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

4 Publisher's Commentary

A Textbook of Faith

6 Buddhist Concept for Today's Living (8)

The Latter Day of the Law: The end of the world or a new dawn of hope?

8 Foreword to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*

12 A guide to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*

16 Creating Partnerships for a Compassionate Civilization

SGI-USA cosponsors State of the World Forum Conference in San Francisco

19 Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra #44

The Implicit Teaching Is "Buddhism for the People"

37 Denmark's Folk High School Movement Looks to the Future

SGI's "Peace Through Education" Exhibit Stirs Interest Among Educators

39 Recollections of My Meetings with Leading World Figures

President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of India

43 1999 Index

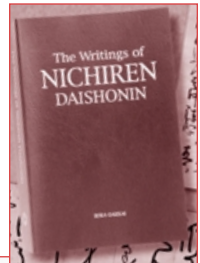
47 Making a Difference

A Quiet Revolution on the Mountain

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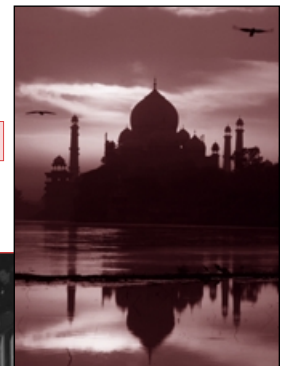
8



16



19



39



47

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From the Editor

On behalf of all of our staff, I thank you for your devoted readership and support of *Living Buddhism* Magazine. In this issue you will find several articles introducing the new edition of the Gosho titled *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. This book, a single-volume edited compilation of all of the writings previously published in the seven-volume *Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, is now on sale in SGI-USA bookstores and by mail.

In this new volume, changes have been made to the translations that appeared in *The Major Writings*, a few of which are explained in this issue. We consider this new version to be an improved and more accurate collection of translations of Nichiren Daishonin's writings. For this reason, beginning with the January issue of *Living Buddhism*, all quotes from the Daishonin's writings that appear in this magazine will be based on *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. References will include the page number and, after first reference, will be abbreviated (WND, #). In addition, we will try to ensure that the name of the specific writing being quoted is mentioned in the text before or after the quote.

Jeff Kriger, Managing Editor

FROM OUR READERS

Due to the volume of letters we receive, not all can be printed, and all letters are subject to condensation. Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the views of SGI-USA or *Living Buddhism*. Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number with all correspondence. Mail to: Letters, Living Buddhism, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

Potters for Peace

Congratulations to *Living Buddhism* staff! The cover of the October issue—"Potters for Peace"—confirmed the idea that a great photo contains the essence of more than a 1,000 words. It reminds me of President Ikeda's works as a worldwide laureate photographer, involved with every single person's happiness. In this picture we can sense great concern and compassion about Central America through the great photo by Byron Cohen, to the Nicaraguan potters, Lopez, Cano Rodriguez, Ducale Grande and Munoz. I also enjoyed reading Lynette Yetter's article on page 44 of "Potters for Peace." She encouraged me to understand and learn once more what world peace is on a deeper level...with the people, expanding our life condition and making changes in our hearts. We can share this beautiful experience about Nicaraguan's people in groups and district discussions meetings. It contains points about determination, overcoming obstacles, encouragement of working together in unity, using our Buddhist practice to help and inspire others, creating bonds of friendship and happiness in the world,... achieving our mission as members of SGI-USA.

ARMANDO YANES,
Miami Beach, Florida

Do We Need Priests?

I want to thank everyone involved in the two articles, "Do We Need Priests?" by Shin Yatomi, and "Priesthood In The Post-Modern World" from Dr. Harvey Cox in the October issue of *Living Buddhism*. Over the course of the past nine years I've been struggling to understand the priesthood issue in our practice. Most things I've read previously seemed to be emotionally charged and subjective, but these two pieces give an objective historical perspective I've been longing for.

I also appreciate the beautiful new design of the magazine, particularly the information on the inside front cover page describing the SGI and *Living Buddhism* Magazine. This kind of information will be very useful for introducing people to the SGI and our Buddhist practice. All of the changes I've seen in the publications since I've been practicing have been refreshing, encouraging and indicative of a spirit of striving for excellence and embracing change. In my opinion *Living Buddhism* is the most encouraging, enlightened publication of all times!

DEBORAH MULLIS
Winter Park, Florida

This is a welcome article, although I have one very fundamental disagreement. The author spends most of his time discussing the history of the sangha in India, incorrectly using the term "priest" presumably in order to make the connection with Japanese Buddhist priests. There were no priests in Indian Buddhism. The distinction was between wandering mendicants who led a monastic life and those who maintained their societal roles as householders. There was no priestly function with ritual authority given to the monastics. This role only developed as Buddhism moved through China, eventually acquiring its sacerdotal position in Japan. There is no mention of this fact until ten pages into the article, with a tangential reference to Japanese priests on the eighth page.

I would argue that the emphasis should not have been on India, but on Japanese Buddhism, which is unique and has its own language and customs. The dilemma, of course, is that the Daishonin was a Japanese Buddhist priest, but I think his role, and that of Nikko and some of the others, was unique. Regardless, it is clearly incorrect to describe Indian Buddhists as priests.

GUY MCCLOSKEY,
Chicago

Author's response:

Regarding the definition of the word priest, I simply followed the definition commonly used in Buddhism. I used the word to indicate those who have left their home for a religious purpose (Jpn shukke) as opposed to those living in the secular world or keeping their home life (Jpn zaika). This distinction was used in India, China and Japan. It is a bit different from your definition, which is those vested with "ritual authority." In discussing the role of priesthood from the viewpoint of a lay movement, defining priests as those who are not lay believers, I thought, would be simplest and most appropriate. In other words, if wandering mendicants were not Buddhist priests, what were they? They were certainly not lay believers.

As I explained in the essay, in the later period of Indian Buddhism, there were those who conducted esoteric rituals for lay believers. So to state that there was no priest in Indian Buddhism seems inaccurate. But I agree in early Indian Buddhism there was no concept of intermediaries or ritual conductors. (I also made this point in the essay.)

In early Buddhism, monks or mendicants were called "elders" or those who grew old in knowledge within the Buddhist community, as in "Theravada" or the way (vada) of the elders (thera). Those Buddhist "elders" were so called because they were wise enough to teach the Buddha's Dharma to initiates.

Regarding my emphasis on Indian Buddhism, I intended to focus my essay on early Indian Buddhism in order to investigate the origin of Buddhist priesthood. But I totally agree with you in that we should examine the original significance of priesthood in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Shin Yatomi

A Textbook of Faith

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

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

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

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

I appreciate the incredible efforts of all those who contributed to the translation, editing and production of this great book. In the history of Buddhism, the greatest translator of all was China's Kumarajiva (344–413) who translated the Lotus Sutra into

Chinese from the Indian Sanskrit. The names of those who worked on *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* will certainly be remembered in history as the Kumarajivas of this era.

The Soka Gakkai made the Goshō Available to Ordinary People

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

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

When Mr. Toda proposed that Nichiren Shoshu publish a volume of the complete writings of the Daishonin, the priesthood rejected the idea. Mr. Toda's passion for such a project was based on his wartime experience. It was a lack of study and understanding of Buddhism that caused so many of his peers to falter under the persecution of the military regime, renounce their faith, and even malign first President Makiguchi. He concluded that the only way to carry out widespread propagation was for each member to become deeply familiar with the teachings of the Goshō.

At the time, of greater concern to the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood was casting a new bell for the head temple. They had donated a previous bell as scrap metal to aid in Japan's war effort. They had also prohibited

the publication of the Daishonin's writings during the war out of fear of the militarist government and had in fact deleted certain passages from the texts they thought might offend the Shintoist authorities.

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

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

The Daishonin's Writings in English

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

In the meantime, we can study the Lotus Sutra through SGI President Ikeda's "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," which has been serialized in *Living Buddhism* for

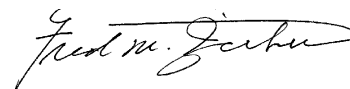
***President Ikeda
encouraged them to
"read the Goshō regularly!
Even just a little is fine.
Even a single sentence. Just
opening the Goshō is
a start.... The Goshō is
filled with illumination.
When we open its pages,
we are bathed in
the rays of philosophy
and the sun of life.
The Goshō is Nichiren
Daishonin's voice;
it is the collection of
his golden words and
teachings."***

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

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

Addressing a group of young people on another occasion, President Ikeda encouraged them to "read the Goshō regularly! Even just a little is fine. Even a single sentence. Just opening the Goshō is a start.... The Goshō is filled with illumination. When we open its pages, we are bathed in the rays of philosophy and the sun of life. The Goshō is Nichiren Daishonin's voice; it is the collection of his golden words and teachings."

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



Fred M. Zaitu
SGI-USA General Director

THE LATTER DAY OF THE LAW:

The end of the world or a new dawn of hope?

“The end is coming!” On December 31, 999, many people in Christian Europe fearfully anticipated the catastrophic end of the world and the judgment of their souls. But as Pope Sylvester II conducted midnight mass in the Vatican, nothing happened. A half-century later, the similar millennium fear swept Buddhist Japan. Many believed that the year 1052 marked the first year of “the Latter Day of the Law,” a period in which they expected the world to be lost to suffering and chaos. As aristocratic rule was collapsing and the warrior class was gaining more influence, Japanese society at the time was in turmoil. For the next several centuries, as war, famine and pestilence continued to rack the country, many Japanese were convinced that they were indeed living in the Latter Day of the Law.

This apocalyptic frenzy in medieval Japan was based on the concept of the “three time periods” of Buddhism—the Former, Middle and Latter Days of the Law (or Shakyamuni’s teaching). These are the three consecutive stages into which the time after the Buddha’s death is divided. There are several views on the length of these three periods. Many Buddhists, including T’ien-t’ai, Dengyo and Nichiren Daishonin, adopted the explanation found in the Sutra of the Great Assembly, which describes five consecutive five-hundred-year periods following Shakyamuni’s death. The first two five-hundred-year periods are regarded as the Former Day of the Law, the following two five-hundred-year periods as the Middle Day of the Law, and the fifth five-hundred-year period as the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, which continues indefinitely.

Nichiren Daishonin describes the three time periods of Buddhism in terms of teaching, practice and proof. “Teaching” refers to the Buddha’s teaching, “practice” to the practice set forth by the Buddha’s teaching, and “proof” to the resulting benefit of that practice. During the Former Day of the Law, the pure spirit of Buddhism remained intact, and people practiced Buddhism cor-

rectly and enjoyed the benefit of their practice. Thus, in the Former Day, the teaching, practice and proof of Buddhism were all present. During the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism flourished in society, but the emphasis was placed on formalities and rituals. The vibrant humanism of Buddhism was beginning to decline. In this stage, people practiced Buddhism yet could not enjoy the fullest extent of its benefit.

In the present Latter Day of the Law, people neither practice the Buddha’s teaching nor gain its benefit. While the teaching is present, there is neither practice nor proof. The Sutra of the Great Assembly describes this degenerate stage in the history of Buddhism as a time in which “quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my [Shakyamuni’s] teachings, and the Pure Law will become obscured and lost” (quoted in *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 85). That is, during the Latter Day of the Law, people lose sight of the Buddha’s true teaching and suffer from egoistic delusions.

According to the ancient Chinese dating of Shakyamuni’s death as 949 BCE, most Japanese thought that the year 1052 marked the beginning of the third millennium after the Buddha’s passing, that is, the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. Most modern scholars, however, date Shakyamuni’s death at either around 480 or 380 BCE. Based on these recent datings, the time in which Nichiren Daishonin lived would correspond to 1,600 or 1,700 years after Shakyamuni’s death.

When examining this discrepancy, it is important to note that the Daishonin deeply considered the conditions of religion and society at large in light of statements in various sutras. This fact is more significant than simple arithmetic. The Daishonin was living in the midst of conditions that could be best characterized as those of the Latter Day of the Law as described by the Buddhist teachings. In addition, it is important to note that expressions like “500 years” and “1,000 years” in the

*The Daishonin viewed the arrival of the Latter Day of the Law
as an opportunity to bring a new and powerful
light of hope to humanity”*

Buddhist scriptures should be taken not so much as a succinct fixed length of time, but as a description of a magnitude of time and a corresponding flow of events. From this standpoint as well, the conditions in the realm of Buddhism and society predicted for the Latter Day of the Law in the Buddhist sutras are more relevant a gauge than the precise number of years.

Why is Shakyamuni’s teaching said to fall into obscurity in the Latter Day of the Law? Because in the Latter Day, the sutras teach, people are profoundly deluded. Just as medicine kept beyond its expiration date can lose its power to combat pain or illnesses, Shakyamuni’s teaching has over the millennia lost its power to save ordinary people from suffering. In this regard, the Daishonin states: “In this way, the extremity of greed, anger and stupidity in people’s minds in the impure world of the latter age is beyond the power of any sage or worthy man to control” (MW-6, 141). The Daishonin here indicates that Shakyamuni’s teaching is no longer effective in relieving the people of the Latter Day of their suffering and confusion.

Although the Latter Day of the Law is described as rife with “quarrels and disputes,” this does not simply mean that there is an abundance of Buddhist dialogue and debate. In the history of Buddhism prior to the Daishonin’s time, there had been many doctrinal debates to evaluate the merits of various teachings. But in these earlier times, practitioners shared a strong desire to seek the correct teaching. Because of this seeking spirit, those who lost a debate over doctrine would gladly discard their own teaching or teacher and adopt those of the one who had successfully pointed out their error. In contrast, in the Latter Day, most people, including Buddhist practitioners, are so entrenched in greed, anger and ignorance that they refuse to follow the correct teaching even when they encounter it. Consumed with pride and ego, they tend to value status, position and fame more than the heart and spirit of Buddhism. So, in league with those in power, they persecute the practitioners of the correct teaching. The Lotus Sutra explains that the sutra’s practitioners after

Shakyamuni’s death will encounter various forms of oppression from religious authority. What underlies such persecutions is the tendency, particularly among the Buddhist clergy, to be attached to status or wealth instead of striving to uphold the correct teaching.

The corruption of priesthood that characterizes the Latter Day of the Law was rampant during the Daishonin’s time. For example, Ryokan—a powerful and highly revered priest in Kamakura—was behind the government’s failed attempt to execute the Daishonin and his exile to Sado Island. Threatened by the Daishonin’s forthright challenge to the teachings they espoused, many influential priests felt enmity and contempt for the Daishonin.

While the characteristics of the Latter Day—corrupt and arrogant clergy and the people immersed in misery—were apparent in thirteenth-century Japan, the Daishonin remained optimistic. To be sure, the Latter Day of the Law signified the end of Buddhism to many; but Nichiren Daishonin viewed it as a new era in which the teaching by which all Buddhas attain enlightenment is to be revealed and spread among the common people. He confidently declared: “But that which is to come after ‘the Pure Law has become obscured and lost’ is the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra. This is what should be propagated and spread throughout the continent of Jambudvipa. . . so that it may be chanted by all persons. . .” (MW-3, 87-8). While he recognized the bleak reality of people’s lives in his contemporary society, the Daishonin viewed the arrival of the Latter Day of the Law as an opportunity to bring a new and powerful light of hope to humanity. He transformed the concept of the Latter Day of the Law from one of a fearful end into one of a hopeful new beginning.

Standing now as we do at the brink of a new millennium, his spirit can serve as a model for all those who have their gaze fixed upon the future. □

By Shin Yatomi, Associate Editor, based on the book *Yasashii Kyogaku (Easy Study)*, published by the Seikyo Press, Tokyo.



The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin over images of the Daishonin's original writings.

THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

A one-volume, 1,200-page edition titled *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* has been published in celebration of November 18, the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's Founding. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* contain 172 of the Daishonin's writings and combines what was previously contained in seven volumes.

In the following two articles, the background and importance of this publication are explained. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes the foreword to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* in which he states that "religion exists to resonate vibrantly within each person. Even if one discusses the happiness of all human beings, if it is spoken of apart from the happiness of a single human being, that is mere theory."

Tomohiro Matsuda is vice general chief of the Soka

Gakkai study department and editor-in-chief of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, and shares his thoughts in "A Guide to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*." Also, please read the "Publisher's Commentary" on page 4 for SGI-USA General Director Fred M. Zaitzu thoughts on this important event leading into the year 2000.

Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's successor, envisioned that the writings of his teacher would be translated in the future for the sake of worldwide propagation. He states: "When the Buddhism of India spread eastward, the Sanskrit texts were translated and introduced in China and Japan, so when the time comes to widely declare the sacred teachings of this country, the Japanese texts are sure to be translated and spread...." (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1613).



Foreword to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*

The publication in a single volume of the translations of 172 writings of Nichiren Daishonin, including his five major works, is indeed wonderful news, not only for members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), but for all English-speaking people interested in Buddhism. This volume is the translation of works in the Nichiren Daishonin *Gosho Zenshu* (The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin). Now a good half of the contents of that latter volume has been translated and published in English.

Looking back, I recall that the *Gosho Zenshu* was published in April 1952, about one year after my mentor, Josei Toda, became the second president of the Soka Gakkai. Since then, the members of the Soka Gakkai in Japan have been fond of reading the *Gosho Zenshu* as they have persevered in spreading the Buddhist teachings widely, exactly as the Daishonin willed, for the peace and prosperity of humankind.

Particularly since my visit to the United States in 1960, my first trip outside Japan, the teachings of

Nichiren Daishonin have transcended national boundaries and spread to numerous countries around the world. Now the number of countries I have visited has also grown to fifty-four.

Today the expansion of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to 128 countries and territories worldwide attests to the realization of these golden words of the Daishonin: "The moon appears in the west and sheds its light eastward, but the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day" (p. 401).

A world religion invariably has its sacred scriptures or original texts. In Buddhism, for instance, there are sutras that record the teachings of Shakyamuni; in Christianity, there is the Bible; and in Islam, the Koran.

The scriptures of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism are called the "Gosho." ("Go" is an honorific prefix and "sho" means writings; thus, literally, honorable writings.)

That practice begins with the inner reformation of the individual, and through that practice, the substance of our lives is deepened and enriched.

These writings have a distinguishing feature that sets them apart from the sacred texts of other religions. It is the fact that the founder, Nichiren Daishonin, wrote those works himself. Though the originals of many of those works have been lost, many important writings, including more than half of those known as the ten major works, have been handed down to the present in their original form. Naturally, with the worldwide spread of this Buddhism a demand has grown for the translation of those works, and efforts are now being made in many countries in that direction.

The Daishonin's successor, Nikko Shonin (1246–1333), envisioned early on that, for the sake of worldwide propagation, the writings of his teacher were certain to be translated in the future. He declared "Just as when the Buddhism of India spread eastward, the Sanskrit texts were translated and introduced in China and Japan, so when the time comes to widely declare the sacred teachings of this country, the Japanese texts are sure to be translated and spread in China and India. There is no reason to argue over translations that will benefit far-off lands. I alone worry about changes being made according to personal views" (*Gosho Zenshu*).

Buddhism calls our present age the Latter Day of the Law. It is a period described in the sutras as an evil age defiled by the five impurities, in which people's lives are muddied, and their confusion of thought is extreme. I am convinced that the Gosho is the one book that can dispel the darkness of this period and illuminate the third millennium. I believe it is the Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin that is indeed the scripture for the Latter Day of the Law, the scripture for all eternity.

The Gosho is a work of faith, of philosophy, of daily living, of eternal peace, and of boundless hope. It is set with myriad jewels of guidance. SGI members have read a single passage of the Gosho with their entire life, and not only changed their lives for the better but also achieved their human revolution.

What is the purpose of our studying the Gosho? The answer is expressed clearly in the following passage: "Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of devo-

tion in all of Jambudvipa. Be sure to strengthen your faith, and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase" (p. 386).

The main elements of the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism are summed up in this passage. What is important is, first, faith; second, practice; and third, study. Strong faith leads us directly to Buddhahood. And it is practice and study that deepen and strengthen that faith. For us, study must never be a mere accumulation of knowledge. It must be strictly a practical study to deepen one's own faith and elevate one's own state of life.

Moreover, the path of practice and study leads to the Gohonzon and to society. Because of practice and study, we face the Gohonzon, recite the sutra, and chant daimoku. With the wisdom and life force gained thereby, we carry out our practice and study in the midst of society. Herein lies what we call the bodhisattva way. That is the action of leading other people toward lasting happiness while striving to establish enduring peace for humanity. That practice begins with the inner reformation of the individual, and through that practice, the substance of our lives is deepened and enriched. The ultimate of those changes is the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime, or in modern terms, human revolution or self-actualization.

When the Daishonin talks about the Lotus Sutra, it is no longer a mere sacred scripture of the past. How overjoyed those who heard his teachings must have been on learning that the Lotus Sutra is alive in the realities of life, and that it teaches one's own precious dignity. Our attitude when we read the Gosho should be the same.

The Gosho was written in thirteenth-century Japan. No matter what idea one expresses, one can never avoid what the sociologist Karl Mannheim described as "the

Nevertheless, universal principles both timeless and unchanging are beautifully expressed therein. Our responsibility, I believe, is to read and extract those principles, and bring them to life in the present.

existential determination of knowledge.” That is, it is perfectly natural that ideas be bound by various conditions of the society and age that are quite unrelated to the ideas themselves.

Thus, the Daishonin’s writings also reflect the cultural and social conditions of his time. Nevertheless, universal principles both timeless and unchanging are beautifully expressed therein. Our responsibility, I believe, is to read and extract those principles, and bring them to life in the present.

To give just one example, the Daishonin writes, “Even if it seems that, because I was born in the ruler’s domain, I follow him in my actions, I will never follow him in my heart” (p. 579). In modern terms, we might say that this well-known passage from “The Selection of the Time” expresses the ideals of freedom of spirit, freedom of religion and freedom of thought.

Because of the pioneering nature of the Daishonin’s ideas, he was rejected by the feudalistic society of his time. At the Daishonin’s asserting that a debate on the teachings — in other words, discussion — is the only fair means of determining the superiority of a religion, the eminent priests of various schools, who were in collusion with government authorities, responded with violence unacceptable in a religious person.

In that sense, the Goshō is also the record of the Daishonin’s confrontation with the leaders of the political and religious worlds of his day. And the motivating power for that unyielding struggle was none other than his strength of spirit. The Daishonin writes: “Everyone in Japan, from the sovereign on down to the common people, without exception has tried to do me harm, but I have survived until this day. You should realize that this is because, although I am alone, I have firm faith” (p. 614).

The Daishonin clearly describes his circumstances during this period in this passage of “Letter from Sado”: “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong. Our contemporary scholars of the various schools are just like them. They despise a wise man without power, but fear evil rulers. They are no more than fawning retainers. Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove one’s real strength. When an evil ruler in consort with

priests of erroneous teachings tries to destroy the correct teaching and do away with a man of wisdom, those with the heart of a lion king are sure to attain Buddhahood. Like Nichiren, for example. I say this not out of arrogance, but because I am deeply committed to the correct teaching. An arrogant person will always be overcome with fear when meeting a strong enemy” (p. 302).

In the midst of that battle with authority and power, in which he never begrudged even his life, the meticulousness of the Daishonin’s concern for his followers is absolutely astonishing. In response to the offerings he received from them, he wrote letters to each one, noting the items they had sent, and encouraging them in their faith. And to those believers grieving for the husband or child they had lost, he extended the utmost sincerity, giving them courage and hope to live.

Religion exists to resonate vibrantly within each person. Even if one discusses the happiness of all human beings, if it is spoken of apart from the happiness of a single human being, that is mere theory.

The Daishonin writes: “The heart of the Buddha’s lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the ‘Never Disparaging’ chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being” (p. 852).

It is when the fruits of studying the Goshō show in our own behavior that we can say we have truly read it.

Thus I am praying that, with great seeking spirit and deep faith, SGI friends throughout the world will tackle the serious study of the Goshō.

In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the staff of the Goshō Translation Committee, who were in charge of the translation and editing of this volume. I also offer my deep gratitude to Dr. Burton Watson, the translator of The Lotus Sutra, who made so many invaluable contributions in translation.

Daisaku Ikeda, President Soka Gakkai International



A Guide to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*

By Tomohiro Matsuda, vice general chief of the Soka Gakkai study department, and editor-in-chief of the new English compilation of Nichiren Daishonin's writings. Mr. Matsuda was one of the earliest managing editors of the Seikyo Times, the original name of Living Buddhism.

In this short article, I would like to examine what the Goshō means to us as members of the SGI, and suggest how to make *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (hereafter abbreviated as *The Writings*) a valuable reading experience. I will explain some of the changes made in the latest translation and give a brief history of our work of translating the Daishonin's writings into English.

In 1952, one year after Josei Toda was inaugurated as second president of the Soka Gakkai, the *Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Zenshu* (The Complete Works of Nichiren Daishonin) was published by the Soka Gakkai. The members in Japan were overjoyed at this historic achievement, for though they had often heard of the Goshō, most had never actually seen it. A collection of the Daishonin's writings published by another Nichiren school was not easily available to the general membership of the Soka Gakkai. Moreover, it was marred by some vital errors with regard to the reading of certain passages of the Daishonin's handwritten documents. Yet even when their tremendous seeking spirit moved them

to purchase the Soka Gakkai edition of the Goshō—and it was a substantial investment by those days' standards—most at first found it nearly impossible to read. They were not yet well acquainted with Buddhist terms and concepts, nor were they familiar with medieval Japanese. With the *Goshō Zenshu* in hand, however, they attended lectures given by President Toda, who explained important Goshō in an attempt to clarify the essential meaning of the Daishonin's Buddhism and give them confidence in faith and practice. No reference materials were available in those days, but Mr. Toda's lectures resolved many of the members' doubts and deepened their understanding.

Now, forty-seven years after the publication of the *Goshō Zenshu*, the English translation of exactly one half of the Japanese text has been published in a single volume titled *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. This work will provide precious reference material for the translation of the Goshō into many other languages.

In reading this new publication, I think it is important

that we ask ourselves, “What does the Goshō mean to us as members of the SGI?” In my view, the Daishonin’s individual writings are meant to be taken as letters personally addressed to each of us. With this attitude we can read them with great joy, just as the Daishonin’s followers did in his time. There may be parts we do not fully understand, but we will surely be inspired by the Daishonin’s warm words of encouragement. When we find ourselves in the midst of adversity, we will no doubt be filled with courage, hope, and confidence.

Many of us have heard our fellow members cite short passages from the Goshō in recounting their experiences of applying Buddhist practice in overcoming difficulties. The following quotes, for example, have inspired many in the midst of personal struggles and challenges: “Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring” (p. 536). “Great events never have minor omens. When great evil occurs, great good follows” (p. 1119). “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō” (p. 681).

Among the Daishonin’s followers, Shijō Kingo had difficult relations with his lord, who was hostile to his faith; Toki Jonin’s wife battled with ill health; Ota Kingo was troubled by a skin disease; the Ikegami brothers were opposed in their faith by their father; and the lay nun Myōichi lost her husband and faced the formidable obstacle of raising her children alone in a male-dominated society. Though these individuals lived in thirteenth-century Japan, the nature of their problems differs little from those that people face today. Though the times and society may change, human nature remains essentially the same, as do the problems it gives rise to.

Nichiren Daishonin’s writings address the very essence of what it means to be human, and explain how to make the most of that humanity. By studying the Daishonin’s longer treatises, such as “The Opening of the Eyes,” we can gain a deep understanding of Buddhist principles and doctrine. But it is the brief statements of wisdom and conviction, such as those quoted above, that support our faith and practice in daily life. Also, by reading letters addressed to lay believers such as Shijō Kingo, we can learn the correct attitude with which to carry out our Buddhist practice.

When we read SGI President Ikeda’s speeches and other writings, which are based on and frequently refer to the Goshō, we naturally learn how to read and apply the Goshō in our own lives and circumstances.

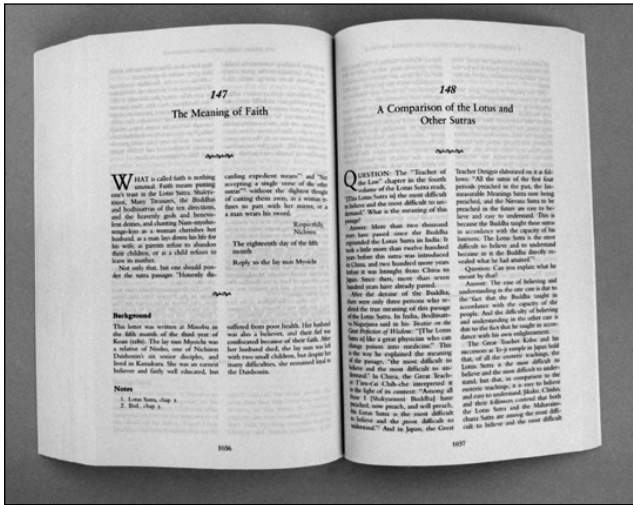
There is no fixed way of reading the Goshō. Rather than worrying about which Goshō is best to begin with, for example, you can simply start by reading whichever one seems most appealing. Doing this engages you in the meaningful process of Buddhist study.

Nichiren Daishonin’s individual letters and works are arranged in chronological order, though the dates of several are unknown or uncertain. You may find it interesting and instructive to read *The Writings* from beginning through end, so that, generally speaking, you can follow the development of the Daishonin’s thought over the course of his life and practice. At the same time, though, it is perfectly fine to pick up and read any Goshō anytime. Each is an independent work, a singular expression of Nichiren Daishonin’s enlightened wisdom and compassion. We can therefore read and apply the message of any Goshō directly to our own lives and practice.

The purpose of our study is not simply to increase our knowledge. In his foreword to *The Writings*, President Ikeda cites a very famous passage from “The True Aspect of All Phenomena”:

Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of devotion in all of Jambudvīpa. . . . Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if it is only a single sentence or phrase.” (p. 386)

President Ikeda then states: “The main elements of the practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism are summed up in this passage. What is important is, first, faith; second, practice; and third, study. Strong faith leads us directly to Buddhahood. And it is practice and study that deepen and strengthen that faith. For us, study must never be a mere accumulation of knowledge. It must be strictly a practical study to deepen one’s own faith and elevate one’s own state of life.” (p. xii)



Now let's look at some of the changes made in the latest translation. In reading the above Goshō quotation, you may have noticed some differences in the translation of certain Buddhist terms and concepts. For example, the title "The True Aspect of All Phenomena" replaces the former title, "The True Entity of Life." Both are translations of the Japanese Buddhist term *shōhō jisso*. Also, "object of devotion" replaces "object of worship." And, as another example unrelated to the above quotation, the three poisons are now rendered as "greed, anger, and foolishness" instead of "greed, anger, and stupidity." Such changes were made to express Buddhist concepts more precisely and understandable.

You will find that the most sweeping changes have been made in the titles of Buddhist documents and in the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In the seven-volume series *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, these were rendered in romanized Japanese. The meanings therefore were impenetrable to the English reader. In *The Writings*, all have been translated into English except certain well-known Sanskrit names such as Mahāvairocana and Vimalakīrti.

For instance, the Kegon Sutra is now rendered as the Flower Garland Sutra, the Hannya Sutra as the Wisdom Sutra, and T'ien-t'ai's Maka Shikan as *Great Concentration and Insight*. Bodhisattva Fukyo is Bodhisattva Never Disparaging and Bodhisattva Kannon is now Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. Thus we can now understand the meaning of the document titles and the ideals represented by the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, meanings which, for the most part, are clear to the reader of the Japanese text. For reference, Japanese names and titles and their

English equivalents are listed in Appendices G and H (pp. 1173–1182).

In addition, the names of most of the Buddhist schools have also been translated into English. Examples are the Lotus (Hokke) school, the Pure Land (Jodo) school, and the Flower Garland (Kegon) school. (See Appendix J, pp. 1185–86)

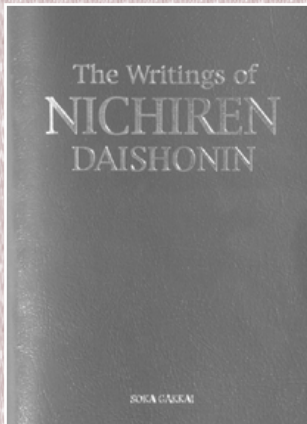
Finally, I would like to describe briefly the history of the Goshō translation project. The first letter we translated was "Reply to Kyo'o," which appeared in the July 1, 1966, issue of the *Seikyo Times* (now *Living Buddhism*), which at the time was published in Japan three times a month. From then on, we continued to translate Goshō texts for study material and lectures published principally in the *Seikyo Times*. In 1979, volume one of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* was published, in which we revised earlier translations and added new ones including "The True Object of Worship."

By 1994, a total of seven volumes had been published, which included 172 Goshō, among them the Daishonin's five major works. It is these 172 Goshō, with the five major works at their core, that comprise the new volume. The five major works are "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," "The Opening of the Eyes," "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind Established in the Fifth Five-Hundred-Year Period after the Thus Come One's Passing," "The Selection of the Time," and "On Repaying Debts of Gratitude."

We have continued our translation work non-stop over the years, first at the Soka Gakkai's overseas bureau, then at the Seikyo Press, the publications branch of the Soka Gakkai, and later at NSIC, a foundation established in 1974 and dissolved in 1998. We are now carrying on the work of this profoundly significant project at the Soka Gakkai's Translation Department in its Office of International Affairs. We will continue our work with the conviction and prayer that these translations will help you nourish your faith and strengthen your practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. □

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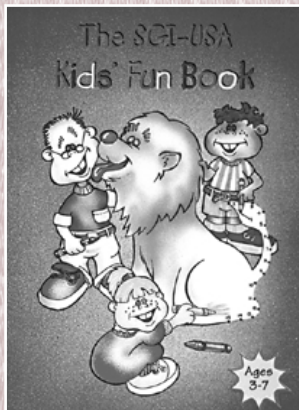
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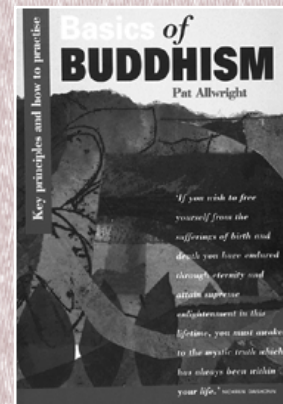
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Dr. Patch Adams speaking at the "Creating A Culture of Peace for the 21st Century" event.

PHOTOS BY JANET LOURENZO



Pauline Tangiora, elder, Maori people, New Zealand, participating in round table discussion, "The Role of Religion and Spiritual Leadership in the 21ST Century."



Dr. Jane Goodall, primatologist and Director, Gombe Stream Research Centre and SGI member Janet Lourenzo.



K.D. Gulko, SGI member, participating in discussion on "The Role of Religion and Spiritual Leadership in the 21st Century."

PHOTO BY KIM ERICCO

Creating Partnerships for a Compassionate Civilization

SGI-USA Co-sponsors State of the World Forum Conference

By Janet Lourenzo and Caley Guida, San Francisco

STATE of the WORLD FORUM

The 1999 State of the World Forum is designed to create partnerships for envisioning and creating a sustainable and compassionate civilization. This year's annual gathering was held in San Francisco on October 1-6, 1999, and brought together over 800 luminaries, leaders and futurists from around the world. The Forum event is a global platform where leading thinkers—who seldom have the opportunity to work together—engage in dialogue and develop programs and policies to address our greatest global concerns.

For the many San Francisco SGI-USA members who attended, this was a kind of "New Age" United Nations without the bureaucracy and protocols. The five-day conference featured many panel discussions and over fifty roundtable sessions. SGI members participated in the dialogue on; "The Earth Charter: Establishing a New Covenant with Nature and Humanity," "Capitalism and the Compassionate Society" and "The Role of Religion and Spiritual Leadership in the 21st Century." The opening dinner gala titled, "Creating a Culture of Peace" featured welcoming remarks by Her Majesty Queen Noor of

Jordan and Jim Garrison, President, State of the World Forum. Mr. Garrison's opening statement, "The people in this room are the leaders of the 21st Century," was especially meaningful to me (Janet), as SGI district leader in Redwood Coast Territory.

The entire city of San Francisco seemed charged with the hopeful spirit of the Forum's activities. Fellow SGI-USA member, Charlotte Kobayashi said that, "As I walked down California Street, streams of people strolled by smiling and talking, using gestures of peace, friendliness and acceptance. Some wore saris, others wore traditional Maori tattoos, or a few sprigs of *ti* leaves (native to Hawaii for spirit cleansing), and others wore conventional business suits. Strangers smiled as we were all seated for the Keynote Address on the Earth Charter, presented by Steven Rockefeller, Professor of Religion, Middlebury College. There were over 500 places set, with 10 to each round table. On my left was a management consultant from Germany, whose mission was to help companies blend spiritualism in the workplace. On my right sat a designer of a magazine called, *Humanity*, connecting nature and mankind from around the world. There were many others in attendance from every corner of the world, including Mexico, Japan, The Philippines, Bosnia and young Palestinian children from a refugee camp."

President Ikeda once stated, "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. I offer my heartfelt prayers for the reward and successful civil society consultations involved in the drafting process."¹

SGI-USA also co-sponsored a special event addressing the elimination of nuclear weapons titled, "Creating a Culture of Peace for the 21st Century," featuring Dr. Helen Caldicott, founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Dr. Patch Adams, founder of the Gesundheit Institute. Former U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, who led the discussion on eliminating nuclear weapons, described the forum as a "transforming event for many." "I (Caley) felt it was a culmination of my twenty years of practice. The friends I made represent a wealth of cultural diversity and creative genius. I look forward to sharing my Buddhist life philosophy with my new and treasured friends, and putting into action President Ikeda's vision of hope for the 21st century."

The closing session, "Family, Community and the Human Spirit" was held at Grace Cathedral. SGI-USA member, Roberta Donnay was most impressed by the Forum's 130 Emerging Youth Leaders from over fifty countries who all stood in front of the assembly and taught us a simple song. Hafsat Abiola, a young woman from Africa said, "We want to tell our elders that it's OK, we can take it from here." Roberta said, "That declaration meant more to me than all the famous people and beautiful presentations, because it was a simple statement from the people, showing once again the power and hope of the youth."

As San Francisco SGI members, we felt proud to be a part of this global effort of discussion and action towards the realization of a sustainable and compassionate society in the new millennium.

1. Foreword to *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*, published by the Boston Research Center for 21st Century.



CORBIS/BRYN COLTON

"During the years since its inception, the State of the World Forum has come a long way. It has created a large network of activists, many of whom I call my friends. Working together and interacting with them is a thought-provoking experience that enriches one's mind, a practical study in achieving unity in diversity. In our globalizing and increasingly interconnected world, we must learn to listen to and hear each other, to assure that change, which is

inevitable, works for the benefit of all. Our meetings in San Francisco and follow-up activities are part of this quest."—Mikhail Gorbachev, President, Soviet Union (1985–91); Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1990; Founder, State of the Word Forum.

The State of the World Forum

The State of the World Forum network is comprised of leaders and activists in business, science, academia, politics, religion and the arts. The Forum also gives priority to gender parity and the full inclusion of youth. Combining all these constituencies as equals to address common issues and challenges, the Forum also gives priority to bringing those from the grassroots together with those widely known and acclaimed, as well as with the gatekeepers of capital and power.

The State of the World Forum's uniqueness has been

in the breadth and scope of its interests; the diversity of individuals it has brought to its various gatherings and initiatives; and its willingness to place the issue of spirituality on a par with economic, scientific, cultural and political discussions.

The first State of the World Forum gathering took place in San Francisco, September 27-October 1, 1995. Convened by Mikhail Gorbachev, more than 400 innovative leaders and thinkers from 50 countries came together. The central question Mr. Gorbachev challenged this gathering to take up was what principles, priorities and values should guide humanity as it moves beyond the strictures of the Cold War into the next phase of development. This was debated and discussed from the vantage points of science, economics, global security, religion and the arts.

During the 1996 and 1997 Forums, this conversation was continued. The inclusion of youth and the emphasis on gender parity, combined with people coming from all over the world and representing all manner of constituencies and disciplines, engendered discussions which were both catalytic and transformative. Issues addressed ranged across the entire spectrum of human interest in the late twentieth century. All perspectives were welcome, every point of view was heard, and everyone was invited to honor diversity as the key to creativity.



Hafsat Abiola, human rights activist from Nigeria and Emerging Youth Leader makes a pledge toward the 21st Century.



Rev. Jesse Jackson with Emerging Youth Leaders at the press conference for the nuclear test ban treaty.

UN 2000, September 3 - 9, 2000

The State of the World Forum, working in cooperation with the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in association with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in cooperation with the Conference of Non Governmental Organizations (CONGO) and the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), and in partnership with other networks, constituents and corporations worldwide, will convene its annual gathering of leaders of civic society September 3-9, 2000 in New York. This event will take place concurrently with the special United Nations Millennium Assembly of heads of state convened at the special invitation of the Secretary General, to discuss the future of the United Nations and the priorities to which it should address itself.

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DIALOGUE

ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

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

44

The Implicit Teaching Is “Buddhism for the People”

This is the forty-fourth installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and Vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the September 1998 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

The ultimate teaching of Buddhism is the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that is implicit in the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Why is it only through this “implicit” Buddhist teaching that people of the Latter Day of the Law can attain true happiness? How does the true value of our Buddhist faith become manifest in our daily life? Addressing these and other questions in this fourth and final discussion on the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (twenty-first) chapter, the participants continue their investigation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, a teaching for the human being, for the welfare of the people.

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)¹

FROM "THE RECORD OF THE ORALLY TRANSMITTED TEACHINGS"

The expression "in the end" refers to widely declaring and spreading the teaching [kosen-rufu]. "To dwell in the single vehicle," means that one should dwell in the single teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. "Such a person" refers to a common mortal who has reached the stage of initial aspiration. "The Buddha way" refers to the ultimate stage.

The word "doubt" here indicates the darkness of fundamental doubt and confusion. The passage makes clear that now, in the Latter Day of the Law, one should carry out this single practice only, that of accepting and upholding "this sutra," in order to attain Buddhahood. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 772)

ENDO: I heard a woman from the Kansai area relate how, in 1957, a men's division member was dozing off at a discussion meeting that you were attending, President Ikeda. She said that her husband earnestly attempted to rouse the man.

But you kindly said: "This man has come here after having worked hard all day, so he must be very tired. There's no need to wake him. Discussion of the Mystic Law cannot fail to enter a person's life — even if it has to be through the pores of the skin!" When you said this, the atmosphere at the meeting at once became relaxed and friendly.

The woman said she was impressed at the time by your ability to understand the circumstances of others despite your relative youth, and she thought, "This is a remarkable person."

SAITO: I think there is an important lesson here. No one has the right to take someone to task for arriving late at a meeting; often people have to rush just to get there before the meeting ends. On the contrary, those who make their best effort to attend meetings despite their busy schedules ought to be praised.

ENDO: The same woman also described how, on another occasion she reported something to you, President Ikeda, and was about to leave. To her surprise,

you came over to see her off. Addressing her in the most courteous manner, you told her: "Thank you so much for your efforts. Please return home safely." She said that this gesture had really moved her, and she had thought to herself, "This is what it means to be a leader of the Soka Gakkai."

IKEDA: I'm surprised you would hear of such an account from so long ago!

ENDO: It seems to me that the concept of religion existing for the sake of human beings ultimately comes down to people's conduct. That's all. The more I think about it, the more convinced I am of this.

IKEDA: How we behave as human beings is really the bottom line. Buddhism ultimately boils down to character. The purpose of Buddhism is to produce people of fine character.

People of excellent character are humble. They are not jealous. They are not self-absorbed, but are concerned with everyone's happiness. For us, this means caring about kosen-rufu. People who do so are fair and compassionate. And because they have compassion, wisdom wells forth in their lives.

When any organization increases in size, it tends to become bureaucratic. But the SGI must never become this way. The SGI is a world of humanism.

It is the leaders who set the tone of an organization. The larger an organization grows, the more its leaders need to develop humility. It is the function of leaders in the SGI to treasure their fellow members. Where leaders genuinely make such thorough efforts, there is growth. Again, such efforts are what our Buddhist practice consists of. This is the Lotus Sutra.

ENDO: Excuse me for bringing up the past again, but I heard about another woman from Kansai who once consulted you, regarding her recent appointment as a district women's division leader. She was uncertain as to how to direct her efforts in that capacity. That was in the summer of 1959. You replied to her, saying:

There are no set guidelines dictating what you should do. It's as though the short staff you have been wielding until now has been switched to a long one. Because it is longer, you are not sure how exactly to manage it. But, the fact is, whether the staff you carry is short or long, the basic principle is the same; if you grasp it at its base and move it, the other end will swing around.

The important thing is to earnestly chant daimoku



CORBIS/ADAM WOOLFIT

Relief depicting the events from the Buddha's life on the stupa grounds in Sanchi, India. The stupa at Sanchi is said to have been built by King Ashoka.

noble—thousands, tens of thousands of times more noble—than any influential person.

It's not a matter of appearance, position or schooling. The strength of mind to be determined to help the suffering become happy and to accomplish kosen-rufu is most respectable. This is what it means to be at one with the Law.

The universe is also an entity of the Mystic Law; it is the great life of the Mystic Law itself. When we focus on the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law and devote our lives to realizing this goal, we become one with the Mystic Law in both body and mind.

In a broad sense, we enter the path of "oneness of the Person and the Law."

SAITO: Concretely speaking, the path of the Mystic Law is the path of kosen-rufu.

IKEDA: And more precisely, since the SGI is the only group striving for kosen-rufu, the path of the Mystic Law is actually found in SGI activities. Those who really exert themselves in the organization for kosen-rufu embark on the path of the oneness of the Person and the Law.

As was mentioned at the beginning of this discussion, such people, while working long and hard in society, push themselves and take selfless action for the sake of the Law, society and others. They are truly noble. Though on the surface they may be working in a company or taking care of the home or what have you, their inner status is that of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. And a Bodhisattva of the Earth is a Buddha. While we may speak of the Buddha in various contexts, apart from these people there simply aren't any Buddhas. This is a point that people really have a difficult time grasping.

SAITO: Your remarks really get at the superb features of the implicit teaching of the Lotus Sutra. One is that, as the Daishonin says in "The Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings" (from "Eight Important Points of the 'Supernatural Powers' chapter"), "Thus Come One refers to all living beings, as has already been

and treat those around you with the utmost respect, just as you have done up to now. It's about really caring for one individual, about praying for the happiness of your friends and kindly and considerately encouraging them. Such determination will spread through the entire district. This is the principle of "our life pervades the entire universe both physically and spiritually."² (MW-1, 65)

It is a mistake to think that kosen-rufu will be accomplished if we fail to encourage people around us and share this practice with them.

Her growing insecurity vanished at once upon hearing this, like a mist that suddenly clears, and she felt great confidence that she would succeed.

SUDA: While we tend to think that a leader has to engage in special activities, the reality is that the higher one's position in our organization, the more important it becomes to really focus on the basics of the practice.

Where Does the Buddha Reside?

IKEDA: At any rate, those who are working for kosen-rufu deserve the utmost respect. Ordinary people who honestly devote themselves to kosen-rufu are more

explained in the earlier ‘Life Span’ chapter” (GZ, 770). This is the point that all living beings are Buddhas, which is nowhere explicitly stated in the text of the “Life Span” chapter. Another feature is that the implicit teaching, or the Buddhism of “from the effect to the cause,” enables one to directly address the reality of the nine worlds on the basis of inherent Buddhahood.

SUDA: All Buddhist teachings expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra encourage single-mindedly striving to attain Buddhahood. That is, they proceed from the nine worlds, or cause, to the world of Buddhahood, or effect. Because practicing those teachings means concentrating on one’s own enlightenment first and foremost, they hardly bring forth the strength needed to change society.

ENDO: I think that historically Buddhism on the whole has not been able to shake this static and passive tendency.

IKEDA: To put it into simple terms, Buddhism that proceeds from the cause to the effect is analogous to someone saying, “After I become wealthy, I will help others”; or “After I get my Ph.D., I will instruct others.” But one never knows whether or not that day will actually come. Buddhism that proceeds from the effect to the cause, on the other hand, seeks to provide others with supreme fortune and supreme wisdom right away.

ENDO: And this principle is contained in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

IKEDA: Yes, it’s the “seed.” The Daishonin says, “The blessings and wisdom [of both the objective and subjective worlds] are immeasurable. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has these two aspects of blessings and wisdom” (GZ, 792).



After searching for happiness high and low, it turns out that it is found in one’s immediate surroundings, in one’s own home, as it were. Happiness does not lie way off in the distance; happiness means that one’s life is afire with the inherent life force of the world of Buddhahood, and that it is being expressed in a manner true to oneself. It means advancing continuously, no matter what happens, determined to fulfill one’s mission in this life.

SUDA: The implicit Buddhist teaching is then completely different from all the teachings that had come before.

IKEDA: Yes. We can discuss the differences from a variety of other perspectives, but the two points cited just now by Mr. Saito are the most important. Of course, they are two sides of the same coin.

The Practice and the Principle of the Fundamental Truth

SAITO: Regarding the idea that all living beings are the Buddha, let’s first review the doctrine of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” that is revealed in the “Life Span” chapter. There, Shakyamuni refutes the view that he first attained enlightenment during his present lifetime, and discloses that he has in fact been continuously expounding the Law in the saha world since the



CORBIS/LEONARD DE SELVA

Portrait of Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), the author of the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

extremely remote time in the past of gohyaku-jintengo. This is sometimes called the “practice of the fundamental truth [revealed in the ‘Life Span’ chapter].”

IKEDA: This is in contrast to the “principle of the fundamental truth [revealed in the ‘Life Span’ chapter].” This point is discussed in the Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.

SUDA: Yes. Regarding the term “responding with joy” which appears in the “Benefits of Responding with Joy” (eighteenth) chapter, the Daishonin says:

“Respond” means to respond to and comply with practice and principle.... “Practice” means responding to and complying with the practice of the fundamental truth revealed in the Life Span chapter, which is known

as gohyaku-jintengo [inconceivably remote past]. “Principle” means responding to the principle of the fundamental truth revealed in the “Life Span” chapter. In the end, then, responding means responding to and complying with the inner truth of the “Life Span” chapter. (GZ, 761)

ENDO: In the section of “The Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings” on the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” (nineteenth) chapter, the Daishonin also refers to the “the practice and principle of the fundamental truth revealed in the ‘Life Span’ chapter” (GZ, p. 763).

IKEDA: From ancient times, various arguments concerning the revelations of true identity in practice and in principle have been put forward by the Tendai and other schools. What exactly do these refer to?

SAITO: In general, “practice” indicates something that manifests as a phenomenon, while “principle” indicates an invisible law or truth that exists behind the phenomenon.

In the present case, “practical revelation of true identity” means the preaching of the “Life Span” chapter. As the Daishonin says, it points to the “revelation in practice of true identity since gohyaku-jintengo.” By contrast, “revelation in principle of true identity” refers to something that, while not explicitly stated in the text, is implicitly contained in the “revelation in practice.” I think it could be said that it refers to the revelation of the true identity of the Buddha of absolute freedom (the Buddha of Limitless Joy) since time without beginning.

IKEDA: That would probably be a fair conclusion. In the section of “The Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings” that deals with the “Distinctions in Benefits” (seventeenth) chapter, the Daishonin interprets “believe and understand” (in the phrase “to believe and understand it even for a moment” [LS17, 237]), as follows: “This one word ‘believe’ means to believe in the principle of the fundamental truth revealed in the ‘Life Span’ chapter. And the word ‘understand’ means to understand the practice of the fundamental truth revealed in the ‘Life Span’ chapter” (GZ, 760). Since the revelation in principle of true identity is not clearly articulated, it can only be grasped through belief. And this belief translates into an understanding of the true meaning of the revelation of true identity in practice.

SUDA: In other words, when people heard the preaching of the “Life Span” chapter (i.e., the revelation of true identity in practice), they grasped the revelation of true identity in principle.

IKEDA: The term “revelation of true identity” sounds somewhat complicated, but in simpler terms it means “to show one’s full potential.”

This principle is actually illustrated quite well by the Japanese historical drama of Mito Komon in which the deputy shogun disguises himself as an ordinary citizen and travels throughout the country. At the end of each episode, the protagonist Mito Komon discloses his real identity. In a way, this is an example of revealing the fundamental truth!

ENDO: Yes, just when everyone thought him to be a retired grandfather, he turns out to be a very powerful man second only to the shogun!

SUDA: Then the villains shrink back in fear, and the good people rejoice. This indicates the benefit that comes from revealing one’s true identity!

IKEDA: Of course, this is only an analogy. In world literature, we could compare it with Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*. I am thinking of the scene where the true identity of the learned and wealthy count is revealed to be Edmond Dantès. Although it’s a story about revenge, I think this is still a kind of revelation of true identity.

SAITO: Those who had looked down on Mito Komon were certainly taken aback when they found out who he really was!

In the Lotus Sutra, as well, great bodhisattvas like Manjushri are at first thought to be the disciples not of Shakyamuni but of other Buddhas. Therefore they view Shakyamuni as a “new Buddha” who has only just attained enlightenment. The revelation that Shakyamuni in fact has been the Buddha since the remote past refutes this illusion.

ENDO: So, Mito Komon’s sidekicks, Suke and Kaku, are comparable to Bodhisattvas who attend a Buddha!

IKEDA: That means that just the sight of these attendants is cause for alarm to those who know the true identity of their boss!

SUDA: People who see them coming immediately think of the deputy shogun Mito Komon whom they represent.

SAITO: The relation between revelation of true identity

in practice and in principle is similar to this. That is, those who are quick to grasp the meaning of Shakyamuni’s revelation of true identity in practice understand the revelation of true identity in principle that is implicit in it.

IKEDA: On the Gohonzon, the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures appear as attendants on either side of “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Nichiren,” which is written in large characters down the center. And flanking these two Buddhas are the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

The explicit revelation of true identity corresponds specifically to the attendant “Shakyamuni Thus Come One,” who represents the True Effect of the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the remote past of gohyaku-jintengo. Also, Shakyamuni represents the extremely long life span and boundless wisdom and compassion to lead all beings to happiness acquired as the benefit of this True Effect.

Those listening to the preaching wonder what True Cause gave rise to this great True Effect, and what is the source of the benefit of this True Effect? To understand this is to grasp the explicit revelation of true identity.

ENDO: With regard to the cause of his enlightenment in the remote past, in the “Life Span” chapter Shakyamuni says only, “Originally I practiced the bodhisattva way” (LS16, 227). But the True Cause of his enlightenment is implicit in these words. This is what we mean when we say that it is implicit in the sutra.

SUDA: While the Tendai school does not have terminology to refer specifically to these two levels of “explicit” and “implicit” meaning, the school’s interpretation of the sutra follows similar lines. They speak of the “phenomenal revelation of true identity” and the “essential revelation of true identity.” Also, there are other schools that call them “doctrinal revelation of true identity” and “mind-observing revelation of true identity.” Despite differences in terminology, the basic thrust of the approach to the sutra is the same.

SAITO: Namely, that there is a revelation of true identity that is not literally expressed in the sutra text.

IKEDA: Let’s talk about that.

The preaching of the “Life Span” chapter is the “revelation of the fundamental truth” pertaining to the individual person Shakyamuni. It could be said that the person Shakyamuni revealed the essence of his own life.

Though he completely revealed his true identity as an

individual, the revelation of true identity implicit in the sutra is another matter entirely; it is on a completely different level. It is a revelation of universal significance. It is the revelation of the fundamental truth for all living beings of the Ten Worlds, from common mortals to the Buddha. The text of the sutra describes the eternal Buddha who has continued to expound the Law and instruct people from the remote time in the past of gohyaku-jintengo.

SUDA: This is the idea of “Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment in the remote past.”

IKEDA: While this Buddha might be thought of as eternal, in an absolute sense, he is not eternal. Although it was an extremely long time ago, there is still a specific point in time at which he attained enlightenment. This Buddha consequently cannot be identified with the Mystic Law that is one with the universe and without beginning or end. There is a “gap.” Therefore, the Buddha in the text of the sutra is presented as “inferior” and the Law as “superior.”

The true intent of the “Life Span” chapter in revealing this “eternal” Buddha is to hint at the existence of the perfectly eternal Buddha (the Buddha of absolute freedom from time without beginning). This Buddha is one with the Mystic Law that is without beginning or end, and is identified with the great life of the universe itself, embodying the oneness of the Person and the Law.

ENDO: That is to say that all living beings in the universe are “perfectly eternal Buddhas,” just as they are.

IKEDA: All living things are originally Buddhas. This is the central thesis of the “Life Span” chapter. The Lotus Sutra calls on us to open our eyes to this truth.

SAITO: To recapitulate, the revelation of true identity in the text of the sutra is the revelation of the true identity

of the individual Shakyamuni. And the revelation of true identity that is implicit in the sutra is the revelation of the true identity of all beings in the entire phenomenal world (i.e., of the Ten Worlds).

SUDA: In terms of both scale and profundity, they are completely different.

IKEDA: Yes, they are.

Only when we understand the implicit revelation of true identity do we grasp the Daishonin’s real meaning when he says that the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra is as different from the theoretical teaching “as fire is from water or heaven from earth” (MW-3, 275).

ENDO: When the Daishonin says, “Thus Come One refers to all living beings, as has already been explained in the earlier ‘Life Span’ chapter” (GZ, 770), he is speaking from the level of the implicit teaching.



CORBIS/ADAM WOOLFEIT

A stone relief of footprints on a pillar at the Great Stupa, built by King Asoka. Markings of a “Wheel of the Law” on the sole of each foot were regarded as one of the thirty-two features of the Buddha.

The Implicit Teaching Completes Buddhism

SAITO: Last time, we reviewed the history of Buddhism in terms of people’s efforts to seek the cause of enlightenment. The conclusion is that the ultimate cause lies in the depths of the “Life Span” chapter. If this were not the

case, Shakyamuni's desire to enable all living beings to become Buddhas would be incomplete.

IKEDA: Needless to say, the "cause of Buddhahood" that is implicit in the "Life Span" chapter is the Mystic Law that is without beginning or end, or Nam-myohorenge-kyo. At the same time as this is the "cause of enlightenment," it is also the "effect of enlightenment." It is the "inscrutable Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect." Those who listened to the preaching of the "Life Span" chapter realized this and attained enlightenment.

It is a mistake to read the "Life Span" chapter as a fantastic tale of a resplendent Buddha endowed with the thirty-two features [see box this page] suspended aloft in the Ceremony in the Air. If the point of the teaching were simply a matter of revering this august Buddha, it would ultimately be a teaching of looking outwards. Through the teaching of the Buddha's attaining enlightenment in the remote past, however, the participants at the Ceremony in the Air realize that they share the same origin as Shakyamuni.

It is as though by gazing upwards into the "air" they at last become aware of their feet on the ground. This is explained [in Nichikan Shonin's *Hokke Shuyo Sho Mondan* (Commentary on the "Essence of the Lotus Sutra")] as "those at the highest stage of bodhisattva practice, or the stage of near-perfect enlightenment, changing into persons at the stage of initial aspiration and instantaneously attaining enlightenment."

The True Cause of enlightenment is Nam-myohorenge-kyo Thus Come One. By awakening to this Mystic Law of time without beginning, bodhisattvas at the 51st stage of practice (according to T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of the 52 stages from bodhisattva to Buddha) return to the stage of initial aspiration, or that of ordinary people, and quickly jump over the intervening stages to reach the highest, 52nd stage, that of enlightenment.

SUDA: After proceeding through the bodhisattva stages step by step toward Buddhahood, as though climbing a staircase, in the end they return to their "point of departure." This means that they perceive the life of the universe itself that gives rise to and sustains their very life.

ENDO: The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China expressed the same thing, saying that the fundamental cause of enlightenment is contained in the depths of the "Life

Thirty-two Features

Remarkable physical characteristics said to be possessed by Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Bonten, Taishaku and the wheel-turning kings, symbolizing their superiority over ordinary people. The "Treatise on the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom" (Daichido Ron) lists them as follows: They are listed as follows: (1) flat soles, (2) the markings of the thousand-spoke wheel on the sole of each foot, (3) long and slender fingers, (4) broad and flat heels, (5) webbed feet and hands, (6) extremely flexible limbs, (7) protuberant insteps, (8) slender legs like those of a deer, (9) hands which extend past the knees even in standing position, (10) concealed genitals, (11) a body of equal breadth and height, (12) body hair that turns upward, (13) one hair growing from each pore, (14) golden skin, (15) light radiating from the body, (16) thin and pliant skin, (17) well-developed muscles of the hands, feet, shoulders and nape of the neck, (18) well-developed muscles below each armpit, (19) a dignified torso like that of a lion, (20) a large and straight body, (21) substantial shoulders, (22) forty teeth, (23) even teeth, (24) four white fangs, (25) full cheeks like those of a lion, (26) an unexcelled sense of taste, (27) an extremely long and broad tongue, (28) a voice that can reach the Brahma Heaven, (29) eyes the color of blue lotus blossoms, (30) long eyelashes like those of a cow, (31) a protuberant knot of flesh resembling a top-knot on the crown of the head and (32) a tuft of white hair between the eyebrows, curling to the right. According to the "Treatise on the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom," these marks are to be acquired one by one as a result of good causes accumulated over a total of three asogi kalpas (an incalculable amount of time).

Nichiren Daishonin states in "Letter to Niike," "If you chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo with your whole heart, you will naturally become endowed with the Buddha's thirty-two features." The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that one can attain Buddhahood in one's present form. In other words, one can attain Buddhahood "just as one is," without discarding one's present identity. Therefore, from the viewpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism, these thirty-two unusual qualities are interpreted as wisdom, ability, compassion, etc., which one displays by manifesting one's Buddha nature.

Span” chapter, and that those at the assembly of the Lotus Sutra were able to attain Buddhahood by virtue of their having discerned this original cause.

SAITO: This “original cause” is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. That is what they realized.

IKEDA: They understood the implicit teaching just by hearing the literal teaching. For beings with such high capacity, that’s all it took.

But what about those unable to grasp this? This is why Shakyamuni entrusted Bodhisattva Superior Practices with the task of propagating the teaching after his passing.

Superior Practices is a “bodhisattva-Buddha”—that is, a being whose life embodies the “wonderful Law of simultaneity of cause and effect”—who spreads that wonderful Law. Buddhism teaches in no uncertain terms that the Law and the person who expounds it are one.

SAITO: The Daishonin explains this idea when he says, “Because the Law was expounded by the original Buddha, it was entrusted to his true disciples” (MW-1, 73).

This statement appears in Miao-lo’s supplement to the Hokke Mongu Ki (Annotations on the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China) by the T’ien-t’ai scholar Tao-hsien of the T’ang period. The Daishonin cites this passage in “The True Object of Worship” and other writings.

IKEDA: Nichiren Daishonin says, “Bodhisattva Superior Practices of the True Cause is brought together with Shakyamuni of the True Effect solely for the benefit of those in the Latter Day of the Law after the Buddha’s passing” (GZ, 864).

To match the capacity of beings of the Latter Day, the Mystic Law of *kuon ganjo*, which is the original cause of Buddhahood, is expounded in a direct and straightforward manner. That is the purpose of the transmission in the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” chapter.

Therefore, the meaning of “Thus Come One” in the chapter’s title refers not exclusively to Shakyamuni, but to all living beings. And “supernatural powers” means the power of life. The “Supernatural Powers” chapter reveals the true “power of life” of all living beings, and particularly of ordinary people. To indicate this, the

Buddha’s ten supernatural powers are expounded on a cosmic scale.

ENDO: In other words, the magnificent Buddha endowed with the thirty-two features is simply a provisional Buddha serving to help people understand the truth.

“It Is Not Difficult to Become a Buddha Equal to Shakyamuni”

IKEDA: The thirty-two features are a collection of ideal characteristics; perhaps these were qualities that the Indian people of that time revered. They were expounded to initially arouse in people a sense of respect and seeking toward the Buddha. The point is not whether Shakyamuni actually possessed these features. Their purpose is to lead ordinary people to the awareness that they themselves are Buddhas. I think Nichiren Daishonin refers to this principle in his writing “Junyoze Ji” (On the Ten Factors of Life).

The Daishonin says, “These three factors of life (of appearance, nature and entity) of our own are the Buddha’s three enlightened properties. But we common mortals think the three enlightened properties have nothing to do with our own lives. One who is thoroughly awakened to this is a person who truly understands the Lotus Sutra” (GZ, 410).

The point is that after searching for happiness high and low, it turns out that it is found in one’s immediate surroundings, in one’s own home, as it were. Happiness does not lie way off in the distance; happiness means that one’s life is afire with the inherent life force of the world of Buddhahood, and that it is being expressed in a manner true to oneself. It means advancing continuously, no matter what happens, determined to fulfill one’s mission in this life. To have such faith is Buddhahood itself; it is eternal happiness.

Such things as learning, fame and social standing could be called the modern equivalents of the thirty-two features. In some instances, possessing these adornments might be useful in teaching others about the greatness of the Mystic Law. That’s because there are people in whom those qualities inspire respect. But they are definitely not the “goal.”



CORBIS/David Wuench

Giant Sequoias in the Sequoia National Park, California. In this dialogue, President Ikeda compares our Buddhahood to the seed of a giant tree. Though our innate potential seems small and fragile at times, with our earnest and steady Buddhist practice, it will grow into an unmovable foundation of our happiness.



CORBIS/Bob Bailey

The Battle of Okinawa, 1945. Okinawa is Japan’s southernmost island. During the fighting there, the locals experienced discrimination from Japanese soldiers from other parts of Japan.

As long as we cloak the self in such ornamentation, we cannot cultivate our true strength as human beings. We cannot understand the real meaning of faith, or of Buddhism. Such vanity is the spirit of Devadatta. In “Letter to Horen,” the Daishonin notes that Devadatta tried to adorn himself with the thirty-two features.

SUDA: Yes. Devadatta is said to have possessed thirty of the thirty-two features, lacking only “the tuft of white hair” and “the markings of the thousand-spoke wheel.” Thinking that this made him inferior to Shakyamuni and would cause people to look down on him, he contrived to collect the light of fireflies to smear in the middle of his forehead to achieve the effect of the tuft of white hair, and to have a blacksmith brand the soles of his feet with the pattern of a chrysanthemum in place of the markings of the thousand-spoke wheel (MW-7, 99).

IKEDA: But instead, his feet were severely burned! It’s funny to think about, but it reveals Devadatta’s true nature — his jealousy toward Shakyamuni and his vanity in seeking to embellish himself.

Many of those who have abandoned faith and turned against the SGI have displayed the same tendencies. There are also many people who, as the Daishonin says, “outwardly maintain their practice but cherish doubt in their hearts” (MW-3, 287).

Genuine practitioners of Buddhism do not put on airs; they act in a manner true to themselves. Things

such as academic background have nothing to do with the world of faith; rather, to be obsessed with such extras is only an obstacle to one’s faith.

True faith is selfless. It is not about looking out for one’s own interests, but actively challenging and seeking to overcome difficulties with a spirit of not begrudging one’s life. To carry out the pure practice of the Buddhism of the True Cause, which explains that the ordinary person is a true Buddha, is to advance the great popular movement of the SGI. The fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra is found in Nichiren Daishonin’s “Buddhism of the people,” which teaches struggling against the personal affectations of power and authority.

SAITO: Yes. The thirty-two features are characteristics that match people’s

worldly aspirations. They are taught “in accord with the understanding of others.” This is one reason why Shakyamuni, while a Buddha of absolute freedom, is said to be the “Buddha who struggled to advance to the state of limitless joy through accumulated practice.”³

IKEDA: Shakyamuni is a Buddha of absolute freedom, but on a scale completely different from that of the “Buddha of absolute freedom of kuon ganjo.” One is a Buddha who is enlightened as an individual, while the other is a Buddha embodying the entire universe.

ENDO: I am reminded again of how wonderful the teaching implicit in the sutra is. If one were to compare various Buddhist teachings in terms of their relative level, this is truly the most advanced.

IKEDA: It is the great Buddhist teaching that can lead all people, whatever their capacity, to happiness. The Daishonin says, “Ordinary medicine will help a slight ailment, but for grave illnesses, elixir should be used” (MW-3, 55). And:

With the coming of the Latter Day of the Law, however, with regard to these Hinayana sutras, Mahayana sutras and the Lotus Sutra—which were entrusted respectively to Mahakashyapa, Ananda and others, to the bodhisattvas Monju, Miroku and others, and to Yakuo, Kannon and others—though the words of these



The elders of the Ainu, the indigenous people of Hokkaido, Japan, photographed in 1908. The Ainu, as a minority, have been the target of discrimination by the Japanese.

sutras still remain, they will no longer serve as medicine for the illnesses of living beings. The illnesses will be too grave, and these medicines too ineffectual. At that time, Bodhisattva Jogyo [Superior Practices] will make his appearance in the world and bestow upon all living beings of Jambudvipa the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo. (MW-6, 125)

This is the Mystic Law that is eternity itself. It is the original seed that has enabled all Buddhas throughout time and space to attain enlightenment. And the Daishonin says that if we embrace this original seed of enlightenment, “it is not difficult to become a Buddha [equal to Shakyamuni]” (MW-1, 259). This is a statement of no small significance.

When we truly have confidence in these words, we

will never become deadlocked in life. We are Buddhas. We cannot possibly fail to be victorious. There’s no such thing as a downcast Buddha. Nor is there such a thing as a Buddha who is defeated by hardship and loses hope.

Whatever happens, it is vital that we muster our courage and continue advancing, reminding ourselves: “That’s right! I have the Mystic Law! There is no difficulty that I can’t overcome!” As long as we possess this fighting spirit, our lives will develop greatly in accord with the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment, in that our desires and sufferings work as fuel for our development.

A seed may be a tiny thing. But a single seed contains all the necessary elements to produce a towering tree more than a hundred feet tall. This is the mystery of the seed. When we plant the original seed of Buddhahood,

CORBIS/HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION



A group of AINU women performing a traditional dance. They have tattooed lips, a ritual that is carried out during childhood. President Ikeda praises the hospitality of the soldiers of AINU descent shown to the locals of Okinawa during WWII. He comments: "I think this was because they themselves had experienced discrimination as a minority. . . . This is probably why they treated the people of Okinawa kindly and saved the lives of many."

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in our heart and cultivate it, we develop boundless good fortune and wisdom.

Giving a lecture on the Daishonin's teachings, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda would often say, "If the benefit that each of you has received is the size of one's little finger, then the benefit I have received is large enough to fill this entire hall." My feelings are exactly the same.

The Heart Determines Everything

SAITO: President Ikeda, you have received honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from nearly sixty universities around the world. In the ordinary course of affairs, for someone to receive so many accolades would be unimaginable.

IKEDA: I hope that people will view this as symbolizing

the good fortune and benefit of all SGI members throughout the world.

I did not go to college. Instead, I dedicated my youth to President Toda. Because of the failure of President Toda's businesses, I changed my plans to attend college. I told him: "Please don't worry about anything. I will work; I will fix everything. So please rest assured." And I have done everything I said I would. I turned the Soka Gakkai, which had fallen upon the hardest of times, into a worldwide organization. I have made the greatness of President Toda and President Makiguchi known to the world.

I believed that to protect President Toda was to protect kosen-rufu and to protect Buddhism. There was no other way. I thoroughly devoted myself to the path of mentor and disciple.

I am confident that the cause I made to support President Toda rather than pursue my plans to attain an



CORBIS/BRIAN VIKANDER

Statue of the heroes of the Long March in Beijing, China. Under the severe circumstances of the Long March (1934-35), Zhou Enlai shared his personal rations with the troops, saying, "I am here thanks to everyone."

education has now come back to me in the form of these honorary degrees from universities across the globe. The law of cause and effect is unfailing.

SUDA: This is truly a drama of actual proof of Buddhism that will be eternally remembered by generations to come.

IKEDA: The heart is key. Because of his spirit in making an offering of a mud pie to Shakyamuni, the boy Virtue

Victorious [Jpn Tokusho Doji] was reborn as the great king Ashoka.

ENDO: A little earlier we talked about not adorning the self. Everything depends on the state of one's heart, on whether one has genuine strength as a human being.

IKEDA: We should carefully consider the significance of Nichiren Daishonin's having been born into the lowest rung of the society of his day. If he were to have expounded a Buddhist teaching "according to the minds of others," he might have been better off born as a member of the nobility or of a powerful family.

But he was born as the "son of a commoner" (MW-5, 293). The fact that he was not a member of a noble family helps explain why he encountered such a succession of incredible persecutions.

ENDO: The Daishonin says of himself, "Nichiren... in this life was born poor and lowly to a *chandala*⁴ family" (MW-1, 37).

IKEDA: To help people form a connection with Buddhism even through a reverse relationship, he boldly took on and endured great persecution. Forgetting this immense compassion, there were some that treated the Daishonin with contempt. He says: "There are also those who appeared to believe in Nichiren but began doubting when they saw him persecuted. They have not only forsaken the Lotus Sutra but actually think themselves wise enough to instruct Nichiren" (MW-1, 42). This is deplorable. Without the path of mentor and disciple, there is no Buddhism.

SAITO: The Daishonin says of the end that these arrogant people will meet, "the pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the depths of hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers" (MW-1, 42). This is an unchanging principle; one that will apply as much



CORBIS/DAVID MUEENCH

Giant Sequoias in Parker Grove, California. President Ikeda states: "A 'seed' may be a tiny thing. But a single seed contains all the necessary elements to produce a towering tree more than a hundred feet tall. . . . When we plant the original seed of Buddhahood, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in our heart and cultivate it, we develop boundless good fortune and wisdom."

in the future as it does today.

IKEDA: In any event, ordinary people understand the hearts of ordinary people. A citizen truly understands the feelings of other citizens. The Daishonin dared to be born as member of the most abused and reviled class, as the son of a *chandala*.

This summer will mark the fifty-third anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I heard that when the fighting moved to Okinawa, Japan's southernmost island, the locals there experienced severe discrimination at the hands of many Japanese officers and soldiers [who had in large part been mobilized from other parts of Japan]. The only soldiers who did not abuse them were those who were aboriginal Ainu from northernmost Hokkaido.

SAITO: I too have heard unbelievable, sickening accounts of how the people of Okinawa were treated by the Japanese army. There are reports of soldiers murdering local citizens on suspicion of their being spies, simply because they were heard speaking in the Okinawan language, which to the soldiers was unintelligible.

IKEDA: But the soldiers of Ainu descent treated the locals differently. I think this was because they themselves had experienced discrimination as a minority. It seems that they were themselves discriminated against and mistreated even by the army. That is probably why they treated the people of Okinawa kindly and saved the lives of many. They were truly noble.

SUDA: That's very moving. To stand eternally on the side of the people, eternally to stand on the side of those being mistreated—I think that this is true humanity.

Zhou Enlai: "I Am Here Thanks to Everyone"

IKEDA: True humanity is true Buddhism.

When a delegation of the Buraku⁵ Liberation League of Japan visited China (in 1962), Chinese premier Zhou Enlai met with them. The head of the delegation thanked him for taking time out of his busy schedule to meet with them, to which Zhou replied: "What are you saying? A premier who would not receive the most mistreated people in Japan, the people who are suffering the greatest hardship, on their visit to this country is no premier of China."⁶

At the time of the historic Long March (1934–35), Zhou shared his personal rations with the troops. When his party advanced into the wetland region of Szuchuan province, they had nothing to eat. For emergency rations, Zhou had a sack of beef that had been boiled and dried, and a sack of barley flour. It was something that could be hydrated with cold or hot water and eaten anywhere.

The soldiers, who had no such provisions, at first resorted to eating rats, leaves and the roots of plants as they went along. As a result, they all began to suffer from malnutrition. Seeing what was happening, Zhou directed that the beef be distributed to the soldiers, and had his rations divided among everyone.

After a while, they again faced starvation. It was so bad that people who seemed healthy enough one evening would be found dead the following morning. Zhou immediately told his escort to distribute the barley flour. But the man did not ensure that everyone received a portion. When Zhou reproached him for failing to follow his directions, the man protested, "If I follow your orders, what will you have to eat, Sir?" Premier Zhou drew close and, gazing into the soldier's face said: "I am here thanks to everyone. If the life of even one more person can be saved, the justice of the revolution can be that much more securely demonstrated. I entreat you to do as I have asked." Having no alternative, the escort divided the remaining rations among all the soldiers. Luckily the company finally reached a village four or five days later.

This is what it means to be a leader. This is what it means to truly treasure one's companions. The bonds of people who are united behind the same goal are more profound even than the bonds of parent and child or between siblings. These are bonds not of blood, but of justice—of people fighting side by side to realize a common goal. To cultivate and maintain such bonds is proof of one's humanity.

Leaders exist solely because of the people they lead. A genuine leader is someone who takes the initiative and selflessly devotes himself or herself to achieving some goal. There are, however, far too many "leaders" in the world who use the people to realize personal gain. The SGI exists to battle such evil tendencies. Without opposing the "enemies of the people," one cannot attain Buddhahood. Without battling the "one great evil," without directly confronting the "enemy of Buddhism," *kosen-rufu* cannot be achieved. As the Daishonin strictly states, "One must set aside all other



GREGORY NAKASUJI

Second Soka Gakkai president Toda said, "I declare those great champions of propagation who carry on the Daishonin's work will appear now without fail. I am firmly convinced that these people will put the Daishonin's prophecy into practice."

affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law" (MW-5, 103).

SAITO: Among many kinds of slanders, the offense of slandering the votary of the Lotus Sutra is particularly grave. The Lotus Sutra says that the offense of slandering the sutra's votary in the age after Shakyamuni's passing is even greater than the offense of continuously slandering the Buddha for an entire kalpa.

The offense of slandering an ordinary person who is dedicated to the practice of the sutra is even greater than the offense of slandering the Buddha who preaches the Law. This may seem odd on the surface, for it is impossible to grasp without realizing that it is common people in the Latter Day who directly propagate the Mystic Law, the ultimate source of enlightenment for all people.

IKEDA: That's it exactly. Of course, while the votary of

the Lotus Sutra specifically refers to Nichiren Daishonin, we who follow the Daishonin are likewise votaries of the Lotus Sutra, and are leading the most noble of lives.

President Toda said:

I declare those great champions of propagation who carry on the Daishonin's work will appear now without fail.... In kuon ganjo, these great champions of propagation are Buddhas of absolute freedom embodying the oneness of parent and child; in the intermediate term of the assembly at Eagle Peak, they stood beside Bodhisattva Superior Practices as his attendants; and in the near term, during the Daishonin's lifetime, they were without a doubt people who made a profound vow of mentor and disciple. I am firmly convinced that these people will put the Daishonin's prophecy into

practice with their lives, will solidly vow to see to it that the original Buddha endowed with the three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent does not become a Buddha whose prophecies are not fulfilled; and they will surely exert themselves in their practice with the spirit of not begrudging their lives.

The fact that the Soka Gakkai has emerged at this time [700 years after the time of the Daishonin] is cause for great joy!

As a human being, there is no more honorable way of life, no life of greater good.

The Age of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth Has Arrived!

ENDO: As SGI members, each of us has been born with a tremendous mission. The “Supernatural Powers” chapter describes the activities of Bodhisattva Superior Practices as follows:

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.
(LS21, 276)

Japan and the world are today cloaked in an impenetrable darkness. I think that for precisely this reason, our time has now arrived.

IKEDA: That’s right. The deeper the darkness, the more brightly shines the Buddhism of the sun.

SUDA: This is our opportunity.

IKEDA: It’s a chance for us to help countless people become truly happy. Kosen-rufu means enabling people “in the end to dwell in the single vehicle” (LS21, 276) and to take faith in the Mystic Law. In “The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin says, “‘in the end’ means kosen-rufu” (GZ, 772). It was for this reason that we were born in this world according to our own wishes. We need to live out our lives to the fullest as we work to fulfill our mission.

When our heart blazes with the spirit to “exert one-

self bravely and vigorously” (LS2, 23), ageless and immortal vitality wells forth. “Bravely and vigorously” means immense courage. “Exert” has two meanings: pure, in the sense of unsullied; and incessant, in the sense of continuous activity and unswerving advancement. The Daishonin says, “Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the practice of ‘exerting’ oneself” (GZ, 790).

We must never stop challenging ourselves; the “supernatural powers of the Thus Come One” are manifested through such faith. The Daishonin says, “If you exert a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment” (GZ, 790). It comes down to “exerting a hundred million eons of effort in each moment” — not just one or two year’s effort. This means racking one’s mind and exerting oneself wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu. This is what is meant by “as he passes through the world” (LS21, 276). Those who take action in society are the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have received the transmission of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter. They are people who, without putting on airs or adorning themselves, work tirelessly in the organization for kosen-rufu, that is, directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin.

Such people are more respectable than any dignitary or celebrity. They are the “emissaries of the Buddha” in the Latter Day of the Law. And they themselves are Buddhas.

To be continued

Footnotes

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 page number.
2. *Makashikan Bugyoden Guketsu* (Annotations on T’ien-t’ai’s *Maka Shikan* [Profound Concentration and Insight]), vol. 5.
3. “Through accumulated practice” refers to the process of transforming from the Buddha of Inferior Manifestation expounded in Hinayana Buddhism, to the Buddha of Superior Manifestation in Mahayana Buddhism, to the Buddha of Beneficence in the teachings specifically targeted at bodhisattvas, and to the Buddha of Absolute Freedom in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.
4. *Chandala* (Candala): A Sanskrit term designating the lowest social class, comprised of those professions required to kill living creatures. The Daishonin was born to the family of a fisherman.
5. *Buraku*: Originally referring to people living in a small village or hamlet, but came to mean the largest discriminated-against population in Japan. They are not a racial or a national minority, but a caste-like minority among the ethnic Japanese.
6. *Saichiro Uesugi, Jinken wa Sekai o Ugokasu* (Human Rights Move the World) (Osaka: Kaiho Shuppansha, 1991), pp. 127–28.

DENMARK'S FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MOVEMENT LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

SGI's "Peace Through Education" Exhibit Stirs Interest Among Educators

The Folk High School movement is deeply rooted in Denmark. When Masaaki Kamio (now leader of SGI-Denmark) arrived in Denmark, he happened to start spreading Buddhism in the area where this movement was born. He arrived on August 13, 1965, young, full of hope and penniless. This meant he couldn't leave, and fortunately he was able to find work and lodging in a farmhouse in Rødding in southern Jutland. He entered a primary school at the age of 21 and learned Danish together with young children. In October 1967, he entered the Askov Folk High School where his roommate was Jan Møller. Jan became the first Dane to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Impressed by the mystic, yet logical aspects of Buddhism, Jan made up his mind to start practicing. He naturally trusted the process of changing one's inner self, which corresponds, to the Buddhist concept of human revolution.

Gradually more Danish people learned about Buddhism, and it was eventually possible to form a chapter in Denmark in 1974 with five native Danish members and several Japanese. Now there are five chapters, and meetings are held weekly in seven different cities. Once a year members from throughout Denmark



The Askov Folk High School

Photos courtesy SGI Graphic

gather for the Danish Summer Course, held in 1999 at the Askov Folk High School with the theme, "Creating Hope Through Action and Dialogue."

A key attraction for Danish people is that Buddhism stresses inner-motivated action rather than an outwardly imposed system of morals.

The Danish Folk High School tradition has led people to place great stress on inner motivation. N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), educator, priest, author, poet and member of the Danish parliament, advocated education using "the living word." He believed education should not be reserved for an elite but made available to all people. If Denmark was to become a genuine democracy, ordinary people needed more education.

Grundtvig's young disciple Christen Kold (1816–70) started a boarding school at which adult farmers could learn through the living, spoken word in 1851. Despite their lack of formal education, people could learn about life, culture and Danish society. He created an open university at which people from all levels of society could meet, hold discussions and study. This idea spread all over the country, and today there are ninety-six Folk High Schools in Denmark. To study at one of these schools is seen as a chance for training, and so the majority of the Danish population joins a Folk High School at least once in their life.

While there is a wide range of Folk High Schools



A painter at the turn of the century depicts the Grundtvigian "living word" lecture milieu in full flower, with the Rødding Folk High School Principal Ludvig Schrøder on the rostrum.



The SGI Nordic Culture Center in Copenhagen

offering different political and religious perspectives and different subjects for study, the spirit common to all these schools has always been the wish to create a living, democratic society based on dialogue. It can certainly be said that this goal has been achieved. Now there is a strong tradition of dialogue instead of dispute in matters related to politics and employment in Danish society and no deep polarization between different groups of people.

The level of education is very high, and an important part of the primary school curriculum is caring about democracy. Many adults still study in evening schools or at courses paid for by their employers—they continue to develop themselves throughout their lives. The famous Danish welfare system initiated in the 1930s is based on the humanism of Grundtvig. His vision was of a society where “few have too much and fewer have too little.”

Inspired by Grundtvig and Kold among others, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), the Japanese educator and founder of the Soka Gakkai, created his value-creating philosophy of education. Like Grundtvig, Makiguchi emphasized the importance of education for ordinary people and that education provides a vital basis for a prosperous and peaceful society.

During the recent conflict in Yugoslavia, the members of SGI-Denmark wished to provide a Buddhist perspective on how to solve the greatest scourge of humanity: war. To this end, they created an exhibition on Makiguchi and his philosophy, entitled “Peace Through Education.” Members gave their time for many weeks to help realize this exhibition. They prepared posters, pamphlets, displays, a slideshow, mounted photos and succeeded in opening the exhibit on May 30 in the Nordic Culture Center in Copenhagen. In just one week 500 people visited, including many teachers and educators.

But that was just the beginning.

The Danish Folk High School movement is at a crossroads in its history. After 150 years of creating a Danish folk spirit, the question many people are asking now is “What next?” Increasing globalization, including the immigration of people from other cultures, has made Danish thinking alone insufficient in today’s world. This is a problem for the Folk High Schools, which is manifested in decreasing numbers of students in recent years. Some schools have had to close.

At the same time, the rapid pace of globalization is causing feelings of insecurity and rootlessness, and there is a need to address these issues in Danish society. It may be that the future task of the Folk High School movement lies here—and SGI-Denmark is ready to support and cooperate in whatever way possible.

Henning Dochweiler, principal of the Askov Folk High School, the third oldest Folk High School in the country (opened in 1865), opened the Makiguchi exhibition. Mr. Dochweiler gave a lecture at the Nordic Culture Center on the following day, in which he analyzed the opposing trends of globalization and removal of borders on the one hand and increasing nationalism and discrimination on the other. He urged close cooperation between the Folk High School movement and



The “Peace Through Education” exhibit

SGI-Denmark. He commented that the SGI, as an organization with experience in international dialogue based on exchange among ordinary people, and as a

movement for peace based on education, could be a great inspiration to the Folk High School movement at this crossroads.

He revealed that he hoped the Askov Folk High School would be able to establish a European institute for international dialogue among ordinary people.

In August and September 1999, the exhibition “Peace Through Education” was shown at the Askov Folk High School.

It is the goal of SGI-Denmark to introduce this exhibition to all Folk High Schools in Denmark and in this way start to contribute to the dialogue on the revitalization of the Danish Folk High School movement. □

Courtesy SGI Graphic



SGI President Ikeda and President Narayanan with Indian First Lady Usha Narayanan in New Delhi, October 22, 1997.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY MEETINGS WITH LEADING WORLD FIGURES

President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of India

By SGI President Ikeda

I seem to have a mysterious affinity with President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of India. When I visited Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi in February 1979, Mr. Narayanan, then vice-chancellor of the prestigious institution, greeted me warmly.

He said to me with a friendly smile, “Please be professor for a day.” When I replied, “No. Please allow me to be student for a day,” his smile broke into laughter. His personal warmth and openheartedness shone from his smile.

Four young women who were studying Japanese language at the university sang with beautiful pronuncia-

tion the well-loved Japanese songs—“Sakura Sakura” (Cherry Blossoms) and “Haru ga Kita” (Spring Has Come)—and the audience clapped in time with the music. When I made the “urgent motion” to the teaching staff, suggesting that the girls be given the highest marks for their Japanese, Vice Chancellor Narayanan and their fellow students applauded enthusiastically.

One student raised his hand and said he had a question for me. He explained that he was studying for his doctoral degree, and his subject of research was the Soka Gakkai. Mr. Narayanan quipped that I was being studied and asked me to assist the student.

I was immediately impressed by Mr. Narayanan’s character, his kindness, and his quick intelligence. He had only recently taken the post of vice-chancellor. Up to that time, he had been a diplomat, serving as India’s ambassador to such countries as Thailand, Turkey and China. Just

after he married, early in his diplomatic career, he did a stint of duty at the Indian Embassy in Tokyo.

“In fact,” he mentioned the second time we met in December 1995, “my eldest daughter was born in Tokyo.” That conversation took place sixteen years after our first encounter at Jawaharlal Nehru University. I received word from him: “I am coming to Japan, and I’d like to see you.” We met in Tokyo. At that time, he was vice-president of India.

He shared a story about Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: “My daughter was eight years old. She had won first prize in a poetry contest, and she was to receive her award directly from Prime Minister Nehru. But just then I received notice that I was to be transferred overseas, and since my daughter would be coming with me, she would miss the award ceremonies.

“We visited the prime minister’s residence just before we left, and before the award ceremony was to be held. Prime Minister Nehru remarked he had seen the poem, saying to my daughter, ‘Very good! Very good! I’ve already read it in the magazine!’ There were many stu-

dents at his residence that day, and he called my daughter up to stand beside him and recite her poem to those present. It was like her own private award ceremony.”

Mr. Narayanan told me: “The thing I found most impressive about the prime minister was his humanity.”

There are those who lead by force and those who lead by their humanity. Prime Minister Nehru, a direct disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, knew the subtlest workings of the human heart.

President Narayanan has described himself as “one who has sprung from the grass-roots of our society and grown up in the dust and heat of this sacred land.”¹ He was born in 1921 in a small village in the southernmost state of Kerala. He was from the most downtrodden class that for centuries had been oppressed and discriminated against and treated as if they were less than human.

Mr. Narayanan was the fourth of seven children. The family was destitute and starving. They had no bathing facilities in their home. Yet he walked seven kilometers



CORBIS/ Brian Viskander

Worshippers on the river Ganges — Mahatma Gandhi abhorred the system that defined a certain group of people as “untouchable.” He denounced it as a creation of the devil.

to and from school each day. During the rainy season, the mud came up to his ankles. On those long walks, he was always reading. He couldn't afford to buy books, so he would devour newspapers or books he came upon, taking careful notes.

Appreciating how fond he was of study, Mr. Narayanan's elder siblings gave up their schooling so that he might have a chance to get an education. But even then the family often could not afford to pay his tuition. He was punished for this by being forced to stand outside the classroom, but he refused to let this humiliation defeat him. He would simply strain to hear every word of instruction going on inside. He recalls with a smile that it was "good training." A diplomat must be thick-skinned, and being forced to stand in front of his classmates when he was young was a useful exercise.

He's a person of great inner strength. He's even cheerful when recounting stories of his hardships.

Apparently he rarely speaks about his childhood, but his feelings for the exploited and underprivileged burn with the power of a volcanic force deep within his breast. After our meeting in Tokyo, he attended an international conference in Hiroshima, where he shared his heartfelt sentiments. "What humanity needs most," he declared, "is sympathy for the suffering of others. We need to care for others as if they were ourselves, so that when we witness some cruel act or tragic occurrence, wherever it may have taken place, we think, 'That could have been me.' We need education that fosters in people such compassion and fellowship." In his speech, he also quoted Gandhi's ambition "to wipe every tear from every eye." All leaders, he insists, must regard the suffering of any other person as their own suffering. I am reminded of the determination of my own mentor Josei Toda "to eradicate all misery from the face of the earth."

Mahatma Gandhi abhorred the system that defined a certain group of people as "untouchable." He denounced it as a creation of the devil. He loved these people at the very lowest rung of society, renaming them the Harijan, or "Children of God." Gandhi said that while he did not particularly wish to be reborn, if he were, he would choose to be reborn as an untouchable so that he might share the pain, sadness and insult they bear.

The young Mr. Narayanan was able to continue his studies with the assistance of the Harijan Scholarship that Gandhi had established. He worked and worked and finally graduated from university at the top of his

class. He did brilliantly in school, but career success did not follow easily, perhaps because of his caste.

He left his hometown to become a journalist. One of the highlights of this period of his life was an opportunity to interview Gandhi. He was nervous and excited when he arrived. His timing was bad: Gandhi was right in the middle of lunch; most of India's top leaders were in the room with him. To cap it all, Gandhi was observing a day of silence as part of his religious practice. Yet Gandhi gladly responded to the inexperienced young journalist's questions, jotting his replies down on paper.

When Mr. Narayanan completed his interview and was about to leave the room, one of those in attendance called out to him to stop. Gandhi had instructed that he be given a meal before he left. Mr. Narayanan was astonished by this compassion. Surely Gandhi had felt bad that he was eating his lunch while this thin, hungry young man had asked questions. That kindness, that consideration for others, impressed the twenty-four-year-old Mr. Narayanan even more than Gandhi's thoughtful replies to his interview questions. No doubt because he had suffered much indignity from his childhood, the young journalist was deeply sensitive to others' feelings. He would never forget Gandhi's kindness.

Who could have ever imagined that a half-century later, that young man would become the president of India? In July 1997, in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence, he became the republic's tenth president. Gandhi had once expressed the wish that the president of independent India be selected from among the most oppressed and discriminated-against class; now his wish had come true. From the standpoints of learning, character and experience, there was no better choice. Mr. Narayanan won ninety-five percent of the votes cast.

Three months after he had taken office, I visited him at the presidential offices in New Delhi. "Thank you for coming," he said. He welcomed me with the same warmth as always, hurrying over to shake my hand.

President Narayanan's term in office lasts until 2002. I shared with him my conviction that in the twenty-first century, India, a country of great spiritual richness, will play an increasingly important role in world affairs. I believe, I said, that from the broad perspective we will see the emergence of a triumvirate of pivotal nations: the United States, China and India. When the world was dominated by two powers, the

United States and the Soviet Union, we had the Cold War. When there are two centers of power, they inevitably polarize into opposition. But we are entering an age of three centers of power, which will lead the world toward harmony and stability.

When I referred to the ancient Chinese historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to support my case, the learned Dr. Narayanan said he knew the work well. He smiled and said, “I agree with your vision, President Ikeda.”

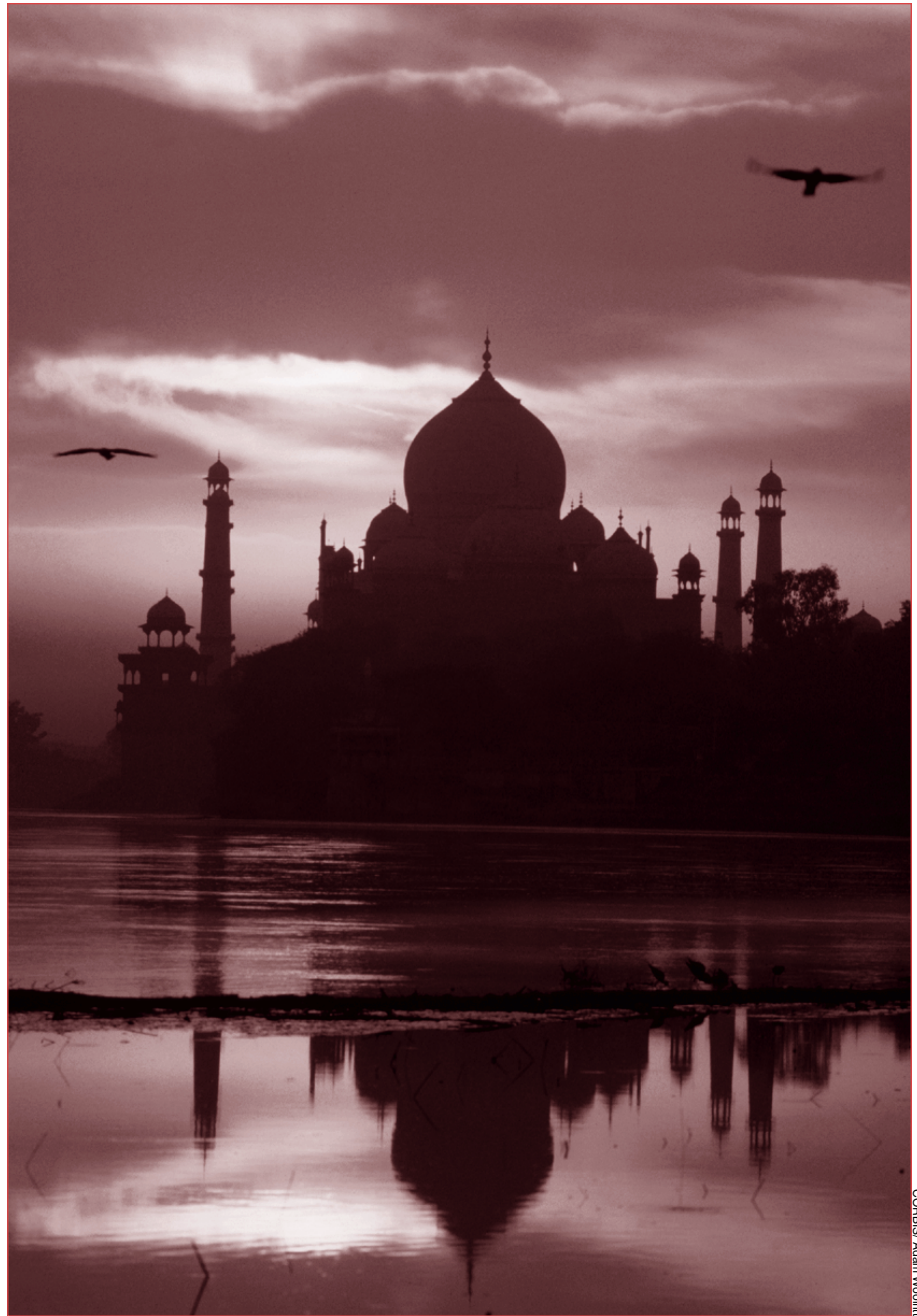
I praised him for the profound content of his speeches. “The truth is,” he said, “I sometimes borrow from your writings for ideas.”

“I know you’re just joking,” I said, “but thank you for the kind words.”

“No, it’s true!” he insisted. I couldn’t help but recall our friendly repartee at Jawaharlal Nehru University so many years before.

Whenever I meet Mr. Narayanan, our conversation turns to young people. Most likely because the Indian president wishes to pay back the support and encouragement he received from Gandhi and Nehru in his own youth, he is always concerned about the education and development of the youth. In his inauguration speech, he said that it is inevitable that India’s youth should show “indifference” and become “cynical” when they are confronted with the corruption of the nation’s leaders. He vigorously urged all to remember that, unless they set an example for the youth, India’s future will be in jeopardy.

And in that same speech, he again recalled the fer-



Sunset over the Taj Mahal—a mausoleum at Agra, India, built around 1630–48 by Shah Jahan for one of his wives. In his conversation with India’s President Kocheeril Raman Narayanan, SGI President Ikeda says that the conversation eventually turns to young people. “Most likely because the Indian president wishes to pay back the support and encouragement he received from Gandhi and Nehru in his own youth.”

vent wish of Mahatma Gandhi to “wipe every tear from every eye.” For President Narayanan, a leader is a person who is willing to give his or her life for the sake of the poor, the oppressed, and the exploited. □

1. Presidential inauguration speech delivered on July 25, 1997.

Living Buddhism Index for 1999

Article **Month/Page**

SGI President Ikeda

New Year’s Message: Aspiring for Inner GlobalizationJan/2
 Toward a Culture of Peace: A Cosmic View—1999 Peace ProposalMay/18

Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra

(34) The “Life Span” Chapter—Testimony to the Eternity of lifeJan/34
 (35) The “Life Span” Chapter—Life After Death—Fusion with the Universal Life: The Meaning of Eternal Life ...Feb/28
 (36) The “Life Span” Chapter—Life After Death—Eternally Advancing with Great Life Force:
 The Meaning of Eternal LifeMar/32
 (37) Those Who Spread the Mystic Law Accumulate the Great Life ForceApr/30
 (38) Joyfully Spreading the Mystic LawJune/20
 (39) Those Who Spread the Mystic Law Receive the Great Benefit of the Purification of the Six Sense Organs ...July/24
 (40) A Struggle Against the Forces of ArroganceAug/16
 (41) The Transmission to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth: A Solemn Ceremony of Kosen-rufuSept/25
 (42) The Essential Transmission to the Bodhisattva Superior PracticesOct/22
 (43) The “Supernatural Powers” Chapter Is an Overture to the Triumphant Advancement of the People ...Nov/28
 (44) The Implicit Teaching Is “Buddhism for the People”Dec/19

Recollections of Leading World Figures

Ba Jin, President of the Chinese Writers AssociationJan/22
 Dr. David L. Norton, Professor of Philosophy of the University of DelawareFeb/14
 A Great Leader of the People—Zhou EnlaiMar/10
 Forbes Munro—Clerk of Senate of the University of Glasgow, ScotlandApr/16
 A Builder of World Peace: Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Former United Nations Secretary GeneralMay/44
 Raisa Gorbachev, Former Soviet First LadyJuly/46
 King Juan Carlos I of SpainAug/42
 Valentina Tereshkova: First Woman in SpaceSept/45
 Elsie Tu—A Champion of the Common PeopleNov/44

President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of IndiaDec/39

Unforgettable Friends From Around the World

Dr. David Chappell: Scholar of BuddhismJune/8

Publisher's Commentary

Victory Through Trust and FriendshipJan/4

Beyond the BasicsFeb/4

Living What We TeachMar/3

Be Extraordinary Ordinary PeopleApr/4

An Antidote to ViolenceMay/4

The New Millennium Is NowJune/4

The Time Is RightJuly/3

The True Image of BuddhismAug/3

Freeing Mother EarthSept/4

Time to Test OurselvesOct/3

Creating Harmony and TrustNov/4

A Textbook of FaithDec/4

The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue

(11) The Priesthood Wartime BehaviorJan/26

(12) The Soka Gakkai's Postwar ExpansionFeb/20

(13) The Second Chapter of Kosen-rufu and the Temple IssueMar/18

(14) Toward the Liberation of Nichiren Daishonin's BuddhismApr/20

(15) The SGI's Conferral of the GohonzonJune/32

(16) The Destruction of the Grand Main TempleJuly/39

The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin

Letter to the Mother of Oto Gozen (1)Jan/10

Letter to the Mother of Oto Gozen (2)Mar/4

Letter to Lord TokiMay/6

On My SicknessJuly/7
 Gift of An Unlined Robe (1)Sept/6
 Gift of An Unlined Robe (2)Nov/8

Features

Global Friendships for Peace: SGI Activities ReportJan/46
 The Meaning of Slander and Religious ToleranceFeb/8
 People With Faith and Creativity Vital for AmericaMar/48
 Global Friendships for Peace: SGI Activities ReportMay/48
 Soka University, Aliso Viejo: Cornerstone Laid for LibraryJune/46
 The Global Significance of the Lotus SutraJune/11
 Don't Foul Out of the Game of LifeJuly/10
 The Courage to Respect All People—Learning From Bodhisattva Never DisparagingAug/8
 The Lotus Sutra and the Twenty-first CenturyAug/30
 Crossing the Bridge to Hope—School Kids Create Mural That Honors Diversity and SGI President's Poem ..Aug/48
 Seeking Our True Roots—The Campaign Against ViolenceAug/46
 The Earth Charter—Can We Free Mother Earth?Sept/11
 Do We Need Priests?Oct/5
 Priesthood in the Post-Modern WorldOct/16
 Overcoming Pessimism with the Lotus SutraNov/12
 The Significance of Contemporary Lotus Sutra Manuscript StudiesNov/24
 The First SGI-USA Youth Grand Culture FestivalNov/48
 Foreword to The Writings of Nichiren DaishoninDec/8
 A guide to The Writings of Nichiren DaishoninDec/12
 State of the World Forum ConferenceDec/16

Making A Difference

Steering A Course Dedicated to Public Service: Larry Florin, San FranciscoApr/8
 My Ambition Is to Express Humanity Naturally and Directly: Elisabeth Augustin, AustriaApr/14
 Giving Back to Nature What She Gives to Us: Mike Mullen, Niles Canyon, CaliforniaApr/44
 Couldn't Sing to Save My Life!: Duncan Sheik, New YorkJune/42
 Bringing Hope and Healing to First Nations People: Larry Loyie, CanadaAug/40
 Building "Soka" Farms: Ellis Aferi, GhanaSept/41
 Waves of Peace and Friendship in the Caribbean: Valerie Giterson-Pantophlet and Cora ChristianSept/43
 How Pets Improve Our Quality of Life: Lee Zasloff, Davis, CaliforniaOct/38

Potters for Peace: Lynette Yetter, Eagle Rock, California	Oct/44
Sowing SEEDS for the Prosperity of India: Manu Gupta, India	Nov/20
Seeking Greater Value: Pietro Bonanomi, Switzerland	Nov/22
A Quiet Revolution on the Mountain: Marsha Erickson, Kaua'i, Hawaii	Dec/??

Gallery

Michael Goodman: The Art of Construction	Feb/44
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SGI Culture Centers

San Francisco Culture Center	Jan
New York Culture Center	Feb
Los Angeles Friendship Center	Mar
Hawaii Culture Center	Apr
Denver Culture Center	May
New England Culture Center	June
Seattle Culture Center	July
Chicago Culture Center	Aug

Historical Buddhist Figures

Mother of Oto Gozen: "My Story"	Jan/18
Toki Jonin: "My Story"	May/16

Buddhist Concepts for Today's Living

(1) The Four Virtues of the Buddha: Breaking Out of the Lesser Self	Jan/8
(2) Earthly Desires Equal Enlightenment: Taking Control of Our Lives	Feb/6
(3) What is Karma?	Apr/6
(4) The Oneness of Life and Environment	June/6
(5) Treasures of the Heart	July/5
(6) <i>Sunyata</i> : Non-substantiality	Aug/6
(7) To Open, Show, Awaken and Induce to Enter	Nov/6
(8) The Latter Day of the Law	Dec/6

A Quiet Revolution on the Mountain

by Fay Hovey

In the small seaside town of Waimea on the West side of Hawaii's island of Kaua'i, you find the road to Waimea Canyon and begin to climb up the spine of a narrow ridge clad in low brush that springs from the rust-colored earth. The misty beginnings of a valley appear on your right while on your left, the land falls away and the ocean broadens beyond the mysterious island of Ni'ihau.

Soon the air is cooler, the trees taller: acacia koa, the gnarled ʻōhia. The road winds higher still through a thickening forest where tantalizing previews of Waimea Canyon flash through the branches, taking you to Koke'e State Park and to a lush green meadow at the 3000 ft. elevation where the air is brisk and the clouds hang close. A place of rare birds, it is a unique and fragile home to native trees and plants. You have reached the site of the Koke'e Natural History Museum and the Joseph M. Souza, Jr. Research Center and Field Station, directed by SGI-USA-member Marsha Erickson.

You have stepped into a quiet revolution where since 1987, Marsha has been using her Buddhist principles and training to create a vigorous organization that continues to serve the needs of Kaua'i's visitors and residents alike. With her hardworking staff of six people and devoted volunteers, the Koke'e Natural History Museum and its environs serves to interpret the wonders of this astonishing corner of the planet in a number of significant ways.

"I like to use my skills to make dreams come true," Marsha immediately responds when asked what keeps her here in so remote a place, where the State Park falls silent each evening at dusk as visitors leave the forest to a handful of people who live "on the mountain." When she arrived at the museum, originally established in 1952, she was beginning again after founding a major art center on the island of Hawai'i. In an isolated place



Marsha Erickson and Koke'e Museum volunteers.

where there is no television reception, she settled into her house and quiet evenings of reading, contemplation, writing and working for kosen rufu with her fellow SGI-USA members on Kaua'i.

For some it might be considered a lonely life, but for Marsha, it was an opportunity to solidify her practice of this Buddhism, which she had embraced the year before. It was there, chanting in front of her Gohonzon,

that her dreams for the museum began to take shape.

"In 1989, I read an article by President Ikeda about Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator and how, in the interest of science and knowledge, he brought together the great minds of his time to challenge the prevailing beliefs about the earth and its oceans. I understood that President Ikeda was urging us to use our minds, to use dialogue in focusing on important subjects and to challenge the fears that hold us back from doing great things. I determined that, one day, we would have an inspired science center, right here in these mountains. Through my continued practice and reading of President Ikeda's articles I began to think, 'Yes, we can do this!'"

Near the busy museum that serves over 150,000 visitors to Koke'e State Park, is the old 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps Camp abandoned in 1982 during Hurricane Ewa. It consists of a series of old wooden structures that include bunkhouses and a great old-fashioned camp-style mess hall and several small cabins arranged around a swath of green lawn, bordered by great shaggy cypress trees. A real office for the museum was established in 1990 and the renovation work begun on the Research Center which would provide accommodations and library facilities for visiting scientists and forest volunteers. "We have a way to go yet," Marsha stresses. "We've begun our campaign to finish the two remaining barracks buildings. We need to raise \$500,000,

which I have never done before. Without my practice and what I have learned in SGI, I don't think I would have developed the confidence for such an undertaking. I mean, a serious Science Center, way out here?" she laughs.

"The beauty of it all is that I can't do it all by myself," she continues. "We have to proceed with unity. We have to build partnerships with others in our island community, remembering that so many times it is the small things that inspire people. At the Museum's weekly staff meetings, the first item on the agenda is appreciation. Marsha shares, "We focus on what staff members have done, and who has done us a special service so that all of us can express our thanks to that person when we speak with them. The Daishonin always began his letters with words of appreciation. President Ikeda always does this at the beginning of his speeches. It's so important to notice the things people do."

All of the programs and festivals that the Museum presents are imbued with a spirit of sincere appreciation: programs that strive to demonstrate how humans are connected to their environment. Events such as the annual "Queen Emma Festival" (which focuses on the compassionate leadership qualities of Hawaii's beloved Queen Emma who lived a life of great value in spite of great personal and national tragedies) require focused planning work and the Museum's financial commitment. These principles are reflected in the upbeat and hands-on experience of basket making using alien plant pests that plague the upland forests at the yearly "Banana Poka Round-Up." They permeate the planning of lectures, volunteer training sessions and guided walks.

"Our mission is providing the information and setting where each person can have their own dialogue with nature. We want to allow people the respite and refreshment that a walk in such a forest can provide them.

"We want to open a door to the beautiful world of nature and encourage people to discover new perspectives here," Marsha shares quietly. Using the principles of meaningful dialogue, Marsha has fostered close ties of friendship with Hawaii's State Park leadership and employees. "We have to keep it positive, asking always, how can we help?" Recently the park's leaseholder association raised money and in-kind contributions with the Museum's help to re-roof the state park's aging pavilion near the museum building. It was a community event with everyone pitching in to create the new roof where there was no state funding to do so. "Everyone's face was so happy! People are happy when they are doing something good, it shows all over their faces!" she exclaims. "Instead of complaining

about the state's lack of funding, we decided, 'We can do it!'"

Twelve years have gone by fast as Marsha and her staff have worked hard and enjoyed the pleasures of achieving together. They weathered the ravages of Hurricane Iniki in 1992, which closed down the Park for a number of months. Marsha is now a Trustee of the statewide Hawaii Museum Association and was asked by SGI to contribute her written comments at the beginning of President's Ikeda's exhibit of photographs, "Dialogues with Nature."

As a Vice Chapter Women's Division leader, Marsha makes many trips "off the mountain," driving up to ninety mile round-trips for meetings.

I use my driving time to conceptualize, to compose poetry, to think and to practice Russian. I have a deep connection to Russia in some way and plan soon to visit Moscow. I really want to write a novel that will live on in its greatness like Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. President Ikeda tells us that we should dream great dreams. I think of my mentor here on the mountain, Joe Souza, who was a visionary and hard-working man who loved the forest. Before he died, I made a promise to him to continue on with his work here. It is from him and from President Ikeda that I have learned about the relationship of mentor and disciple."

If you drive past the meadow with the Museum and the park pavilion with its brand-new roof, eventually you will come to the overlook onto the green-clad ramparts of Kalalau Valley. Small birds dart in the branches of the trees. Rolling mists play with the breezes, alternately clearing and obscuring the view. You can stand there and look down to the small crescent of white beach far below and hear the distant waterfalls singing.

In such a place, great dreams seem even more possible.

Marsha concludes, "What I am interested in these days is how to be effective. I find that the more I devote myself to kosen-rufu in every area of my life, what I think and say become so much clearer. I'm so grateful to my practice. I basically have a lazy nature but the more focused my mind becomes, the bigger my dreams are and I drop the fear. There's so much to accomplish. What happens in a person's mind is important, not their position in life. If being the director of this museum and center can help people's dreams come true, including mine, that is what keeps me here: the incredible possibilities of living in so awesome a place." □

Note: The Koke'e Natural History Museum is located in Koke'e State Park on the island of Kaua'i. e-mail: kokee@aloha.net



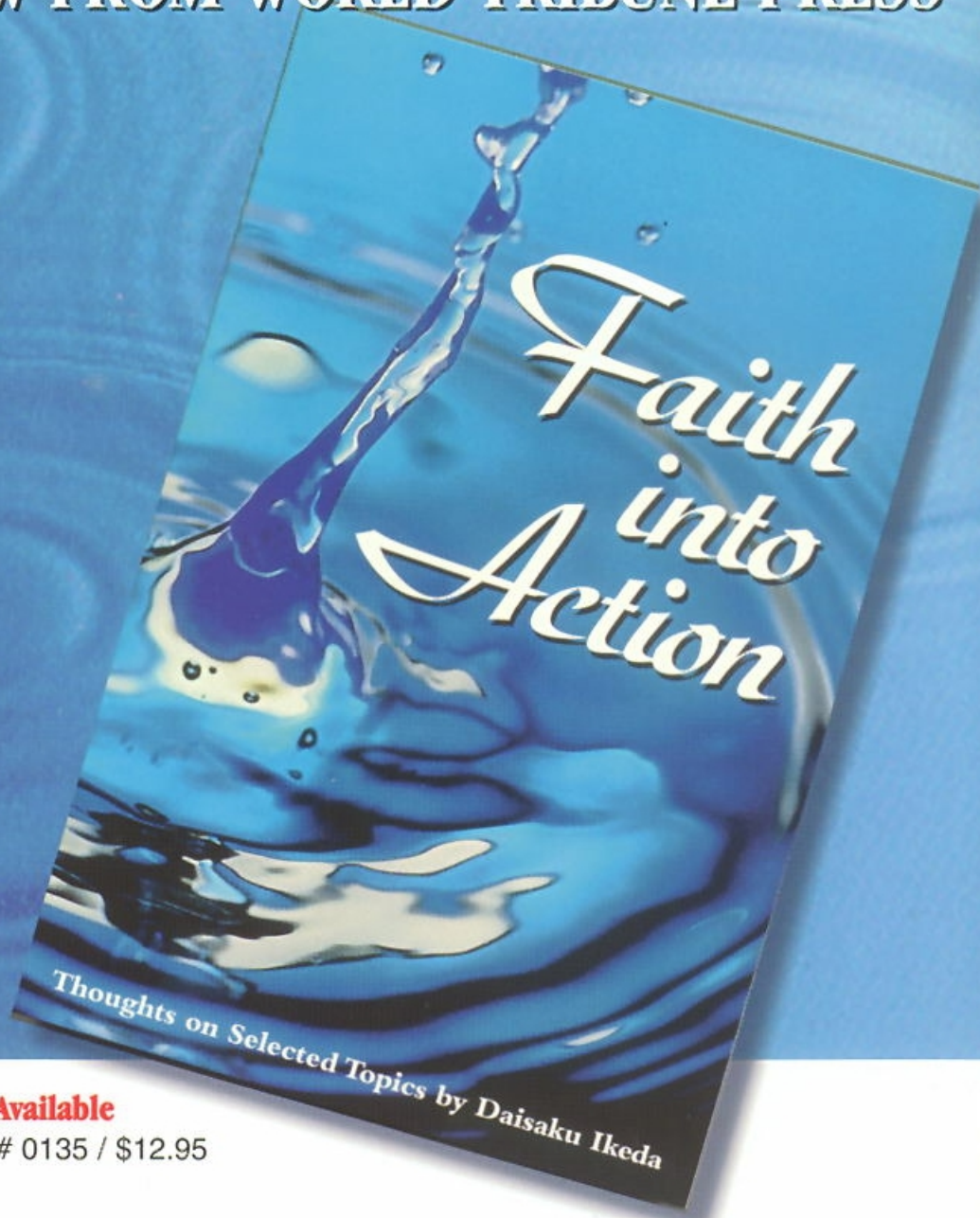
Waimea Canyon, on the island of Kaua'i, Hawaii.



From left, Fay Hovey, Kazuko Takayama, Marsha Erickson, Roselle Bailey, Setsuko Fujimoto and Minako Rabasa on the day of Japan's Princess Layoka's visit to Koke'e, September 15.

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BUDDHIST CONCEPT FOR TODAY'S LIVING (8)

The Latter Day of the Law





The SGI-USA Chicago Community Center won first place in the Mayor's Landscape Awards Program for Community Garden in the city's Region No. 3.

What is the SGI & Living Buddhism Magazine?

Living Buddhism is the study journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. SGI-USA works in association with 75 other SGI organizations comprising members in more than half the world's countries. SGI-USA activities are driven by our understanding of the inseparable link between individual happiness and the peace and prosperity of our diverse communities. Our religious teachings place the highest emphasis on the sanctity of life.

Through their Buddhist faith and practice, our members aim to improve their lives by taking up the challenge to create value, to live without fear, to take responsibility for their circumstances, to care for their families and to live with compassion for others.

What we believe...

Our core philosophy is expressed in the concept of human revolution, a process of inner transformation that centers on the idea that the causes we make through our thoughts, words and actions have influence that extends beyond their immediate context to affect the vast and complex web of life. Through undergoing our individual human revolution, we awaken to the responsibility we each have for our own circumstances and for our environment. Our inner transformation will lead us to take the actions that bring about personal fulfillment and help us contribute to the harmony and healthy development of society. These ideals are based on the Buddhist worldview of dependent origination, a concept of interrelation where all things in the realms of humanity and nature are dependent upon each other for their existence and nothing can exist in isolation.

The Buddhist tradition...

The roots of the SGI-USA worldview can be traced to the teachings of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is modern-day Nepal. His enlightenment to eternal, universal reality was most succinctly articulated

in the Lotus Sutra. Following Shakyamuni's death, the Lotus Sutra spread through Central Asia into China and Japan.

In the 13th century, Nichiren Daishonin revealed the truth hidden in the Lotus Sutra. According to Nichiren Buddhism, the workings of the universe are an expression of a single principle or Law—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, the title and essence of the Lotus Sutra. By putting their lives in rhythm with this Law, individuals can unlock their hidden potential—the Buddha nature—and achieve creative harmony with the environment. Nichiren Buddhism is a vehicle of individual empowerment—that is, individuals have within themselves, the power to transform the inevitable sufferings of life into happiness and to be a positive influence in the community.

The SGI Heritage...

The SGI organization has its origin in the educational theory of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose quest to understand the deepest meaning of life eventually led to his encounter with Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Here he discovered a philosophy that recognized and sought to develop the wisdom inherent in all human beings. The term *soka gakkai* (value-creation society) was first used by Makiguchi in 1930 when he founded the lay organization. During World War II, Makiguchi and his disciple Josei Toda were imprisoned for their opposition to the war. Makiguchi died in prison within eighteen months at the age of 73. After the war, Toda rebuilt the organization and it achieved remarkable growth until his death in 1958. On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Under his leadership, the organization has grown to its present membership of 12 million in 128 countries.

Based on the humanistic principles of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, SGI President Ikeda has founded the Soka School System which includes universities in Japan and the United States. He is also the founder of the Toda Peace Institute, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the Fuji Art Museum, and more. He is the author of numerous books that have been translated into many languages and has received world-wide recognition for his peace efforts.