

# living BUDDHISM

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"Emphasizing the importance of unity among believers, the Daishonin says, 'Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another.' The reason he gives is that 'all those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense.' In other words, he warns particularly against committing the last four of the fourteen slanders: 'despising, hating, envying and bearing grudges' against fellow believers." Page 13

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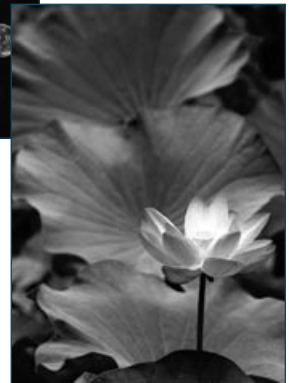
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# GLOSSARY

## Buddha

“Enlightened One.” One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

## Gohonzon

The fundamental object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, expressing in graphic form the life-state of Buddhahood, which all people inherently possess. Go means worthy of honor and honzon means object of fundamental respect.

## Karma

Sanskrit word meaning action. The life tendency or destiny each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds that exert an often unseen influence over one’s future.

## Kosen-rufu

Literally, it means to widely declare and spread (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

## Lotus Sutra

The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members’ daily Buddhist practice.

## Nam-myoho-enge-kyo

The fundamental law expounded in Nichi-

ren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it expresses the true aspect of life. Chanting it allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: Nam (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; myoho (Mystic Law), the essential law of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; rengo (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; kyo (Buddha’s teaching), all phenomena.

## Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82)

The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of devotion, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one’s mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as the universal practice for attaining enlightenment. Daishonin is an honorific title that means great sage.

## Shakyamuni

Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in India (present day southern Nepal) about twenty-five hundred years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

## Ten Worlds

Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (or Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. The Ten Worlds are also interpreted as states of life.

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# A GRAND DRAMA *is Unfolding Within* the SGI-USA

F R O M   T H E   G E N E R A L   D I R E C T O R

**G**reetings to the readers of *Living Buddhism!* Every November 18, we commemorate the founding of the Soka Gakkai. In fact, this year is the seventieth anniversary.

Congratulations! In addition, this past October, we celebrated the fortieth anniversary of President Ikeda's first visit to the United States when he formed the first districts and chapter outside of Japan. I know that in every region of the country, members have exerted themselves in conducting meetings, festivals, performances, fairs and various other events in celebration of our anniversary. Your efforts for these activities, and for the past year, have been awe-inspiring. As general director, I cannot thank you enough, so instead I will respond by working even harder for the happiness of every member.

Because we are commemorating such auspicious occasions, and because we are in the midst of preparations to open Soka University, Aliso Viejo, I have been thinking about how organizations and institutions begin and develop. Last month, I wrote that the spirit at the time of the founding determines the direction in which an institution grows. Despite good intentions, many institutions lose sight of their original purpose. As some institutions grow, the people they were created to serve ultimately come to serve them.

As we honor our past accomplishments and enter a new century, I would like to affirm that the focus of our movement is the individual human being. Nichiren Daishonin didn't teach in order to create a religious organization; he taught in order to free peo-

ple from their suffering. The SGI wasn't founded in order to build a vast organization. It was created to be a wellspring of individual development and social and cultural improvement. I feel I must stress again and again that our efforts for the happiness and growth of people are the beginning and end of our organization. The organization's growth, our efforts to educate people about peace and nonviolence, and our beautiful cultural activities — all come from this.

In the first installment of "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," President Ikeda explained that the spirit of the Lotus Sutra is one of self-transformation. This, he said, is the starting point for our SGI activities and our Buddhist practice.

Wherever we are, it is necessary to begin with the revitalization of individual human beings. That is what we mean by the reformation of society and the world through human revolution. That is the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. And actions directed toward that end, I would like to stress, represent the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 11).

I know many of you have been studying President Ikeda's recent poem, "Soar — Into the Vast Skies of Freedom! Into the New Century!" I have also been studying and speaking about this poem over and over again. A few months ago, I talked about the opening of this poem, and I would like to turn to the first stanza once again because I feel it reflects a profound truth about each of us. It is a message we should ponder deeply as we move into the new century.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth

have emerged!  
 They have arisen!  
 They have started to stir, to move! (*Songs for America*, p. 9)

I want to study this passage again because it refers to each of us and how we are leading our lives and to the eternal mission of the SGI.

I say this because we are the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. President Ikeda's passionate resolve for us to awaken to our mission is so apparent here!

At the same time, this awareness is at the very heart of our identity as an organization. In President Toda's historic essay "The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai," he wrote:

The Soka Gakkai's mission is weighty, and behind its inception there is profound significance....

From the day I was released from prison in July 1945, I could finally say in my heart to the late president: "Our lives are eternal. There is no beginning or end to them. I am now aware that we have all appeared in this world with the great mission to propagate the Lotus Sutra of the seven characters in the Latter Day of the Law. If I dare to define us with this conviction, I can say we are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth..."

This awareness gradually permeated the Soka Gakkai members, but the organization itself did not yet cast off its transient aspect and reveal its true entity. It was really up to each individual as to what it means. (*Seikyo Times*, August 1992, pp. 40–41)

**T**hat we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth is a conviction I believe many members hold. But for this to be the truth of our organization, each of us must live based on this conviction — not only within the organization, but also within our families, careers and communities. As President Toda says, for this to become reality, "it is really up to each individual."

In addition, I believe that this stanza is also in accord with a famous passage from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, in "The True Aspect of All Phenomena":

If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And if you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of Shakyamuni

Buddha from the remote past. The sutra states, "Ever since the long distant past I have been teaching and converting this multitude." There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku. (WND, 385)

In thirteenth-century Japan, gender- and class-based hierarchies were accepted as natural. However, it was also a very homogeneous society, so the problem of racial or cultural discrimination was not a pressing issue. Therefore, while in this particular passage he refers to "no discrimination" in reference to gender, I believe members of the SGI must also "transcend all differences" in race, culture, sexuality, gender and political beliefs. Whatever appearance or identity we possess in this lifetime, in our own unique way, we all equally express the Law of the universe.

This is why, in the United States, at the end of a century wracked by warfare, racial tension, the struggle for equality and devastating poverty alongside unrivaled prosperity, we must affirm that this teaching offers a sound philosophical basis for reforming society. We must awaken to the call in President Ikeda's poem — to stir, to move, to take action where we are. And by so doing, we affirm our role as Bodhisattvas of the Earth to rejuvenate society and to inspire hope in others.

There are now seventy years of Soka Gakkai history. The organization for American kosen-rufu is forty years old. As a religious movement we are still young. At the same time, we have emerged and developed during perhaps the most turbulent time in human history. We are young, but we have seen much.

Together, we are creating a great history of effort and accomplishment with our mentor. I am convinced that our wonderful history comprises the opening lines of a beautiful and grand drama yet to unfold. The past is merely a prelude! Please allow me to express my deepest appreciation to all of you for the work of the past, and the great work yet to come. Thank you all very much!



Daniel K. Nagashima  
 SGI-USA General Director

## THE *Bodhisattva*

*By Alexis Trass, staff writer*

Several years ago, my father, a twenty-seven year member of the Soka Gakkai International, asked me if I was a Bodhisattva of the Earth. I thought he was asking me a trick question. My delayed response was a tentative “yes.” Then he asked if I knew what that was, and I told him, “No, but if it’s something good, then that’s what I am.”

When I finally learned the definition, I wasn’t sure if I should indeed be calling myself a bodhisattva, much less one that emerges from the earth. I was not in denial about the kind of person I was. It was difficult for me to truly care about other people because, through my eyes, the world was a place where only the strong survived. Looking out for others was not a part of my psyche. Other than family, who was looking out for me?

President Ikeda said, “Buddhism calls a person who embodies these qualities of wisdom, courage and compassion, who strives without cease for the happiness of others, a bodhisattva” (*SGI President Ikeda’s Addresses in the United States*, p. 65). The idea of living up to those lofty qualities didn’t quite fit into my exciting, yet highly self-centered, lifestyle. But now I had something to aim for. It was thrilling to know that I didn’t always have to be angry. The process would be difficult for me because I had to look deep inside myself for altruism.

The concept of bodhisattva is familiar to the practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism as the ninth of the Ten Worlds, a way that Buddhism explains life. It is defined as those who aspire to enlightenment and are fully awakened to their mission to help others do the same. Those in this state of life understand that to be completely happy, they must endeavor to remove the pain

and suffering of others as well as lead them to happiness.

It is a human tendency that we spend our lives going back and forth between the six lower worlds, where we simply react to the environment around us. Moving up to the world of bodhisattva, and ideally enlightenment, requires tenacious effort on our part. Changing the way we live and think takes a realization of our dominant life condition and a strong determination to increase our potential for humanism—but we should take comfort in the fact that we *can* change.

I once spoke with a youth division member who, much like me, didn’t think she could possibly be a bodhisattva. She told me that she always thought of Buddhas and bodhisattvas as omnipotent beings who were not quite human. She envisioned them as nebulous figures who walked on water and floated through air.

Nothing could be further from the truth, although it’s understandable that some might feel this way, especially if they have read certain letters by Nichiren Daishonin. In “Letter to the Sage Nichimyo,” he tells the story of an ascetic, Aspiration for the Law, who peels off his skin to use as paper and rips out his bone for use as a writing utensil. He even mixes his marrow and blood to use as ink, all so he could share a verse of the sacred teaching with others.

In accounts of Shakyamuni’s previous existences, it is said that he used his body to fuel a thousand lanterns, fed his flesh to a leper and cast himself into a demon’s mouth. But don’t worry—no one will ask you to remove your skin to attain enlightenment. Ordinary people are not required to do such things. How we practice the correct teaching depends on the time and conditions in which we live. As the Daishonin says, “Of what use is it to peel off our skin when the country has

an abundant supply of paper?” (WND, 324).

These stories serve to illustrate the importance of having a seeking spirit and a practice devoted to enabling the enlightenment of others. It is not necessary to make such extreme sacrifices to attain enlightenment, but the lesson we can take from the stories is the dedication needed to practice correctly. In “The Gift of Rice,” the Daishonin explains, “Because these things are the affairs of worthies and sages, they are impossible for us to do” (WND, 1125). However, there are plenty of things we can do to display the bodhisattva within. For example, mothers and fathers express this state when they show unconditional love for their children and fiercely protect them from harm.

In a view that is a bit more contemporary, bodhisattvas are people who are wholeheartedly seeking enlightenment for themselves and others while challenging any obstacle that may confront them. In talking about the bodhisattva, Nichiren Daishonin says, “Those in the ninth world of Bodhisattva live among the ordinary people of the six paths and revere others more than themselves, giving goodness to others while reserving evil for themselves” (*Gosho Zenshu*, 433).

It’s clear from this passage that bodhisattvas are those who put the happiness of others before their own while devoting themselves to Buddhist practice with courage. Through this passage, the Daishonin invalidates the notion that a bodhisattva is someone special who lives apart from ordinary human beings.

It is interesting to note that each bodhisattva who appears in the Lotus Sutra has a name that corresponds to a special quality he or she possesses. For example, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound contributes to the happiness of others through the beautiful music he performs, helping them tap the pure spirit they possess. Bodhisattva Medicine King represents the function of healing. In other words, we can choose to display whichever qualities of the bodhisattva that will help us fulfill our missions.

Those who practice Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and share it with others establish the life condition of absolute happiness as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. A bodhisattva is not one of the statues you might see at a Buddhist temple. It is a condition inherent in our lives.

Bodhisattvas of the Earth have four virtues: true self, eternity, purity and happiness. These are developed through self-reformation. The virtue of true self is established by strengthening oneself to withstand difficulties, turning them into opportunities for growth. The virtue

of eternity is to experience freedom, through believing in the eternity of life, and to work spontaneously toward the greater happiness of society. Purity is to demonstrate true wisdom and reason, unswayed by selfish desire or ego. Happiness means to live with great joy, securely founded on the creative power of life. These qualities are developed by tapping into the ‘earth’ of Buddhahood. Bodhisattvas of the Earth are truly humane, compassionate and joyful people. (*Basics of Buddhism*, p. 26)

**N**ichiren Daishonin equated the four virtues of the Buddha’s life to the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Bodhisattva Superior Practices corresponds to true self, Boundless Practices to eternity, Pure Practices to purity and Firmly Established Practices to happiness. This suggests that the life condition of Buddhahood is expressed through the behavior of the bodhisattva.

Regarding Bodhisattvas of the Earth, President Ikeda also said, “Humanity today lacks hope and vision for the future. It is for precisely this reason that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have appeared. Without your presence, the future of humanity would be bleak and spiritual decline its destination” (July 12, 1996 *World Tribune*, p. 13). He is talking about every one of us who dedicates our lives to spreading joy in the places that we live and work and to creating peace for all humanity.

We are bodhisattvas when we do seemingly simple acts. Think of the time when a member went out of her way to comfort you during your pain. She is a bodhisattva. Or maybe someone sends you bits and pieces of President Ikeda’s guidance to encourage you. He, too, is a bodhisattva. Perhaps you have even done more than was deemed necessary to ensure the success of an activity. You are also a bodhisattva.

It is nothing other than strong faith in the Gohonzon that enables us to strengthen and expand our innate bodhisattva life condition. By exerting ourselves every day in the essentials of faith, practice and study, we bring forth the qualities that we admire in others, the kinds of qualities that put the happiness of others in the forefront. When we practice strongly as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we can say that, in essence, we are Buddhas bringing forth the power of the Mystic Law within. So yes, Dad, I can now answer with much more conviction that I am a Bodhisattva of the Earth. ☸

*Partly based on Yasashii Kyogaku (Easy Buddhist Study), published by the Seikyo Press in 1994.*

# The Prayers of the Practitioner of the Lotus Sutra

BY MAIYA MURPHY, DENVER

Over years of practice, particular passages from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin have become favorites of those who practice his Buddhism. This series introduces some of those passages and the people whose lives they have impacted, proving that it is, indeed, a living Buddhism.

And yet, though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would

go unanswered. (“On Prayer,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, 345)

**Background:** Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in 1272 while he was exiled on Sado Island. This letter was intended for Sairen-bo, a disciple and former Tendai priest, in response to questions he asked the Daishonin.

**W**hen we start practicing Buddhism, we are offered tools to forge a bulletproof happiness. It is then up to us to use those tools to construct an optimum, joyful life. There is no ambiguity in this passage from “On Prayer.” It is a definite statement of the absolute power of chanting and the potential of people. From my experience, the confidence imbued in this passage presents just the attitude with which we must strive to put this practice to work. As our path in life may not always seem so clear, the kind of focus that Nichiren Daishonin expresses here is the quickest and most successful road to completing our goals. One of my greatest struggles in practicing Buddhism is to stop my own skepticism and doubts from impeding my progress. In the muddiest of circumstances, this quote reminds me that confident, determined prayer is the eternal starting point of Buddhist practice.

I have always had a deep sense that this practice is the foundation of my life. I was born into a family of Buddhists who, through their lives, showed me the great power of Buddhism. Thanks to my parents’ amazing talent to make this practice a joy and an oasis for me, whenever faced with difficulties, I turn to the

Gohonzon. I quickly saw the great benefit of a steady practice and chanting consistently and abundantly. My first life-changing experience using this practice was, against numerous odds, to attend Yale University. Along with this great benefit came some of my greatest difficulties. But, by the end of four years, I graduated with honors, had a dear group of amazing friends, and experienced a series of life-shaping events.

During my senior year of college, I decided to apply to graduate acting school. I had always known that I wanted to be an actor. Some people tried to dissuade me from going for more schooling, saying that acting graduate school was a waste of time, and I should just go to New York and do it. But I felt that a graduate program was the best road for me. However, the programs are small, and the selection criteria sometimes incomprehensible. Some very talented actors audition for seven years before they are admitted to a program. Cherishing the great journey of getting to Yale, I knew the power of this practice and was determined to do it all over again.

I worked very hard, chanted a lot, and got called back by the majority of schools, but didn’t get in to any of the programs. I was crushed. How could this happen? I chanted intensely, worked hard and made every

In the muddiest of circumstances, this quote reminds me that confident,



determined prayer is the eternal starting point of Buddhist practice.

cause I could. I was indignant—this was outrageous! What would I do next year? Where did my prayers go?

A few months later, I moved to the New York City area, still chanting about going to graduate school. I jumped into SGI activities in New Jersey and then in New York, and felt my personal mission for kosen-rufu click into place at the Florida Nature and Culture Center Youth Division Conference. I sincerely felt that I needed to deeply connect my goals with the goal of kosen-rufu. While there, I bought the new one-volume version of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and read this passage. Still unconvinced that I shouldn't be starting my first year of graduate acting school, I pondered this quote.

For a young actor just descending upon New York, whether or not you find work that you enjoy and believe in is a crap shoot. One of the most difficult tasks is to find a group of artists who share the same attitudes, aesthetic, and goals for doing theater. I had the great fortune to do some work that I truly believed was worth doing, and found a group of artists that I see as my core artistic partners for life. It was a dream come true to consistently work with so many people I trust and that inspire me.

At the same time, I got involved with the New York SGI Youth Peace Committee, the group that originated the Victory Over Violence campaign. It was a completely new direction for me. I contributed to exhibits and events that communicate Buddhist ideas to Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. I participated in a presentation for an FNCC conference with fellow YPC members. Immediately following, in honor of United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Week, we supported several SGI-UN symposia on creating a culture of peace.

I was immensely impressed by the symposia panelists. These people who devoted their lives to humanitarian work were quiet champions. In the theater-world where performers can be all too eager to foolishly call attention to themselves, these humble servants of humanity radiated with wisdom. It was clear

to me that these people are the real stars of the global stage. During the SGI-UN nonviolence symposia, the moderator pointed out that each of the panelists had a mentor and actively worked to realize that mentor's philosophy. Their mentors included people like SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. When they spoke of their personal experiences, they each sparkled with such brilliance. This pointed to the fact that they all applied the philosophies on which they base themselves.

I continued to chant about going to graduate school, rereading about how my prayers could never go unanswered. Suddenly, I realized that since the time I had been rejected, my life had expanded greatly. I discovered my sense of mission for kosen-rufu, developed myself as an artist, found my artistic community, and discovered a new respect and passion for peace work. The scope of my life and interests was much larger than I had thought. Inspired by the panelists who have put their philosophies into practice, I realized that I actually want to be much more than an actor; I want to explore peace work, and then create a way to marry all of my interests.

As I continued chanting, summoning up conviction I wasn't sure I had, I was moved to engage my practice for others more than ever before. My prayers touched something more deeply in me than four years of school, and even a career in theater—they unearthed my bodhisattva nature and clues to my mission for kosen-rufu. This passage reminded me to go deeper than my shallow wisdom and call forth my Buddha wisdom through prayer. Even if our goals may be small, the greatness of Buddhism allows us to unearth the depth behind those desires to realize a greater happiness than we could ever fathom. In my life, the impact of striving to put a single passage into practice has had such a profound effect that I strive to follow in the footsteps of many wise, dedicated members by making my own life a map of Nichiren Daishonin's writings. ☸

# NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS

## "The Fourteen Slanders"

(*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 755-56; *Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1381-82)

The following is an excerpt from a letter Nichiren Daishonin wrote to one of his followers, which is known today as "The Fourteen Slanders." This is the study material for the December study meetings in the SGI-USA.

**I**n your letter you write: "Since I took faith in this sutra [the Lotus], I have continued to recite the ten factors of life<sup>1</sup> and the verse section of the 'Life Span' chapter and chant the daimoku without the slightest neglect. But how great is the difference between the blessings received when a sage chants the daimoku and the blessings received when we chant it?" To reply, one is in no way superior to the other. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses; a fire made by a fool is the same as a fire made by a wise man.

However, there is a difference if one chants the daimoku while acting against the intent of this sutra. There are various stages in the practice of this sutra [and various forms of slander exist accordingly]. Let me sum them up by quoting from volume five of *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra"*: "In defining the types of evil, *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* states briefly, 'Expound among the wise but not among the foolish.'<sup>2</sup> One scholar<sup>3</sup>

enumerates the types of evil as follows: 'I will first list the evil causes and then effects. There are fourteen evil causes: (1) arrogance, (2) negligence, (3) wrong views of the self, (4) shallow understanding, (5) attachment to earthly desires, (6) not understanding, (7) not believing, (8) scowling with knitted brows, (9) harboring doubts, (10) slandering, (11) despising, (12) hating, (13) envying and (14) bearing grudges.'" Since these fourteen slanders apply equally to priesthood and laity, you must be on guard against them.

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old said that all people have the Buddha nature and that, if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood. He further stated that to slight a person is to slight the Buddha himself. Thus, his practice was to revere all people. He revered even those who did not embrace the Lotus Sutra because they too had the Buddha nature and might someday believe in the sutra. Therefore, it is all the more natural to revere those priests and lay people who do embrace the sutra.

## Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter, which is now known as “The Fourteen Slanders,” to Matsuno Rokuro Saemon from his small dwelling at Mount Minobu on “the ninth day of the twelfth month in the second year of Kenji (1276).” He was 54 (or 55 according to the traditional counting of age used in Japan at the time, in which a person is considered one year old at birth). The letter was written in his third winter since moving to Minobu after his third and last remonstrance with the shogunate government concerning the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. In a letter written in the same year as “The Fourteen Slanders,” the Daishonin recounts the events that led him to live in this remote mountain area: “On the eighth day of the fourth month [in 1274], I had a meeting with Hei no Saemon.<sup>4</sup> As I expected all along, my warnings were unheeded. I now had remonstrated with the authorities three times for the sole purpose of saving Japan from ruin. Mindful that one whose warnings are thrice ignored should retire to a mountain forest, I left Kamakura on the twelfth day of the fifth month” (“Letter to Konichi-bo,” WND, 661).

The Daishonin’s life at Mount Minobu was far from a comfortable “retirement.” The chronic shortage of food and clothing and harsh living conditions, especially in winter, took a heavy toll on his health. A little more than three years after writing “The Fourteen Slanders,” the Daishonin describes his winter at Minobu as follows:

In the midst of these four mountains and four rivers is a flat area no broader than the palm of one’s hand, and here I have built a little hut to shield me from the rain. I have peeled bark off trees to make my four walls, and wear a robe made of the hides of deer that died a natural death. In spring I break off ferns to nourish my body, and in autumn I gather fruit to keep myself alive. But the snow has been piling up, and now, into the first month of the new year, it goes on snowing. My hut is seven feet in height, but the snow outside is piled up to a depth of ten feet. I am surrounded by four walls of ice, and icicles hang down from the eaves like a necklace of jewels adorning my place of religious practice, while

inside my hut snow is heaped up in place of rice.

Even in ordinary times people seldom come here, and now, with the snow so deep and the roads blocked, I have no visitors at all. So at the moment I am atoning for the karma that destines me to fall into the eight cold hells, and, far from attaining Buddhahood in this present life, I am like the cold suffering bird. I no longer shave my head, so I look like a quail, and my robe gets so stiff with ice that it resembles the icy wings of the mandarin duck (“Letter to Akimoto,” WND, 1022).

Despite the adverse circumstances at Minobu, the Daishonin made strenuous efforts to lay the groundwork for the future spread of his teaching by giving numerous lectures on the Lotus Sutra to his disciples and producing many of his most important writings such as “The Selection of the Time” (1275), “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude” (1276) and “On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice” (1277). He also continued to write many letters to his followers to encourage them in their personal circumstances.

Matsuno Rokuro Saemon, the recipient of “The Fourteen Slanders,” lived in Suruga Province. He is commonly referred to as “Lord Matsuno” or “the lay priest Matsuno.” Not much is known about his life or family background. It appears that he and his wife had many children, as can be inferred from the Daishonin’s statement that the husband had left “many sons behind” (“Wu-lung and I-lung,” WND, 1099). Among them, however, only the eldest son, Rokuro Saemon no Jo; the second son Nichiji, who became one of the Daishonin’s six senior disciples; and a daughter, who became the wife of Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro (the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu), are known. By the time Matsuno Rokuro Saemon received “The Fourteen Slanders,” he had been leading a life of retirement as a lay priest (Jpn nyudo). A lay priest was someone who was tonsured as a priest but continued to live as a layperson. It was a custom in feudal Japan, especially for those in the samurai class, to shave their heads in the manner of a priest when retiring from official secular duties. While this was a matter of social convention, for some it also expressed a deep commitment to Buddhism. It is not certain when and how

Matsuno Rokuro Saemon took faith in the Daishonin's teaching. It is speculated that he became the Daishonin's follower either through his daughter or his encounter with Nikko Shonin at Jisso-ji temple in Suruga Province. Five letters that the Daishonin addressed to Lord Matsuno are known, although one of them seems to have been written for his eldest son. It is likely that the Daishonin had never met Lord Matsuno when he wrote "The Fourteen Slanders." In another letter, dated 1276, the Daishonin writes to Lord Matsuno: "Although we have not yet met, it is wondrous that you have taken faith. It must be solely due to our karmic tie from the past" (GZ, 1379). Although Lord Matsuno probably never met the Daishonin in person, he continued to develop faith in the Daishonin's teaching.

When the Daishonin wrote "The Fourteen Slanders" in 1276, dark clouds of persecution were gathering over the his followers in Suruga Province (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture). Because of the successful propagation efforts led by Nikko Shonin, many ordinary people and priests took faith in the Daishonin's teaching. As a result, the established temples of the area began to take an oppressive stance toward the new practitioners. Keenly aware of this ominous development, the Daishonin writes in "The Fourteen Slanders": "I learned that the scholar Nichigen of Jisso-ji temple, upon becoming my disciple, was driven out by his own disciples and lay supporters, and had to give up his lands, so that he now has no place of his own" (WND, 755). The situation ultimately led to the incident known as the Atsuhara Persecution in 1279. In the ninth month of that year, twenty peasants who had converted to the Daishonin's teaching were arrested on trumped-up charges of stealing crops from the rice fields owned by Ryusen-ji temple. Later, three of them were executed, and the rest banished. Nichigen's banishment from Jisso-ji por-



Gold possessed by a "fool" is just as valuable as gold possessed by "a wise man." Nichiren Daishonin uses this analogy to illustrate his point that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo chanted by a sage is not superior to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo chanted by ourselves.

tended the violent crackdown on the Daishonin's followers to come.

The Daishonin's strict stance toward corrupt priests in "The Fourteen Slanders" clearly reflects the circumstances of the time. The priests of prominent temples in Suruga Province such as Jisso-ji and Ryusen-ji were allying themselves with the ruling Hojo clan, which also directly governed the province. These priests, fearing a loss of influence in their parishes, began to instigate official oppression against the Daishonin's followers. At that time, it was crucial for the Daishonin's followers, especially lay believers, to distinguish "the priest who preaches the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 757), or "a true priest," from the kind of priest the Daishonin harshly describes as "an animal dressed in priestly robes" or "a thief who has stolen the title of priest" (WND, 760). At the same time, the priests who were displaced on account of their conversion to the

Daishonin's teaching—such as Nichigen, who is mentioned in the letter—needed much support. Thus the Daishonin writes to Lord Matsuno: "As a lay believer, the important thing for you is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo single-mindedly and to provide support for the priests" (WND, 760). It was a time for all the Daishonin's disciples—both lay believers and priests—to unite. So the Daishonin stresses the importance of harmonious unity to Lord Matsuno: "Therefore, it is all the more natural to revere those priests and lay people who do embrace the sutra" (WND, 756). The persecution that developed in Suruga Province at that time provides an important context for us to better understand "The Fourteen Slanders."

It is thought that Lord Matsuno died on the fifteenth day of the eleventh month in 1278. He lived in a tumultuous period of religious persecution, yet he maintained pure faith in the Dai-shonin's teaching and kept supporting his teacher until the end of his life. In fact, "The Fourteen Slanders" was the Daishonin's thank-you letter for Lord Matsuno's offerings. At the beginning, he lists

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the articles he received from Matsuno: "I have received the string of coins, the horseload of polished rice, and the white quilted robe that you sent" (WND, 755). After his death, Lord Matsuno's wife, who had also never met the Daishonin, continued to exert herself in faith and provide support for the Daishonin, who could only respond with deep appreciation: "I can only marvel that you so frequently send a messenger to me, when we have never even met....How admirable!" (WND, 960).



Arrogance is the first of the fourteen slanders. The first ten slanders are primarily related to a lack of will and desire to practice what the Lotus Sutra teaches.

## The Synopsis of "The Fourteen Slanders"

This letter explains "fourteen slanders" described in the Lotus Sutra, citing Miao-lo's *Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* These slanders are referred to originally in the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Asked if there is a difference in benefits derived when a sage chants the daimoku and when an ordinary person chants it, the Daishonin answers that there is not. "However, there is a difference," he continues, "if one chants the daimoku while acting against the intent of this sutra." He explains what he means by "the intent of the sutra" by referring to the fourteen slanders, which describe various actions or attitudes that run counter to the Sutra's intent.

The first ten of the fourteen slanders concern one's attitude and action toward the Law, that is, the Buddha's teachings, and the last four, toward people who believe in and practice the Law.

Emphasizing the importance of unity among believers, the Daishonin says, "Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another." The reason he gives is that "all those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha

commits a grave offense." In other words, he warns particularly against committing the last four of the fourteen slanders: "despising, hating, envying, and bearing grudges" against fellow believers.

The Daishonin next recounts in detail the story of the boy Snow Mountains, who offers his body to a fierce demon in exchange for learning a Buddhist teaching. He encourages Matsuno to make this bodhisattva's spirit a model for his own faith and practice. He further clarifies that a priest who lacks the spirit to study and practice Buddhism diligently and to strive to refute its slanderers, is "no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes," a thief who has stolen the title of priest.

The Daishonin concludes by instructing Matsuno how to practice Buddhism as a lay believer. He encourages the lay priest to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, provide support for the priests, and, in accord with the Lotus Sutra, put effort into spreading the Law. Clearly, in light of the preceding paragraphs, "priests" here indicates not any priest, but the Daishonin's disciples—those who are practicing in accord with the spirit elucidated in this letter. (From "Background," WND, 761-62)

# Commentary

## Equality based on the universality of Buddhahood

After thanking Lord Matsuno for his offerings and commenting on the priest Nichigen's eviction from Jisso-ji temple, Nichiren Daishonin takes up Lord Matsuno's question: "How great is the difference between the blessings received when a sage chants the daimoku and the blessings received when we chant it?" (WND, 756). The Daishonin's answer is succinct: "To reply, one is in no way superior to the other. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses; a fire made by a fool is the same as a fire made by a wise man" (WND, 756). Here "a fool" refers to a person ignorant of Buddhism, and "a wise man" to a person who has a profound grasp of Buddhism. From the perspective of Lord Matsuno, "a fool" probably meant a lay believer, like himself, who would typically in medieval Japan be uneducated about Buddhism (and in most cases illiterate), and "a wise man," a priest, like the Daishonin, who had received a formal education. No matter what level of intellectual understanding of Buddhism people may possess, as long as they chant the daimoku, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, with faith in their own innate Buddhahood, they will attain the "blessings" of becoming Buddhas in this lifetime. The Daishonin clarifies the impartiality and universality of Buddhist practice — whether they are priests or lay believers, educated or uneducated. What matters is our Buddhist practice, not social status or intellectual aptitude. This Buddhist concept of equality is based on the conviction that all

people are equally endowed with the Buddha nature—the potential for Buddhahood.

The quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism — the popular Buddhist movement that developed around the beginning of the Common Era — is the capacity to recognize the Buddhahood in all people and enable them to realize their supreme potential. In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which is the ultimate Mahayana sutra, Shakyamuni explains to his leading disciple Shariputra:

You should know  
that at the start I took a vow,  
hoping to make all persons  
equal to me, without any distinction between us...  
(*The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 36)

Shakyamuni's hope to "make all persons equal" to him reflects his strong conviction that all people have the same potential to reveal their innate Buddhahood. If he had thought it impossible to "make all persons equal" to him, he would not have made such a vow. All people are potentially Buddhas — this is the foundation of the Lotus Sutra.



Philip Gauld/CORBIS

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's ability to see the Buddha nature in all people is similar to someone visualizing a giant tree within an acorn.

The Daishonin established the way for all people to reveal their innate Buddhahood. By chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon with the faith that they, too, share the same potential as Shakyamuni and the Daishonin, practitioners are carrying out a practice that crystallizes the spirit and intent of the Lotus Sutra. The key is to believe in the truth that we all have the “gold” of Buddhahood and the “fire” of enlightenment within us, as the Daishonin expresses through this metaphor. This truth, although it was self-evident to Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Daishonin, is often obscured in our minds. Like athletes in a slump, we often doubt our true worth by judging ourselves solely upon our temporary “performance,” or how others view us in our socially prescribed roles. But such externals as appearance, status or wealth are not fundamentally related to our supreme potential of Buddhahood. In moments of doubt, we will do well to remind ourselves of our inner “gold” and “fire.” The first step toward realizing the value of gold or fire is to recognize that we can possess gold or the ability to make fire. Similarly, in order to actualize our innate Buddhahood, we must first recognize the existence of our Buddha nature.

This is the function of faith. Faith in Buddhism means to believe in our own potential for Buddhahood. Everything we want in life, all fulfillment or satisfaction, happiness, accomplishment, ability, and capacity reside as potentials within us. The supreme positive expression of this innate potential is Buddhahood or enlightenment. Faith, therefore, means to believe in our own potential, and in the certainty of realizing it through Buddhist practice.

## The meaning of “slander” in Buddhism

After emphasizing the impartial benefit of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the Daishonin adds: “However, there is a difference if one chants the daimoku while acting against the intent of this sutra” (WND, 756). The Daishonin cautions Lord Matsuno that although he diligently recites the Lotus Sutra and chants daimoku, if he goes against “the intent of this sutra,” he will not enjoy the benefit of Buddhist practice as he otherwise should. No matter how earnestly we may feel we are practicing Buddhism, if we were to act “against the intent of the Lotus Sutra,” we would be undoing all our efforts. Therefore, it is critical for us to understand “the intent of the Lotus Sutra” and uphold it through our Buddhist practice.

The Daishonin then goes on to list the “fourteen slanders” as the causes that prevent Buddhist practitioners from attaining enlightenment. The concept of the fourteen slanders was formulated by Miao-lo (711-782), a scholar and priest of the T’ien-t’ai school in China, based on the following passage from the “Simile and Parable” chapter of the Lotus Sutra in which Shakyamuni states (underline added for clarity and emphasis):

Also, Shariputra,  
to persons who are arrogant or lazy  
or taken up with views of the self,  
do not preach this sutra.  
Those with the shallow understanding of ordinary  
persons,  
who are deeply attached to the five desires,  
cannot comprehend it when they hear it.  
Do not preach it to them.  
If a person fails to have faith  
but instead slanders this sutra,  
immediately he will destroy all the seeds  
for becoming a Buddha in this world.  
Or perhaps he will scowl with knitted brows  
and harbor doubt or perplexity.  
Listen and I will tell you  
the penalty this person must pay.  
Whether the Buddha is in the world  
or has already entered extinction,  
if this person should slander  
a sutra such as this,  
or on seeing those who read, recite,  
copy and uphold this sutra,  
should despise, hate, envy,  
or bear grudges against them,  
the penalty this person must pay...(LS, 74)

The brief meaning of each of the fourteen slanders is as follows: (1) “arrogance” – to slight Buddhism; (2) “negligence” in one’s Buddhist practice; (3) “wrong views of the self” that prevent one from seeking a correct teaching; (4) “shallow understanding” that prevents one from seeking a correct teaching; (5) “attachment to earthly desires” that prevents one from seeking a correct teaching (“the five desires” in the sutra text refers to the sensual desires that stem from our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch); (6) “not understanding” indicates the lack of desire to understand Buddhism; (7) “not believing” in the correct teaching; (8) “scowling with knitted brows” indicates one’s con-



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The letter “The Fourteen Slanders” was written by Nichiren Daishonin from his dwelling on Mount Minobu. In describing his living conditions there in another work, he states: “The snow has been piling up, and now, into the first month of the new year, it goes on snowing. My hut is seven feet in height, but the snow outside is piled up to a depth of ten feet. I am surrounded by four walls of ice, and icicles hang down from the eaves like a necklace of jewels adorning my place of religious practice, while inside my hut snow is heaped up in place of rice” (WND, 1022).

tempt toward the correct teaching; (9) “harboring doubts” indicates one’s doubt and confusion about the correct teaching and (10) “slandering” indicates one’s calumny toward the correct teaching. Those first ten “slanders” are directed toward a correct teaching, that is, the Lotus Sutra, and the rest of the four slanders toward

those who uphold and practice a correct teaching, that is, (11) “despising,” (12) “hating,” (13) “envying” and (14) “bearing grudges” against the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

In one sense, taking faith in the Gohonzon and sincerely praying can do away with the first ten “slanders”. This is because they are mainly related to the lack of will and desire to practice the correct teaching. So those already practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching, like Lord Matsuno, should be especially mindful of the last four slanders, those of “despising,” “hating,” “envying” and “bearing grudges” against other fellow practitioners. This is why the Daishonin writes to Lord Matsuno in the same letter: “Always remember that believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense” (WND, 756).

“Slander” in the context of the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin’s Buddhism means to “slander the Lotus Sutra.” To borrow the Daishonin’s expression, “slander” is to “act against the intent of the Lotus Sutra.” The intent of the Lotus Sutra, as mentioned before, lies in the universality of Buddhahood — that Buddhahood is a potential within all life. The sutra, therefore, stresses the importance of developing fundamental respect for all people, especially for those who actively seek to manifest their Buddhahood while encouraging others to do the same. In fact, Shakyamuni’s entire preaching of the Lotus Sutra ends with the following injunction: “If you see a person who accepts and upholds this sutra, you should rise and greet him from afar, showing

him the same respect you would a Buddha” (LS, 324). The Daishonin calls this passage “the foremost, supreme transmission” of Buddhism (GZ, 781). In other words, “slander” in the Daishonin’s Buddhism is to reject the existence of supreme humanity in each person and debase the dignity of people’s lives. From another perspective,

“slander” may be described as obstinate disbelief in one’s own Buddhahood as well as in that of others. This is why the Daishonin states: “Therefore, the substance of the fourteen slanders expounded in the ‘Simile and Parable’ chapter derives from disbelief” (GZ, 97). Put another way, as long as we continue to cultivate respect for the lives of others as well as our own based on the universality of Buddhahood, we cannot possibly commit any fundamental “slander” in the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The process of our attaining Buddhahood may be described as a process in which we strive to always strengthen our conviction in the universality of Buddhahood and act upon it. “The fourteen slanders” are not simply a list of “thou shalt nots.” Rather, they should be regarded collectively as a reminder of our necessity and responsibility to develop respect for life. (For more discussion on the concept of slander, please see “The Meaning of Slander and Religious Tolerance” in *Living Buddhism*, February 1999, pp. 8-13.)



Each of us has the “fire” of enlightenment within us. In moments of doubt, we should remind ourselves of this inner “fire.”

those priests and lay people who do embrace the sutra (WND, 756).

The Buddha nature is a potential for the highest human state, a condition rich with compassion and wisdom. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging perceives the Buddha nature in all people he meets and tells them: “I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practicing the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood” (LS, 266-67). This passage—consisting of twenty-four characters in the Chinese translation by Kumarajiva (344-413)—is known as “the twenty-four-character Lotus Sutra,” for it captures the heart of the Lotus Sutra.

## Bodhisattva Never Disparaging

Probably no figure in the Lotus Sutra expresses its spirit of fundamental respect for life more eloquently than Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. So it is no surprise that the Daishonin uses this character to explain to Lord Matsuno the importance of respecting all people:

Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old said that all people have the Buddha nature and that, if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood. He further stated that to slight a person is to slight the Buddha himself. Thus, his practice was to revere all people. He revered even those who did not embrace the Lotus Sutra because they too had the Buddha nature and might someday believe in the sutra. Therefore, it is all the more natural to revere

Many in the West have recognized the sanctity of the human being as well. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, for example, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, asserts that we must pattern our actions after a “categorical imperative,” which states: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”<sup>5</sup> Kant explains that since every rational being wants to be free, his or her existence should be regarded as an end in itself. If the existence of a rational being is treated as a means, it will never be free, and its worth will become relative to what it is good for. While Kant argues that the “absolute worth” of human existence derives from its “rational nature,”<sup>6</sup> Bodhisattva Never Disparaging sees the Buddha nature as the source of dignity in every person that deserves respect from everyone. Setting aside the difference between the “rational nature” and the “Buddha nature,” we could say that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging puts Kant’s categorical imperative into practice in the sense that he follows the only possible course of action toward something of absolute worth: respect. Viewing each person as an end rather than a means, and acknowl-

edging his or her absolute worth, is a fitting imperative for all humanity in the twenty-first century, and the Daishonin's Buddhism has much to contribute toward making this a reality. (For more discussion about Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, please see "The Courage to Respect All People: Learning from Bodhisattva Never Disparaging" in *Living Buddhism*, August 1999, pp. 8-15.)

## Respect for life as the basis of propagation

Toward the end of the letter, the Daishonin urges Lord Matsuno to exert himself in spreading Buddhism: "You should also teach the sutra to the best of your ability" (WND, 760). Bodhisattva Never Disparaging serves as one of the most excellent models in the Lotus Sutra for our efforts to communicate the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism to others, for he makes respect for each person the very basis of propagation. This might well be one reason why the Daishonin introduces the story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging in this letter.

When Bodhisattva Never Disparaging meets people, he sees their Buddha nature, something of absolute worth that demands his respect. He cannot remain silent about the existence of this supreme potential, so he tells them, in spite of their violent reaction: "You...are certain to attain Buddhahood" (LS, 267).

This bodhisattva is said to have lived in "the period of Counterfeit Law" when "monks of overbearing arrogance exercised great authority and power" (LS, 266). Buddhism had degenerated into mere formality, something that these arrogant monks capitalized upon, and few practiced Buddhism correctly. So when the bodhisattva tells people, "You are all practicing the bodhisattva way" (LS, 266), he is expressing his expectation that "if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood," as the Daishonin interprets this statement (WND, 756). Bodhisattva Never Disparaging respects people for their yet-to-be realized potential and encourages them to practice the bodhisattva way, regardless of who they are or what they do now.

This is easier said than done, however. It is no easy task to look at a person who is in the depth of suffering and confusion, who is given to bad or destructive behavior, and envision a truly happy person full of wisdom and compassion. It is as difficult as seeing a giant oak tree in

an acorn. Bodhisattva Never Disparaging does exactly this, however. He is like a gardener who sees a giant tree of happiness in a tiny seed left neglected on the parched ground. He patiently cares for the acorn by planting it in good soil where there is plenty of sunlight and water, always reminding it that it will certainly grow into a magnificent tree. And imagine this acorn not only refusing to be cared for, but also trying to attack the gardener!

The story of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging teaches us that at the core of our efforts to spread the Daishonin's teaching must be our respect for the supreme potential that all people possess. We must have wisdom not to judge them based on how they appear today and have courage to believe in what they can become down the road. When we develop such respect, we can benefit not only others, but also ourselves; for when we respect the Buddha nature of others, we are praising our own as well. In this regard, the Daishonin explains: "There is a fundamental oneness of self and others. Therefore when Bodhisattva Never Disparaging makes his bow of obeisance to the four groups of people, the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of the four groups of arrogant people bowed toward Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. This is the same as how when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back" (GZ, 769). All people, regardless of who they are, or what they believe in, share the Buddha nature. When we respect them for it, we are treating ourselves with the same respect. From the viewpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism, therefore, failing to respect others is failing to respect ourselves.

*"Background" and "Commentary" by the SGI-USA Study Department.*

1. Presumably this indicates the first section of the "Expedient Means" chapter, which ends with "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance...and their consistency from beginning to end."
2. Chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra says that one should not expound this sutra among the foolish in order to protect them from committing the evil of slandering the sutra.
3. This "one scholar" has been identified as the Dharma Characteristics scholar, Tz'u-en, by Ts'ung-i in his *Supplement to T'ien-t'ai's Three Major Works*. The attribution, however, is dubious. Tz'u-en in his *Praising the Profundity of the Lotus Sutra* mentions slanderers, but does not enumerate or enlarge upon them.
4. A leading official of the Hojo regency, also known as Hei no Saemon-no-jo and Taira no Yorituna. He served two successive regents, Hojo Tokimune and Hojo Sadatoki, and wielded tremendous influence as deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs (the chief being the regent himself). He played an active role in persecuting Nichiren Daishonin and his followers ("Glossary" WND, 1235).
5. Kant, Immanuel. *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 80.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

# SUMMARY

OF THE CHAPTERS  
OF THE

## *Lotus Sutra*

**Including perspectives from the “The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra — A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century”**

**By Jeff McDaniel**  
**Palo Alto, California**

The following is a review of the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra based on “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra” (DLS) which just completed serialization in *Living Buddhism* last month. The fifty-three installments of the dialogue appeared in the magazine from April 1995 to October 2000. The series is being published in book form as *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* (Volume One is now available.) The dialogue was conducted between SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and representatives of the Soka Gakkai Study Department, Katsuji Saito, Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. With the fresh look at the Lotus Sutra they have provided for the past five years, the relevance of this ancient

teaching to our times has been made clear.

A crucial point to keep in mind is the recurring theme of the “oneness of mentor and disciple.” It is woven throughout the dialogue in a rich discourse that freely pulls in Lotus Sutra text, revelatory passages from Nichiren Daishonin’s writings and wonderful images of correct Buddhist understanding from Josei Toda.

We must be mindful not to lose the opportunity to approach the Lotus Sutra afresh, armed with the illuminating and encouraging perspective of the “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra.” Therefore we will begin with a summary of the introductory portions of the dialogue. (The installment numbers pertaining to each chapter of the sutra follow the title)

## Introduction to the Series: “The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra — A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century (DLS – 1,2,3)

The dialogue participants take a look at the reality of human life and the earth’s environment at the close of the twentieth century. They view the situation as dire, noting the lack of influence that a single person can have on events in the world. They trace the crisis facing humanity to the loss of a functional life philosophy. President Ikeda states:

Some people say that the prevailing mood in the world today is one of powerlessness. Whatever the case may be, we are all aware that things cannot continue as they are. Yet decisions about political, economic and environmental issues all seem to be made somewhere beyond our reach. What can the individual accomplish in the face of the huge institutions that run our world? This feeling of powerlessness fuels a vicious cycle that only worsens the situation and people’s sense of futility. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 37)

Among the participants, there is no hesitation to declare the need for a fundamental change in what humans believe is of the highest value. They point out that it is the Lotus Sutra that provides the fundamental insight that life itself is what is most precious.

President Ikeda contrasts the hopelessness of the present age with the power that can be manifested based upon actualizing the core teaching of the Lotus Sutra:

At the opposite extreme of this sense of powerlessness lie the Lotus Sutra’s philosophy of a single life-moment encompassing three thousand realms<sup>1</sup> and the application of this teaching to our daily lives. The principle of one life-moment containing three thousand realms teaches us that the inner determination of one individual can transform everything. It is a teaching that gives ultimate expression to the infinite potential and dignity inherent in the life of each human being. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 37)

They discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Teachings with the power to truly change each person and the total environment cannot be transmitted as if moving Wall Street stocks. Thus, President Ikeda introduces the theme of mentor and disciple which will be the linchpin of many of the episodes, principles and truths in the chapters of the Lotus Sutra:

Though knowledge can be transmitted from one per-

son to another, wisdom cannot. The only way to develop wisdom is to acquire it through personal experience. That is one reason the Lotus Sutra places such strong emphasis on the teacher-disciple relationship, a relationship that demands a total commitment by both parties. (*Seikyo Times*, April 1995, p. 42)

Reaffirming the propagation of the Lotus Sutra as the means for all beings to attain absolute happiness, the participants realize that one of the purposes of the dialogue is to communicate the “wisdom” of the Lotus Sutra that will touch the hearts of all people.

Nichiren Daishonin expounded the very essence of the Lotus Sutra, so studying the Lotus Sutra is the same as studying the Daishonin’s teachings. By the same token, studying the Daishonin’s teachings leads to an understanding of the Lotus Sutra. They are like two sides of one coin. Consequently, when we discuss the Lotus Sutra, we are not simply studying the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. We are undertaking the far more challenging task of exploring the Daishonin’s teachings with our sights set on the far-distant future. (August 1995, *Seikyo Times*, p. 6)

## Chapter One: Introduction (DLS – 4,5)

This is the opening chapter of the Lotus Sutra and begins, as most sutras do, with the phrase “This is What I Heard.”

The congregation is introduced with Eagle Peak as the setting. There is a vast assembly of bodhisattvas, *arhats*,<sup>2</sup> people of the two vehicles, humans, kings, gods, animal-beings, demons and other creatures. The Buddha is attended by tens of thousands of disciples and attainees of various levels of illumination. The sutra reports that Shakyamuni preached the Sutra of Infinite Meaning and then entered a deep meditation called “the Samadhi of the place of immeasurable meanings.”

There is a discussion among representative bodhisattvas of the great diversity of the assembly that has gathered amidst the wonderful phenomena unfolding while the Buddha is in deep meditation. They are in agreement that these are all omens that the Lotus Sutra is to be preached. Likewise, we have to look for deeper portents for our own lives as we read the Lotus Sutra. President Ikeda asks us to be mindful that events are unfolding on many levels.

Mr. Toda didn’t want to make the Lotus Sutra some fanciful story divorced from reality, or Buddhism some kind of abstraction. Moreover, he was absolutely convinced the Lotus Sutra and Buddhism were neither of those things. He knew for a

fact that the Lotus Sutra was the Law of life, the Law existing in the depths of one's own being.

It is a movie on a truly colossal scale with the whole universe as its screen. The entire cosmos is the stage of the Lotus Sutra, and all Buddhas have attained their enlightenment based on the Mystic Law. It is the Lotus Sutra, which reveals this one fundamental Law—the Mystic Law. As a prelude to the presentation of this great Law, a variety of startling omens occur. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 23)

In the introduction, the leading bodhisattvas shared their experiences of the Lotus Sutra being preached many times in the past in varying forms. In this milieu, they compare and correlate the many appearances of Buddhas and the different forms in which the Lotus Sutra was expounded. This is embraced by the term “universal Lotus Sutra.”

The ultimate truth is one, but it is expressed in many forms. Yet all of them are the Lotus Sutra. The universal Lotus Sutra is the teaching in which the Buddha reveals and makes accessible to all people the Law that he himself has become enlightened to, the Law for attaining Buddhahood, so that all may achieve true happiness and ease. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 25)

Following this, they turn their attention to the opening phrase, “This is what I heard” or “Thus I heard.” As always, with our study of the Lotus Sutra, we learn that the shortest of utterances can be laden with deep meanings. The dialogue participants delve into the full significance of “This Is What I Heard.” On Eagle Peak in 475 BCE, Shakyamuni’s audience was primarily disciples called “voice-hearers.” As a monk or nun, the person was on a path in the realm of learning. It was Shakyamuni’s goal to have these disciples become self-motivated to transform themselves into bodhisattvas and act with the Buddha’s compassion.

In the sutra text, “This is what I heard” refers to the words of the disciple Ananda who was a personal attendant to Shakyamuni, always present listening to the Buddha’s preaching. We have already learned that there are multiple levels on which to interpret the teaching. President Ikeda explains:

The Daishonin is applying the principle of “text, “meaning” and “intent” for reading the sutra. “Text” refers to the sutra’s literal content. “Meaning” indicates the doctrine or principle to which the text refers. When we restrict ourselves to examining only the literal text of the scripture, we can only get as far as its “meaning.”



Brian Vitander/ CORBIS

The Lotus Sutra is named after the lotus flower that blooms and seeds at the same time, representing the simultaneity of the law of cause and effect.

But no amount of discussion of the “text and meaning” of the Lotus Sutra will be truly valuable unless we get to its heart, or true “intent.” The Daishonin comes to the conclusion that “‘The substance of a doctrine’ indicates Nam-myoho-enge-kyo” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 709).

We are not to read the sutra as something separate from ourselves. Instead, we should “hear” it “as it applies to our own self” and “as the very Law of our own life.” (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 27–28)

President Ikeda goes on to clarify that the most profound connection passing through “This is what I heard” is the bond of mentor and disciple:

The essence of “This is what I heard” is the oneness of mentor and disciple, and that is the quintessence of the transmission of Buddhism.

The drama of the oneness of mentor and disciple, in which there is a mutual resonance and response between the Buddha’s wish to save all living things and the wish of the disciple who seeks to embody and propagate the Buddha’s teaching, is epitomized in this phrase, “This is what I heard.” (*Seikyo Times*, September 1995, p. 28)

## Chapter Two: Expedient Means (DLS – 6, 7, 8, 9)

The “Expedient Means” chapter is the most important chapter in the first half (chapters 1–14) of the Lotus Sutra. The beginning of the chapter explains that Buddha wisdom can only be understood by Buddhas and clarifies the reason for the advent of a Buddha into a world to “open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings.”

After this statement from Shakyamuni Buddha, Shariputra entreats him to explain further. The Buddha refuses because of the potential for slander among those who will reject the sutra. After the third entreaty, the Buddha agrees to preach this wonderful sutra. The core of the revelation by Shakyamuni is that up to this point in his teachings, there had been three vehicles or modes of self-development: the worlds of learning, realization, and bodhisattva. The Buddha rejects this notion and states that there is only one vehicle, Buddhahood. Reaffirming this several times, Shakyamuni explains how rare it is for someone to be able to hear about the One Vehicle.

The point of “Expedient Means” is that these are teaching devices intended to lead the listener to an expanded understanding. Even more, the transformation that is needed is one of actually awakening one’s heart to genuine compassion and then struggling to develop the courage to act upon it. The “Expedient Means” is the perfect educational method for showing people how to reveal their own Buddha nature. President Ikeda states:

In the “Expedient Means” chapter, Shakyamuni says, “I have, through various causes and various similes, widely expounded my teachings” (LS2, 24). The Buddha employs different causes and different similes depending on his audience to lead them to the right path. This ability of the Buddha is called “the power of expedient means.” It is the ability to know precisely what to teach each individual at any given moment.

In other words, it is the ability to perceive the precise state of being of each individual and the wisdom to select the most appropriate teaching for that person. It is also the power of compassion that seeks to nurture each and every person so that they may attain Buddhahood. The source of all these abilities and powers is the profound and immeasurable Buddha wisdom. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1995, p. 11)

The “Expedient Means” chapter holds the deeper revelation of the secret and mystic expedient. It refers to the fact that it is only known and understood by Buddhas that all living beings are themselves Buddhas. In terms of the Ten Worlds, the world of Bud-

dhahood is hidden in the lives of people of the nine worlds. All of the sufferings of the nine worlds act as the ideal motivating force for our Buddhist practice to attain Buddhahood. There is an interdependent relationship that Buddhahood would not be an actuality unless there are the other nine worlds.

The “Expedient Means” chapter also contains the building blocks for the principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life.”

## Chapter Three: Simile and Parable (DLS – 10)

In this chapter, we find the figure of Shariputra dancing with joy, having made a breakthrough listening to the “Expedient Means” chapter from which he “gained something I never had before.” This is the realization that he will attain Buddhahood. However, there are still leading disciples and others present that have not yet realized this. Therefore, Shariputra asks the Buddha for more clarification about the three vehicles that have now become the One Vehicle. The Buddha responds by telling the “Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House.” A father returns to find his children are at play in a large house that is filled with danger and is on fire. The children are so engrossed in their play that they do not heed his warnings. To lure them from these dire straits, the father promises them three special ox carts if they will come outside to safety. When the children are eventually enticed out of the burning house they see that their father has provided one huge “Great White Ox cart” that is described in the unique blend of superlatives and details that characterize the Lotus Sutra.

This parable is an obvious metaphor for the principle of the replacement of the three vehicles of learning, realization and bodhisattva with the One Vehicle of Buddhahood. This particular parable is the first of seven parables in the Lotus Sutra. It is described in prose and then restated in verse, the longest section of poetry in the entire sutra. As President Ikeda states:

Living beings, submerged in foolishness and ignorance, not only fail to recognize that the house in which they dwell is actually burning up with them inside it, but they also fail to realize that their very own lives contain the Buddha’s life. Using parables, the Buddha seeks to awaken them to the brilliantly shining life inside them. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, p. 23)

The distinctive features of the many parables such as the “Phantom City” or the “Gem in the Robe” have struck chords in millions of hearts, making the Lotus Sutra one of the most widely disseminated books in the world. However, the parables have greater meaning than a simple story. President Ikeda explains:

Simply hearing the Buddha’s skillful parables and similes and declaring, “Yes, I understand!” does not constitute a full understanding. Truly profound understanding results in a transformation of one’s entire being. By its very nature, understanding entails a transformation. As one rises to a higher state of being, wisdom is born. That is why the disciples who heard and truly understood the Buddha’s teachings were then able to speak in parables themselves. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, pp. 28-29)

The true significance of the parables in the Lotus Sutra is that they are “identical to the Entity of the Law.” The parables are likened to our experiences in practicing Buddhism:

The same applies to us. Our individual experiences of triumphing over our problems give courage and hope to many others. The story of our personal victory, in other words, becomes a parable expressing the power of the Mystic Law. And those who hear our experience can share it with still others.

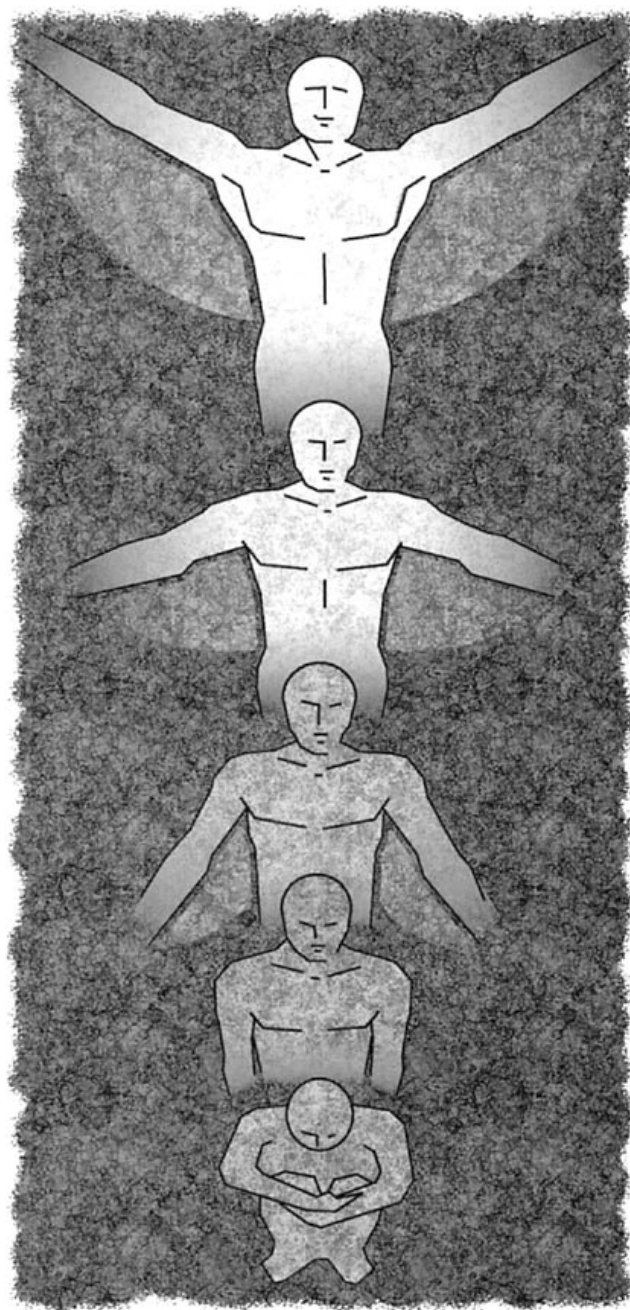
Mr. Makiguchi started the Soka Gakkai’s discussion meeting movement, which centers on members sharing their experiences in faith with others. He taught the Mystic Law not in the form of difficult abstract theories but through easily intelligible personal experiences.

Each individual experience is a parable of the all-pervading Mystic Law. And the discussion meeting, based on sharing such personal experiences, is a contemporary representation of the “Simile and Parable” chapter, a modern version of the seven parables of the Lotus Sutra, an infinite treasury of parables.

Parables are wisdom and compassion distilled to their most fragrant essence. The Soka Gakkai initiated a revolution in the way Buddhism is spread by adopting the same method as the Lotus Sutra. The spirit of the Lotus Sutra’s parables lives on in the sixty-five-year history of the Soka Gakkai [Ed. note: now seventy years]. And we will continue to write the brilliant story of the widespread propagation of the Lotus Sutra (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) day after day, a story that will be passed down through eternal future generations. (*Seikyo Times*, July 1996, p. 31)

## Chapter Four: Belief and Understanding (DLS-11)

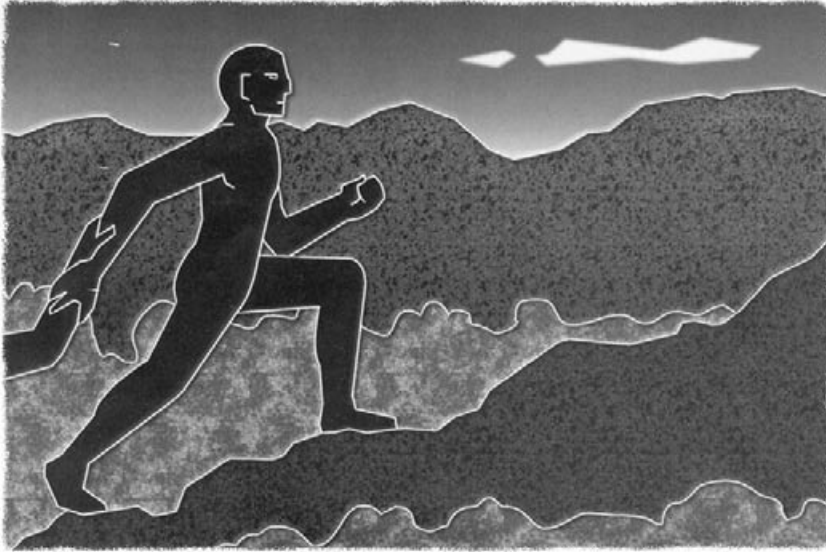
Now that Shakyamuni has expounded the “Parable of the Burning House,” more than just Shariputra dance with the joy of knowing that they too will be able to attain Buddhahood. The fruit of faith is shared



Carl Lawson

The appearance of a colossal Treasure Tower in the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra is an expression of the state of Buddhahood that lies dormant within each of us. It teaches us the infinite nobility of life.

among the four great men of learning: Subhuti, Katyayana, Mahakashyapa, and Maudgalyayana. After taking faith in the one Buddha vehicle and further spreading this “belief and understanding,” all four communicate “The Parable of the Wealthy Man and his Son.” This is the story of the wayward son being recog-



Carl Lanson

“From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, there is the necessity to redefine the journey that is undertaken. The potential for Buddhahood exists at the core of our life. The practice of faith in the Gohonzon and the study of Buddhism is to reveal Buddhahood from within.”

President Ikeda explains:

The belief taught in the Lotus Sutra provides for no easy answers, no escape route from the difficulties of human life. In fact, it rejects such easy answers; instead it implores us to take up the two tools for exploring life, belief and understanding, and use them to continually challenge and work to perfect ourselves. And it also provides us with the energy to do just that. (*Seikyo Times*, August 1996, p. 41)

## Chapter Five: The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs (DLS – 12)

Following the “Parable of the Rich Man’s Son,” Shakyamuni praises the four great men of learning for their

nized by his father and lured back to his home. The son does not recognize his father and is content to labor humbly as a manure cleaner in the stables for twenty years. Eventually, he develops self-respect through his consistent efforts and is able to inherit his father’s land and property. This is a parable that shows how we have forgotten our own roots of the Buddha life within. It also shows how the Buddha uses compassion through expedient means to lead the seeker to the true identity that he or she has always possessed. This chapter gives clear credence to the principle that we must gain entrance to the one Buddha vehicle through faith.

The important point is the fundamental issues for Buddhism of faith and wisdom, and faith and liberation (enlightenment), are distilled in the words “belief and understanding.” In a broader sense, this relates to the universal issues of civilization and philosophy and reason, and belief and knowledge. This is an extremely delicate problem, with relevance to many disciplines, including the cognitive sciences and psychology. Buddhism has traditionally considered these issues in meticulous detail. (*Seikyo Times*, August 1996, p. 33)

For those of us who practice in the Latter Day of the Law, it is our own Buddha nature of Nam-myohorenge-kyo deep in our life. Through our experience, we have learned that our faith and practice do not free us from difficulties. Our faith is not a kind of external scaffolding that holds together a weak human being.

understanding of how the Buddha employs the most appropriate expedient means to lead everyone to enlightenment. To provide further elucidation about the Buddha’s compassion for all sentient and non-sentient beings, Shakyamuni preaches yet another wonderful parable. This is the one for which the chapter is named. The story begins with a description of thick clouds covering the world and raining down equally on all parts of earth. All trees, bushes, grasses, and medicinal herbs receive the same amount of moisture regardless of stature. Each plant, regardless of its diversity, benefits equally from the rain. Shakyamuni equates the “Thus Come One” who preaches the one Buddha vehicle to the rain that causes this single Wonderful Law to be heard by all so that they can attain absolute happiness.

And even within so great a work of religious literature as the Lotus Sutra, the parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees holds a unique interest. Among the seven parables of the Lotus Sutra, it alone emphasizes the diversity of living beings. And through this emphasis, it highlights the equality of the Buddha’s compassion. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1996, p. 21)

From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism what can we learn about this parable that will strengthen our faith and practice? Certainly we can use the sutra’s story to fortify the conclusion that each of us is a unique being. Also, we have seen from what we have encountered so far, that the function of the

“secret mystic expedient” of the Buddha of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, is to lead us in our own unique way to the same state of life. Furthermore, as Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the SGI, we must extend this same opportunity to everyone. As President Ikeda puts it at the conclusion of the dialogue for this chapter:

I quote and discuss Nichiren Daishonin’s writings out of the desire to convey to the entire world the supreme humanity, the vast and immense state of life of the Daishonin who declared, “The various sufferings of all human kind are the sufferings of the one person Nichiren” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 758).

In the parable of the “Medicinal Herbs” chapter, it says that the great cloud of the Buddha’s compassion “covers” the entire thousand-million fold world, that is, the entire universe. How can we cause the immense love and compassion of the original Buddha to rain down upon the entire world? This is the thought that constantly occupies my mind; this is my constant determination. (*Seikyo Times*, September 1996, p. 31)

## Chapter Six: Bestowal of Prophecy (DLS – 13)

There have been several parables told and many members of the audience have come to acknowledge the one Buddha vehicle. They have also realized that the purpose of the skillful means the Buddha employed was to allow them to advance along the Buddha Way. At this juncture, Shakyamuni makes the prediction of the enlightenment of one of the foremost men of learning, Mahakashyapa. He will be named Buddha Light Bright. The sutra extols in text and verses the beauty and wonder of the realm-to-be of Buddha Light Bright. The other men of learning, who have come to know the error of their ways, harbor doubts that they too could attain this same goal. Shakyamuni does not keep them in suspense for too long. He then makes a prophecy that his senior disciples will become Buddhas and gives the names of those Buddhas. At the end of the chapter, Shakyamuni issues the prophecy that all of the disciples in the world of learning will reach Buddhahood in the future.

This is a remarkable occurrence and can be likened to the sun coming out in the middle of the night. In all the previous Buddhist sutras, the goal for the worlds of learning, realization, and even the early bodhisattva path had not included the goal of actually attaining Buddhahood. Those who had placed their faith in the two vehicles and were not awakened to the one Bud-

dha vehicle (as revealed in the Lotus Sutra) were not able to even make the journey. Within the context of all of Shakyamuni’s teachings, this sutra is nothing short of revolutionary. For this reason, all the disciples danced with joy.

There are some additional lessons to be learned from the “Bestowal of Prophecy.” It is important that we encourage our fellow human beings in concrete and effective ways. President Ikeda explains it from the intent of Shakyamuni when he made the prophecies, and how we can interpret them in our interaction with fellow SGI members:

The “Bestowal of Prophecy” has the effect of removing the sense of unease the disciples had felt in the depths of their lives and giving them profound peace of mind. Through the “Bestowal of Prophecy,” which is the Buddha’s assurance they will ultimately attain Buddhahood, they gain profound confidence in the future. (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, p. 22)

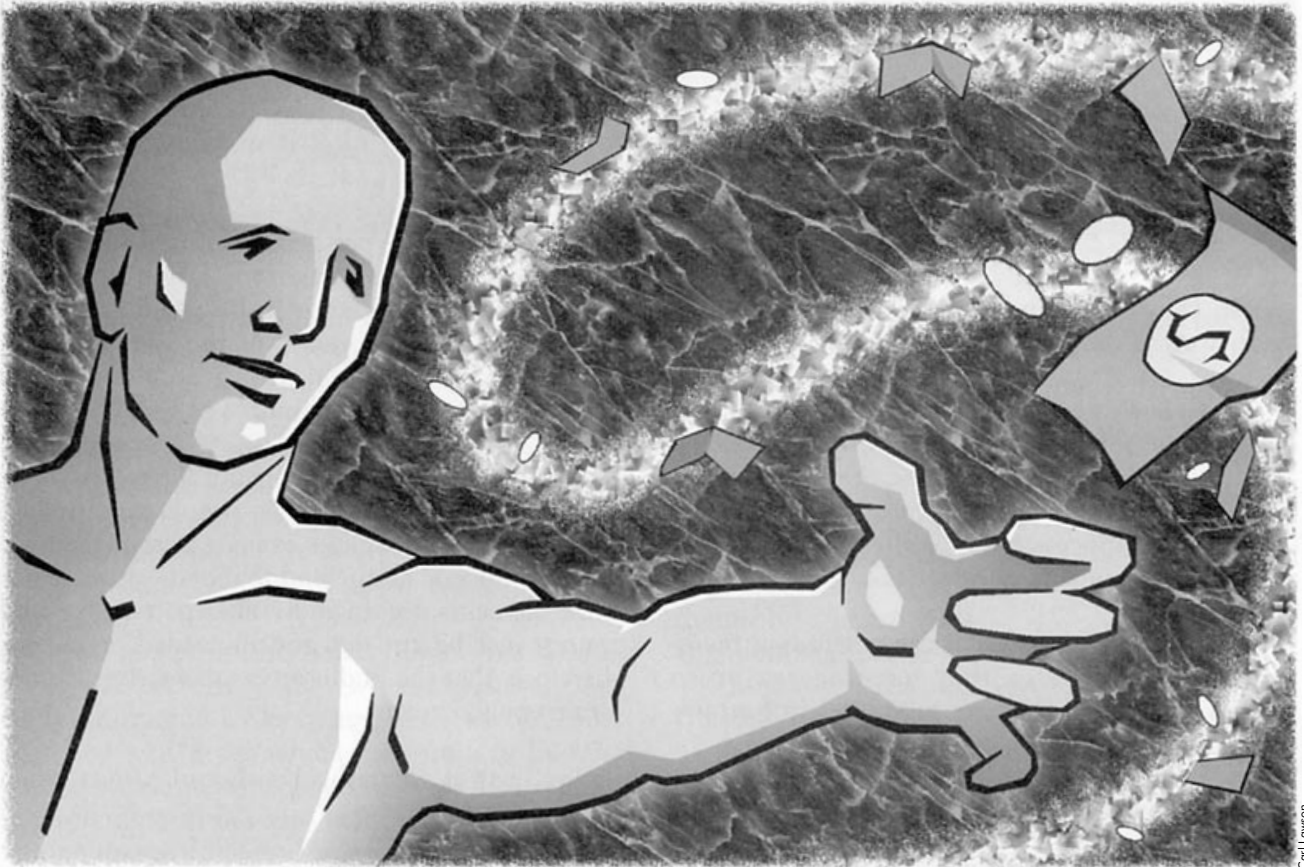
Originally, “bestowal of prophecy” meant giving a clear reply, and so resolving the doubts in people’s hearts. Leaders should always speak with forthrightness and clarity. Vagueness is bad, because it causes people to feel uneasy. Giving people confidence is the key point in the “bestowal of prophecy.” (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, pp. 21-22)

As mentioned, the prophecy of the Buddha for the men of learning comes with a glowing description of the era and land in which that particular disciple will dwell upon attaining Buddhahood. The images of the particular realm and time of these specific Buddhas reflect the character of each disciple as it will be manifested in their respective lives and Buddha lands. Summing up the significance of this similarity, President Ikeda states:

The important point here is that, upon attaining Buddhahood, the personality and total life experience of each of these disciples come to shine as virtuous enlightened attributes. As long as we have faith, no effort is wasted. This is the great benefit of the Lotus Sutra. (*Seikyo Times*, October 1996, p. 25)

## Chapter Seven: The Parable of the Phantom City (DLS – 14)

Even though there remain some disciples of learning and others that still do not get the basic message, with chapter seven we see a shift in the Buddha’s preaching. It is almost as if he is preparing the audience for what is to come. Even so, he once more evokes a restatement of the replacement of the three vehicles by the one



Carl Lawson

The idea that we only attain enlightenment after eradicating the illusion of desires is the thinking of provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

Buddha vehicle. He does this through the story of the “Parable of the Phantom City.”

Even before the story, there is the implicit revealing of the extensive karmic bond shared with his disciples since *sanzen-jintengo* (an immensely long period of time). He used this very long period of time to set the stage for talking about a Buddha called Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom.

To portray this unimaginable length of time since Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom existed, Shakyamuni uses the image of grinding the mass of *sanzen* worlds into dust particles to be used as counters for *jintengo*. These are sand-grain *kalpas*, often figured as nearly sixteen million years. Thus, Shakyamuni was able to cause his listeners’ minds to try to grasp the immensely vast time-and-space perspective of the Buddha life.

Before entering the way of Buddhist practice, Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha was a worldly king with sixteen sons. He left secular life to seek Buddhahood. It took a long time to complete this journey. After his attainment of Buddhahood, his sixteen sons, their families and millions of heavenly and wheel-turn-

ing kings beseeched Victorious Through Great Penetrating Wisdom Buddha to teach the true Dharma, the Lotus Sutra. He grants their request and preaches the whole cycle of sutras. Finally, he preaches the Lotus Sutra for eight *kalpas*. Following this, his sixteen sons teach and propagate the Lotus Sutra to all the beings in many worlds. They cause untold numbers of these beings to seek the Buddha Way. He establishes the connection of these interdependent living beings and gathers with the disciples to hear the Lotus Sutra with the indelibly gripping statement, “After that Buddha had passed into extinction, those persons who had heard the Law dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, constantly reborn in company with their teachers.” (LS7, 140) Earlier in the text portion, Shakyamuni recounts the whole saga of Great Universal Wisdom Excellence Buddha and his sixteen sons who had all been converted by their father, engaged in bodhisattva practice, and finally attained perfect enlightenment in their own respective Buddha lands. Shakyamuni explains that he was the sixteenth son and that is why he is there on Eagle Peak preaching to the assembled

multitudes of human and non-human beings.

Shakyamuni repeats his declaration that his previous teachings of the multiple vehicles are to be replaced with the one Buddha vehicle. Through the true entity of life revealed in the second chapter, all beings are capable of attaining Buddhahood. And that the one Buddha vehicle is the correct path to enlightenment. Shakyamuni uses the “Parable of the Phantom City” to allow his listeners to grasp this truth through evocative images. It is the story of a band of travelers on a tough journey in the wilderness with their guide. The travelers are on foot seeking a land reputed to be filled with treasure. It is a long way off and the journey is more dangerous and exhausting than they had expected. The band is close to giving up the quest. Sensing this and caring for their welfare, the guide uses his supernatural powers to create the illusion of an opulent city where the travelers can rest and gain sustenance. The disheartened band is overjoyed to see this city. When they have recovered their vitality, the guide dissolves the illusory city. He explains that they are resuming their journey to the real land of treasure, which is not far away.

Following the telling of the parable, Shakyamuni explains that the guide is actually the Buddha. The phantom city represents the three vehicles. They are an expedient means to lead people to their true destination, the one Buddha vehicle. Had the Buddha announced the true goal from the very outset, his followers would have balked at taking the journey. Thus, the conjured city is but a waystation to the real goal. The illusion is so good that the travelers seeing it in the distance make the strong effort to reach it and feel that they have attained something. It is through such ways that the Buddha employs skillful means.

From the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, there is the necessity of redefining the journey that is undertaken. The potential for Buddhahood exists at the core of our life. The practice of faith in the Gohonzon and the study of Buddhism is to reveal Buddhahood within. Then how do we look at the journey to the treasure land and the phantom city? President Ikeda explains it from the perspective of Buddhahood and the nine worlds:

From the text of the Lotus Sutra, we gather that the leader makes the phantom city disappear and that they then proceed to the treasure land. But Nichiren Daishonin goes beyond this interpretation, explaining that the phantom city and the treasure land, rather than being distinct, are in fact inseparable. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1996, p. 29)

If the world of Buddhahood is the end or objec-

tive, then the nine worlds become the process leading to it. The view that we only arrive at Buddhahood after escaping the nine worlds implies discontinuity between the nine worlds and the world of Buddhahood—in other words, that the nine worlds do not contain the world of Buddhahood, and vice versa. But as indicated in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” provisional, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings embrace the idea that we only attain enlightenment after eradicating the three categories of illusion (illusions of thought and desire, illusions innumerable as particles of dust and sand, and illusions about the true nature of existence).

Shakyamuni’s true intention in expounding the Lotus Sutra was to clarify that the nine worlds contain the world of Buddhahood and the expedient means are themselves the truth. Accordingly, the phantom city and the treasure land are not separate or distinct. The phantom city is identical to the treasure land.

From this perspective, the process is, in actuality, the end. In other words the attainment of Buddhahood is not a destination at the end of the road of Buddhist practice. Rather, the actions of someone who practices and spreads Buddhism are themselves the actions of the Buddha. (*Seikyo Times*, December 1996, pp. 29–30)

## Chapter Eight: Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples (DLS–15)

Considerable excitement was generated by Shakyamuni’s explanation of his connection to past lifetimes and to the disciples present at the preaching of the Lotus Sutra on Eagle Peak. Of the category of “voice hearers,” (people of learning) the leading disciples Purna, Ananda, Rahula, and others perceive the true intent of the Buddha and the significance of the one Buddha vehicle. Purna was known for great eloquence, as he became the leader in preaching the Law. He approaches, bows and addresses Shakyamuni:

The World Honored One is very extraordinary, very special, his actions rarely to be encountered! Adapting himself to the various natures of the people of this world and employing expedient means and insight, he preaches the Law for them, drawing living beings away from their greed and attachment to this or that. The Buddha’s blessings are such that we cannot set them forth in words. Only the Buddha, the World Honored One, is capable of knowing the wish that we have had deep in our hearts from the start. (LS8, 144)

Hearing Purna's speech, the Buddha praises his steadfast efforts to preach the Law and to never bring attention to himself. He makes the prediction that Purna will eventually become a Buddha called Law Bright Thus Come One. Shakyamuni described the magnificent Buddha lands that his life will bring forth. Furthermore, there were five hundred *arhats* that also received a prophecy of enlightenment.

The promise of enlightenment to the voice-hearers in the "Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples" chapter is very significant. When they realize the correctness of the teaching of the one Buddha vehicle, they awaken their compassion to share this teaching and its joy to many other people. Speaking about Shakyamuni's intent in preaching the Lotus Sutra, President Ikeda comments:

But the Buddha's true intention was not contained in the Hinayana. The Buddha did not want his disciples to wind up being merely people who seek to be led to salvation, and so he expounded the Lotus Sutra, which clarifies his true intention.

What you should seek, he tells the voice-hearers, is not the enlightenment of the Hinayana but the wisdom of the Buddha. He is saying in effect: "I want to enable all people to gain the Buddha's wisdom and raise their state of life so that they can freely lead others to happiness just as the Buddha does." This is the Buddha's true intention. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, pp. 40-41)

It was for this reason that Shakyamuni praised Purna. From the text it is apparent that the other voice-hearers — who were direct disciples of Shakyamuni — were able to learn from Purna's example and the compassion of their mentor that they achieve the same inner reform. To demonstrate their understanding of what they have gained, they tell the parable of the gem in the robe. The story tells of a poor man who visits an old friend. He is treated with food and drink. Overcome by the wine, he falls asleep. Needing to leave on an errand, his host worries about the condition of his destitute friend. So he sews a priceless gem in the beggar's coat. Awakening and finding his friend is not around, the poor man departs the house. Unaware of the wonderful gem in his tattered robe, he wanders from land to land remaining in dire circumstances. One day, the poor man again encounters his old friend. The friend is shocked that the poor man had not made use of the priceless gem that he sewed in his friend's robe so many years ago. He cuts open the robe and reveals the shining gem within. His life-weary friend is overjoyed to learn that he is in possession of such a treasure.

The nature of the priceless jewel is that we be deter-

mined to seek out comprehensive wisdom, that we desire to attain Buddhahood. The dialogue on the sutra participants refer to the voice-hearers' realization from the "Phantom City" chapter that they have been connected with Shakyamuni since the remote past of *sanzen jintengo*. This brings forth another meaning of the gem as the priceless treasure that the Buddha, as the poor man's "good friend," had implanted in their lives so long ago. As President Ikeda states:

They return to their "true selves." This is the "awakening of the voice-hearers." They wake up from the "drunken stupor of darkness" (that is, ignorance about the true nature of their lives).

A key word here is "recollect." They return to their own prime point. They perceive the Law that is the wellspring of their own lives. It is a matter of "returning to the self." It was the stupor of "darkness" that had caused them to forget this. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, p. 47)

## Chapter Nine: Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts (DLS-15)

There are two remaining direct disciples of Shakyamuni that have not yet received a prophecy of enlightenment. They are his cousin, Ananda, and his son, Rahula. They both approach the Buddha to ask what the future holds for them. Shakyamuni does not delay. He first confers a prophecy of future Buddhahood on Ananda who gave up his life among royalty to follow Shakyamuni and become his personal attendant. Because he was always with the Buddha, he became known as the foremost in "hearing the Buddha's teachings." Those are his words at the beginning of the Lotus Sutra, "This is what I heard." Shakyamuni says that he will become Mountain Sea Unrestricted Power King Thus Come One.

Rahula, his son, was always seeking and learning from Shakyamuni's elder disciples. He never tried to stand on his relationship as Shakyamuni's son. His reputation became that of "foremost in inconspicuous observance of the precepts." Shakyamuni says he will become Stepping On Seven Treasure Flowers Thus Come One.

Along with the assurances of enlightenment for Ananda and Rahula, come similar prophecies for two thousand other voice-hearers who ranged from *arhats* to those who were just beginning to learn the Buddhist teachings. President Ikeda explains that this prediction is meant to include all people:

As I have mentioned before, the spirit of bestowal of prophecy upon the voice-hearers is that of the

bestowal of prophecy on all people. The promise of enlightenment does not apply only to the voice-hearers; all people can attain Buddhahood. All people can inherit the Buddha's wisdom and be capable of leading others to happiness. This idea is indicated in the prophecy of enlightenment upon all voice-hearers, in which no distinction is made between arhats, learners, and adepts. (*Living Buddhism*, January 1997, p. 43)

## Chapter Ten: Teacher of the Law (DLS-16)

With this chapter, the sutra progresses beyond the events and parables of the past nine chapters that were aimed at thoroughly revolutionizing the minds of the disciples of learning and realization. Now these disciples are at the congregation as bodhisattvas. Another eighty thousand great bodhisattvas come from the far corners of the universe to hear the Lotus Sutra. The chapter begins with Shakyamuni's documentation of the benefit to be received by any man or woman who upholds and teaches the Lotus Sutra after his death.

Including the assembled multitudes, Shakyamuni addresses Bodhisattva Medicine King with a number of critical statements that reflect the high status of the Lotus in his teachings.

The sutras I have preached number immeasurable thousands, ten thousands, millions. Among the sutras I have preached, now preach and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand. Medicine King, this sutra is the storehouse of the secret crux of the Buddhas. (LS10, 164)

Shakyamuni also focuses on both the inestimable value and the difficulty of teaching and spreading the Lotus Sutra in the future. He explains that those who take on this great task will be people of pure and selfless hearts that will forestall the great rewards of their virtuous deeds in order to continue to help people attain the Buddha Way.

If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even a phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. (LS10, 162)

It must not be distributed or recklessly transmitted to others. It has been guarded by the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, and from times past until now has never been openly expounded. And since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much



A truly profound understanding of the Lotus Sutra results in a transformation of one's entire being. By its very nature, understanding entails a transformation. As one rises to a higher state of being, wisdom is born.

more will this be so after his passing? (LS10, 164)

The dialogue on the sutra participants agree that the "Teacher of the Law" chapter is oriented towards propagation in the future. As we progress, the entire flow of the sutra turns into a mighty river of guidance and encouragement about how to practice, propagate and study the true reality of Buddhism in the ages to come. The dialogue points out that this chapter is an answer to the question that was posed at the beginning of the dialogue concerning "an age lacking philosophy." President Ikeda states that the "Teacher of the Law" chapter paints the portrait of the kind of people that will appear in the "age of darkness". There is a dual thrust of the "Teacher of the Law" chapter. It states that a person who accepts the Law as their master becomes "a seeker of the way" as well as the teacher who spreads the Law." President Ikeda comments:

Teachers of the Law unite both of these qualities in themselves. To forget the "seeking" side is to become arrogant; to forget the "saving" side is to become self-centered. While continuing to deepen their own understanding, teachers of the Law lead others to happiness; and through helping others become happy, they further deepen their understanding. Seeking the Law is itself leading others to enlightenment; and leading others to enlightenment is itself

seeking the Law. Herein lies the supreme path of life. (*Living Buddhism*, February 1997, pp. 24-25)

The concluding part of the chapter deals in more detail with propagation of the Law after the Buddha's passing.

## Chapter Eleven: The Emergence of the Treasure Tower (DLS-17, 18)

The descriptions in this chapter spare nothing in their superlatives. How else can the event of a world-sized, jewel-encrusted tower emerging from the earth be portrayed? Through the manifestation of the Treasure Tower and the voice of Many Treasures Thus Come One speaking from within and the elevation of the entire congregation, the scene dramatically shifts from the rocky crags of Eagle Peak to a setting in another dimension called the "Ceremony in the Air."

As the massive structure arose from the earth, a strong voice speaks from within the tower:

"Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World Honored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth." (LS11, 171)

While the sight was truly awe-inspiring, it created questions and doubts in the minds of many in the assembly. Therefore, a bodhisattva named Great Joy of Preaching asked Shakyamuni about the significance of the tower emerging and the voice coming from within. He replies that the tower is in fact the "complete body of the Thus Come One" (LS11, 171). He tells of the existence of Many Treasures Thus Come One, who has traveled from a remote place in the universe as he said he would to verify the truth of the Lotus Sutra whenever it is preached.

Following this, Shakyamuni performs the unparalleled feat of illuminating countless Buddha lands in all directions, revealing an incalculable number of Buddhas, each with their own retinues of great bodhisattvas who are journeying to partake in the ceremony. Once everyone is in attendance, Shakyamuni rises up from his seat and opens the treasure tower. Many Treasures Buddha again declares the veracity of Shakyamuni's teaching and asks him to take the seat at the top next to him. So that everyone else can participate, Shakyamuni elevates the entire assembly to equal height with the Treasure Tower.

There have been many efforts to interpret this event.

The great tower is seen by many Buddhist scholars to be an image portraying Shakyamuni's enlightenment. The Ceremony in the Air described in the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" chapter is also an expression of the Buddha's compassion to strive with all his might to communicate the state of the enlightenment to all sentient beings. As President Ikeda states, we need to also see this same state of life within ourselves:

Mr. Toda taught us clearly what the Treasure Tower is and the significance of its emergence. That colossal Treasure Tower is an expression of the state of Buddhahood that lies dormant within each of us. It teaches us the infinite nobility of life.

Indeed, there is perhaps no more fitting way to express the eternal and limitless state of Buddhahood than by using the Ceremony in the Air—a setting that breaks free of all boundaries of time and space. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, pp. 6-7)

Once everything is in place, Shakyamuni exhorts the assembly with the question of who will propagate the Lotus Sutra after his passing? He asks all present to make a great vow for propagation. To show the difficulty of carrying out this mission, he sets out the "Six Difficult and Nine Easy Acts." It is a lopsided contrast of nine of the most incredible feats such as hurling Mount Sumeru across the universe, with the difficulty of having faith in and teaching the Lotus Sutra.

Are we to be left with the wonder of this tremendous entity floating in space, surrounded by innumerable hosts of heavenly, human and non-human beings? How can this image be incorporated as a functional part of our lives as practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? In discussing the first chapter, President Ikeda asks that the dialogue participants explain the principle of the "Three Assemblies in Two Places." The participants first examine the chapter-by-chapter flow of the Lotus Sutra. The portion beginning with the "Introduction" (first) chapter and ending with "The Teacher of the Law" (tenth) chapter takes place on Eagle Peak. At the very beginning of "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (eleventh) chapter, this enormous edifice suddenly erupts from the earth and rises into the air as does the entire assembly. This Ceremony in the Air continues until the "Entrustment" (twenty-second) chapter. From the "Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" (twenty-third) chapter, the scene returns to Eagle Peak and remains there through the last chapter. This is the source of the designation, the "Three Assemblies in Two Places." While Eagle Peak is an actual place where Shakyamuni preached his teachings, the Ceremony in the Air transcends ordinary reality. President Ikeda follows this up with his own perspective:

The progression from the assembly at Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air and then back to Eagle Peak parallels the movement from reality to the state of enlightenment and then back to reality. Or, to be more accurate, it is a flow from reality prior to enlightenment, to the state of enlightenment, and then to reality after enlightenment. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 7)

To “rise into the air” means to elevate our state of life through our determined and unwavering faith. This is the significance that pertains to the sutra’s progression from the first assembly on Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 8)

From real life to the Ceremony in the Air and then back to real life—in this continuous process back and forth lies the path of human revolution, the path of transforming our state of life from one motivated by the Lesser Self to one inspired by the Greater Self. In life, we must not permit ourselves to be totally absorbed with only immediate realities. We must have ideals and strive to achieve them, thereby transcending present realities. On the other hand, we must not allow ourselves to become alienated from reality. We can change nothing unless our feet are firmly planted on the ground. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, pp. 8-9)

The important thing is that we act out the “three assemblies in two places” in our daily lives. Nichiren Daishonin used the Ceremony in the Air to express his own enlightenment in the form of the Gohonzon. We, who embrace the Gohonzon, are manifesting the dynamism of the Lotus Sutra directly in our lives. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 13)

When we devote our lives to the propagation of the Mystic Law, the present moment is always one with eternity. Eternity and the present moment meet, interact and reverberate in harmonious unity in our daily lives. Our lives are a continuous stream of joy—a manifestation of eternity in the present moment. Therefore, to a person of faith, a single moment is not just a single moment, a day is not just a day. Each moment, each day, has an eternity of value packed into it. The more time passes, the more each moment, each day, shines with a golden light. (*Seikyo Times*, November 1995, p. 6)

## Chapter Twelve: Devadatta (DLS–19, 20)

The “Devadatta” chapter contains some very important lessons of the power of the Lotus Sutra to enable the enlightenment of all life forms as well as a person



President Ikeda explains that because we have the highest concern for the Law, we need to fully exercise our wisdom in propagating it. We should make continual efforts to pray for the happiness of friends and to use our wisdom to tell others about Buddhism.

of great evil. As the chapter opens Shakyamuni relates the story of a king in the distant past who desired to find the truth of Buddhism. He encountered a hermit who said that he possessed the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In return for the king’s service he would share it with the king. For a thousand years the king served the hermit. Shakyamuni states:

The Buddha said to the monks: “The king at that time was I myself, and the seer was the man who is now Devadatta. All because Devadatta was a good friend to me, I was able to become fully endowed with the six paramitas, with pity, compassion, joy, and indifference, with the thirty two features, the eighty characteristics, the purple-tinged golden color, the ten powers, the four kinds of fearlessness, the four methods of winning people, the eighteen unshared properties, and the transcendental properties and the power of the way. The fact that I have attained impartial and correct enlightenment and can save living beings on a broad scale is all due to Devadatta, who was a good friend.” (LS12, 184)

Of course this was not the image of Devadatta in the earlier sutras. He was the jealous cousin of Shakyamuni who became the enemy of the Buddha, attempting to take his life and disrupt the Buddhist order. However, the participants in the “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra” look deeper at the nature of good and evil as demonstrated by Shakyamuni and Devadatta. Most

certainly, Shakyamuni pointed out to Devadatta the error of his ways. President Ikeda says that evil cannot be reformed if it is not challenged:

If evil functions to reveal good, then evil in its entirety becomes good. This is truly the oneness of good and evil. But if evil is simply allowed to run its course, then it does not become good. Only when evil is thoroughly challenged and conquered does it become an entity of the oneness of good and evil.

In that sense the enlightenment of evil people presented in the “Devadatta” chapter is great proof of the victory won by Shakyamuni. It is his “victory declaration.” Only when he stands in this lofty state of a winner can he say that Devadatta had in a past life been a good friend and mentor, and had in this life aided his efforts to instruct people. (*Living Buddhism*, June 1997, p. 31)

The next revelation is that of the Dragon King’s daughter demonstrating the ability to quickly attain supreme enlightenment. Bodhisattva Manjushri returns from the palace of the Dragon King where he explains that he bears actual proof of someone who has been able to engage in a practice that quickly leads to the highest state of life. There is doubt on the part of those present, since they have been taught that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood only after immeasurable kalpas of arduous practices. Manjushri presents the dragon girl. Her offering of a priceless gem to Shakyamuni out of profound appreciation and her subsequent ability to quickly attain perfect enlightenment wins over the hearts of all who are present. Through actual proof she overthrows the prejudices in their mind about the access to enlightenment for all beings. They have a renewed hope that Buddhahood is not something far off in the distance, but is within their reach in the present moment.

The participants in the dialogue on the sutra point out that the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, which contains the “Devadatta” chapter, was especially popular in Japan when the Lotus Sutra was first brought from China. President Ikeda shares Nichiren Daishonin’s view of its importance:

Regarding the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin says: “The fifth volume presents what is the heart and core of the entire sutra, the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” (MW-930). There are, of course, many other important chapters, but the Daishonin says that the “Devadatta” chapter represents the very heart and core of the entire sutra, suggesting that this chapter is the key to the principle of

attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.

The spirit of the Lotus Sutra is to enable all people to become Buddhas. For ordinary people, the simple fact of whether one can attain Buddhahood or not is a matter of far keener importance than any doctrine. And the “Devadatta” chapter certainly offers a straightforward reply to that question. (*Living Buddhism*, June 1997, p. 24)

Through the concrete example of Devadatta and the dragon girl becoming Buddhas, people could accept this teaching not merely as theory, but as actual fact. (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

## Chapter Thirteen: Encouraging Devotion (DLS-21)

This chapter contains Shakyamuni’s strong admonition to everyone in attendance at the Ceremony in the Air to uphold the Lotus Sutra even at a time of great opposition. The monks, nuns, *arhats*, and bodhisattvas all respond with many vows and oaths saying, “We beg you World Honored One, to have no further worry. After the Buddha has entered extinction we will honor, embrace, read, recite, and preach this sutra.” (LS13, 190)

The fervor to take on propagation reaches a high point with the entire congregation issuing forth a magnificent lion’s roar of commitment to embrace and spread the Lotus Sutra in the evil times to come when people have lost their seeking spirit for the truth and the Buddha way. They recite a litany of the type of opposition from demons and even worse persecutions they will face in taking on this daunting goal. In the verse section is the famous declaration “In order to preach this sutra we will bear these difficult things. We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.” (LS13, 194-195)

In the dialogue on the sutra, the participants engage in an extensive discussion of the “Three Powerful Enemies.” How they function in society for their own power and gain while draining the vitality of the people, creating confusion in the world of human spirituality. For this reason, it is essential to have a strong commitment to Buddhist practice and a bond with a correct teacher. Then the phrase “unsurpassed way” from the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter becomes something inseparable from daily life. President Ikeda explains:

Nichiren Daishonin says, “The ‘unsurpassed way’ is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Now Nichiren and his followers are even more anxious with regard to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo than they are with their own lives” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 749). The ultimate meaning of



Buddhahood emerging from the lower nine worlds — those filled with suffering, desires and impurities — is like the blossoming of the pure lotus flower that rises out of a muddy swamp.

faith is to treasure Nam-myoho-renge-kyo more highly than our own lives. It is to devote ourselves entirely to achieving the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.

Concretely speaking, this means advancing together with the SGI, thoroughly protecting the SGI, and practicing together with the SGI in both times of hardship and joy. Apart from the SGI there is no *kosen-rufu* of the Mystic Law. This is the meaning of the statement by Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai President, “The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my life.” (*Living Buddhism*, August 1997, p. 42)

## Chapter Fourteen: Peaceful Practices (DLS – 22)

The “Peaceful Practices” chapter concludes the first half of the twenty-eight chapter Lotus Sutra known as the theoretical teaching. Regardless of the designation, the drama continues to highlight the essential need to practice and propagate this sutra with unflinching faith and concrete actions.

In discussions with Manjushri, the Buddha sets forth the demeanor and activities of those who will undertake the spreading of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni’s encouragement is extensive and stresses the respect for the dignity of life, selfless action based upon compassion and wisdom.

The participants in the dialogue on the sutra discuss the concept of “peaceful practices” with the mindset of *shakubuku* — a direct form of propagation. They bring forth Nichiren Daishonin’s admonition that *shakubuku*, not *shoju*, is appropriate for a time when the correct spirit of Buddhism has been distorted or lost. Nonetheless, President Ikeda affirms that even within the context of strongly refuting erroneous teachings, we need to employ the means that will be most effective in society:

From our standpoint, this means that even when we are spreading the Law “without concern for our own lives” we absolutely must not do anything that would reflect badly on the Law. Because we have the highest concern for the Law, we need to fully exercise our wisdom in propagating it. This is the heart of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. It explains the spirit: “How can I help all people receive the benefit of the Mystic Law?” The “Peaceful Practices” chapter, therefore, finds full expression in our efforts to pray earnestly for the happiness of friends and to use our wisdom to tell others about Buddhism.

While teaching his followers the *shakubuku* spirit of not begrudging one’s life, Nichiren Daishonin also emphasized the importance of showing people genuine courtesy and respect, and of conducting oneself with wisdom. (*Living Buddhism*, September 1997, p. 34)

The chapter concludes with the “Parable of the Jewel in the Topknot.” It is the story of a great king that has been victorious over kings in other realms. To those who supported him in these battles he provides wonderful gifts. As do other great kings, he wears a precious jewel in the topknot upon his head as a sign of his royal status. To give it away would be seen as lowering his status. Finally, though, he removes his own jewel and bestows it upon those who have distinguished themselves. The Buddha explains to Manjushri that the Buddha saves his highest and most efficacious teaching, the Lotus Sutra, for bestowing on his disciples at the end, just like the king had saved the jewel in his topknot for the bravest warriors.

(To be continued)

1. “Three thousand realms in a single moment of life” is a philosophical system set forth by T’ien-t’ai of China based on the Lotus Sutra. The expression “three thousand” is an integration of the Ten Worlds, their mutual possession, the ten factors and the three realms of existence. These component principles may be thought of as the three thousand conditions that life may manifest in any single moment.  
2. *Arhat*: A “worthy,” one who has attained the highest stage of Hinayana enlightenment. The Lotus Sutra urges one to reject the goal of *arhat* and instead strive for the highest level of enlightenment, that of Buddhahood.

# TEN POINTS *to Derive Maximum Benefit From Our Practice*

This article is based on a presentation made at the Northern California Study Conference in July. Jeanny Chen was born in Taiwan—making Chinese her native language—and immigrated to the United States in 1986. She had a difficult childhood in Taiwan. Her father's business failed several times.

*“Each time, in order to run away from the debtors, we had to move to a new city and start all over. There was one time that my mother was put into jail for one-and-a-half years because my father used her name to run his business and write checks. I remember that because of my family's chaotic situation, I was placed in four foster homes during my junior high school years. My younger sister and older brother could not stand such suffering and became failures in their lives. I became very cynical and resentful.”*

She became an SGI member eleven years ago and developed the Ten Points to Derive Maximum Benefit From Our Practice through her own experience. She opens her presentation by stating:



By Jeanny Chen,  
Saratoga,  
California

*“I would like to share with you the ten key points that I have learned and applied during my years of practice. They have enabled me to achieve great results. It's not my intention to brag about money or show off in any way. My sole reason is to concretely illustrate the results I have been able to create through my practice to the Gohonzon.”*

would like to ask you to imagine I am holding a bag of rocks in one hand and in the other, a solid gold necklace. Is it difficult to acquire rocks? Are they expensive or hard to find? No! How about acquiring gold? It's very expensive! Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could freely exchange rocks for gold? As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we definitely have the power to make such an incredible exchange.

Nichiren Daishonin writes in "The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra," "Each and every one of you should be certain deep in your heart that sacrificing your life for the Lotus Sutra is like exchanging rocks for gold or dung for rice" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* p. 764). In essence, we are exchanging our unhappy destiny for a happy life. We do this by praying seriously, taking action for kosen-rufu and fighting evil influences in our lives and society. It may seem to take a long time to change big problems—transforming our lives on a fundamental level; but that's because the gold we receive in exchange for the rocks that were once our lives, are more fortune, benefits and happiness than we could ever imagine.

## Faith

With that said, let's begin with the first of the ten key points, Faith. Nichiren Daishonin says in "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," that "No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1000-001). It's important that we develop our faith. For some of us, this doesn't come quickly or easily.

There are several things we can do

to strengthen our faith. First, we can practice vigorously to get results or benefits. Second, we can attend SGI discussion meetings and listen to others' experiences. Third, we can study SGI publications to deepen our understanding of Buddhism. And fourth, we can connect with seniors in faith to receive encouragement and advice.

The benefit of the Gohonzon is expansive, infinite and knows no bounds. My son told me to be very careful when I pronounce expansive, because if I said that this Buddhist practice was expensive I would scare people away. Anyway, those who have doubts about the validity of these guidelines should give them a fair chance.

## Mission

Now, the second point is to have a purpose in life, a Mission. We sometimes think that suffering must be our mission. But because we suffer, we are willing to put effort into practicing this Buddhism. As long as we practice correctly and earnestly, we will realize benefits and overcome our difficulties. Such experiences strengthen our faith and enable us to show actual proof. As a result, we will have the desire and the credibility to introduce this Buddhism to others. Thus, we fulfill our mission of propagating this Buddhism. In order to spread this Buddhism, we need hundreds of millions of people



Jeanny Chen with her husband, Raymond, and her two sons, Alan (left) and Eugene.

showing actual proof, each under different circumstances. It's not only a handful of practitioners who got lucky and enjoy benefits from this practice. Everyone can.

What's our mission in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? The first mission is to become happy oneself. The second mission is to help others become happy, which is what we call kosen-rufu or world peace. It's very important to support our mentor, SGI President Ikeda, and the SGI's mission to promote peace, culture and education and also to help develop capable and positive young successors for the twenty-first century.

I would like to share a story with you. After having fulfilled my personal financial goals in my third year of practice, I was able to retire. As a newly immigrated Chinese, my English was very weak, and I thought that would prevent me from doing anything significant. Rather than being frustrated by my poor English language ability, I chanted to be able to do something to create value with my resource as a Chinese speaker. Shortly thereafter, I found myself

# Ten Key Points Jeanny Chen Applied to Her Buddhist Practice to Derive Maximum Results

## 1) FAITH

Faith is what really matters.

## 2) MISSION

My mission is to become happy and help others do the same. This will lead to world peace.

## 3) GOALS

Nothing is impossible through the power of the Gohonzon. I set big goals and go for it!

## 4) DETERMINATION

I am determined to do human revolution!

I am determined to never give up!

I am determined to take correct action now!

## 5) DAIMOKU

I will chant daimoku that will “shake the universe!”

I will strive to chant as much as I can each day.

I will make chanting the top priority when I am fighting for my goals.

## 6) TAKE ACTION

I will take action for my own life and for the sake of others.

I will prove how serious I am about my goals by taking courageous and unceasing action.

## 7) STUDY

Study is the soul of the SGI.

I will read Nichiren Daishonin’s writings.

I will subscribe to and read SGI publications.

I will participate in SGI study programs.

## 8) SHARE BUDDHISM WITH OTHERS

I feel proud and fortunate to practice Buddhism in the SGI.

When I tell others of the Law, I am sharing a priceless gift.

## 9) SHARE MY EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS

I will share my Buddhist experience and determination with others.

## 10) CONTINUE MY PRACTICE OF FAITH THROUGHOUT LIFE

Once I achieve my dreams and goals, I will not slacken in faith.

I will continue to struggle with the negative side of my life.

I will support the SGI in every way I can.

writing Chinese newsletters for my friends and for a boy-scout troop that consisted of a hundred Chinese boys. I then wrote for a Chinese school with 1,000 students. I decided to help those places that others were not taking a great interest in.

I used the high life condition, wisdom and joy derived from my chanting to write in a humanistic and humorous style. Although I did not mention Buddhism, I was able to bring joy to my readers and generate heart to heart bonds among them. When I finished writing the newsletters, my friends gave me a lamp as a gift. They all signed a thank-you card saying, “Jeanny, you are like a lamp. You turn yourself on and shine on others.” In the boy-scout troop, I became the unsung hero and the committee-chair. In the Chinese school, I got the nickname of “super glue” between the school and the parents. That was my way of doing kosen-rufu when I was not yet capable of actually sharing the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism with others.

I chanted for the wisdom to find my unique strength or ability—something that I could develop as my own mission in society. I assigned myself a mission when I saw an opportunity. When we have a sense of mission for kosen-rufu from the bottom of our hearts, not just out of formality, our goals will be fulfilled. One more important aspect about mission is the concept of Soka Spirit. The intent of Soka Spirit is to allow us to attain Buddhahood through overcoming the evil that tries to destroy the kosen-rufu movement and prevent the happiness of each individual. President Ikeda recently said that no one should be a bystander at this critical time. We all need to be part of the battle.

## Goal

The third point is having a Goal. In *Learning from the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, President Ikeda quotes the Chinese Buddhist teacher T'ien T'ai, "The heart is like a skilled painter." President Ikeda writes that, "We should paint this vision of our lives in our hearts as specifically as possible. This 'painting' becomes the design for our future." To set the design for our own future, here, means to set goals—our personal goals, goals for others' happiness and goals for the SGI peace movement.

We often hear that goals should be specific and detailed. We can set bold and ambitious goals. The more impossible they are, the more rewarding they become when we reach them. We can also set goals that we feel comfortable with. Basically, we set goals to overcome hardship and create value.

Here, I would like to share with you the experience of my daimoku campaign for my husband's career. Two years after I retired from work, I had accumulated enough wisdom to realize that I had to do something very seriously about my husband's career if I wanted to enjoy life from then on. I wanted him to become successful and to get rid of financial worries once and for all so that I could fully devote my time to helping others. Next, I wanted to pay him in return for his love. In addition, I wanted to show tremendous actual proof in order to spread this Buddhism more effectively.

In other words, I wanted to be able stay home and not have to go back to work. I was having a good time staying home for two years! A lot of women and young women like



Kelly-Mooney Photography/CORBIS

As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we have the ability to "exchange" rocks for gold.

that idea, too! In last year's study conference, there was a man who wanted to chant for his wife to become successful, so that he could stay home. There's no sex discrimination in Buddhism, so please go for it!

I wanted people to appreciate my husband's ability so that he could succeed and advance in his career. I set a very high target, which I could never even have imagined if I was not practicing this Buddhism. I went into great detail as to "how," "what" and "why" he should be incredibly successful. I did not set the "when" because it was my first huge goal. I did not have the guts to set a time limit. Besides, I was ready to chant for as long as it took. I also chanted for our relationship—our love, health, growth and his happiness.

It took me three million daimoku over eighteen months to reach these goals. The result was my husband's career went far beyond my wildest dreams. It came true exactly as I prayed, every step, every detail. His ability, experience and capacity in his field are the "internal causes" from the Buddhist concept of the "ten factors." But for years, he could not find the right opportunity to use them. My goal, my determination and my

prayer became an "external cause" which led him to the right path at the right time. This is how our practice works. More importantly, our relationship, our love was truly able to grow stronger with each day. You may wonder how a person can love another more and more each day. We can because the benefits of the Gohonzon are expansive, infinite and know no bounds.

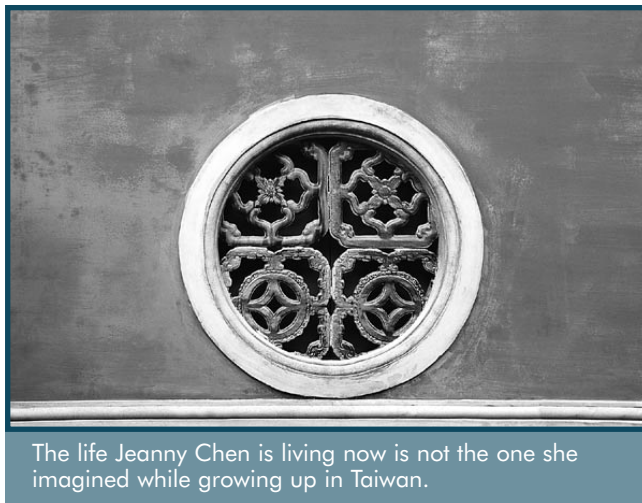
The fulfillment of these goals proved to me that nothing is impossible with the Gohonzon—nothing! The Gohonzon is very powerful and creative. Please don't be afraid to shoot for the moon! Set a goal and go for it!

## Determination

Now that we have converted all our dreams and desires into very concrete goals, the next step is my fourth key point—Determination. We have to be determined to change, determined to never to give up and determined to take the correct action now!

Let's talk about determining to change. It means to do human revolution. It's important to shift our fundamental life tendency in order to change our destiny and our karma. If we don't,

we'll just repeat the same life pattern. For instance, when we repeatedly face a similar situation, we will again respond with a similar attitude and a similar action. We literally create the same type of result for ourselves. Human revolution is not a slogan. It's very important, very practical and very real. We need to chant for the wisdom to recognize our shortcomings and weak



The life Jeanny Chen is living now is not the one she imagined while growing up in Taiwan.

Ken Wente/CORBIS

points and for the strength to take action to change them. We have to painstakingly drag ourselves away from our old pattern and look at things from a different angle. We shouldn't indulge ourselves.

Now, let's talk about never giving up. Once we set our goals there's no turning back. There's no "what if." I don't want to compromise. I don't take "no" for an answer. I will be as stubborn as I can to stick to my goals. This is the best opportunity for me to demonstrate how stubborn I am!

But how do we hang in there? It's so hard! We have to refresh our resolve daily through morning and evening prayers and chanting as much as we can. We also keep our life condition high by attending SGI activities regularly. Usually, when I come home from any SGI activity, I am very excited. My husband would joke with me saying: "Why are you so excited? Which man did you see at the meeting?"

When I chant, I try not to focus on my suffering. I ignore it and live peacefully with it. I keep in my mind my focused determination and the final goal. No matter what the reality of the situation seems to be, no matter what anyone else thinks or says, I hold on to my goal unwaveringly and pray to the

Gohonzon for it.

I look at the process of my daimoku campaign to reach my goal like tough training to forge, distill, develop and transform myself. It's to prepare myself for the harvest. If we are not ready, we won't enjoy the ultimate benefit of our goals. We have to be patient as we single-mindedly chant for our goals. No matter how long it takes, no matter how hard it is, we should keep chanting until we get there. And we will get there! I used to guarantee it, but it sounded so much like a TV commercial I had to drop it. It's in my heart, though. I honestly believe that we will make it by being persistent. Determine to take the correct action now. I would like to strongly encourage you to start now. Now is the time.

## Daimoku

So far, we have faith, we understand our mission, our goal is set and we've determined not to give up until we reach our goal. From now on we need lots and lots of daimoku. Key number five is Daimoku—chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Besides morning and evening prayers, we have to chant as much as possible.

Abundant prayer is the key. You

know, one of the funny things about Buddhism is that everything is the key. We have ten keys here. And we have keys within each key. However, President Ikeda has spoken time and again about the importance of daimoku. Some of the quotes I remember are: "There's no greater strategy than the Lotus Sutra." "Chant so even your face will glow." "Let's always advance with daimoku first. There's no way that your life cannot change."

There's a motto I used during my daimoku campaign for my husband's success in his career that was, "Chant daimoku that shakes the universe!" Well, what it should really be is chant daimoku that shakes your own life from its foundation that's connected to the universe. When we chant, we chant with a penetrating heart and with very deep resolve, thinking that this is a matter of do or die, life or death. And this is the only chance in our life.

When we chant with others it helps us develop a strong rhythm. But we should also have a self-motivated practice. We can't always depend on other members for support. We may want to chant several hours or more for major goals. We can build up to it bit by bit. But if we don't even start, we'll never get to the point where we can chant hours a day when we have a big emergency. The key is for daimoku to be joyful, not obligatory. We need to chant until we feel satisfied. Striving to chant daimoku is an expression of our strong determination. If I don't have a job and can chant for many hours a day, it may not necessarily be striving. But if you have a full time job, family responsibility, etc. and

you manage to chant as much as possible, that's striving!

When I was really fighting for something during that crucial campaign in my life, I made chanting my first priority. I put all leisure activities on the back burner, and totally devoted myself to my daimoku campaign. During my campaign for my husband's career, my friends would call me and invite me to daytime parties or to go shopping. I told them that I was busy. They had no idea why I was busy. Although I did not have a job, I treated chanting to reach my goal as my one and only responsibility besides taking care of my family. Nothing else mattered. Nothing else was important.

When we chant, we can see the outcome vividly with all our senses, see it happen before our very eyes. We even feel the joy and excitement of the fulfillment of our goals. It's important that we constantly reassure and reaffirm ourselves during our daimoku campaign by reading quotes from Nichiren Daishonin and President Ikeda's guidance. We can also use the experience of other people to inspire us.

When I was chanting for my husband's career, I learned the story of Victor Frankle. He was held captive in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. He wanted to escape from the camp so that he could share his experience with the world. While out in the yard one day, he saw a pile of dead bodies, all without clothes. From that moment, he started to plan his escape. The next time he was in the yard was his chance. He waited until dark, took off his clothes and dove into the pile of corpses, disguised as a dead man. Later on, the pile was dumped outside the camp. From there he ran fifty miles to freedom. Imagine his captors when they



One of the funny things about Buddhism is that everything is the key. We have ten keys here and keys within each of them.

RANDY PARIS/CORBIS

discovered he had escaped, they must have been hunting for him. He had no clothes on, no water or food. It was a very dangerous and harsh situation. Yet he made it! And now he has shared his experience through his books and his story has moved people all over the world.

Ever since I learned of his story, I compared my daily hours of chanting to his running fifty miles. Here I am chanting in the comfort of my own home. It was much more delightful than running fifty miles under his circumstances. "If he could make it, I am going to make it, too. And I'm going to tell people my experience!" From then on, I would run fifty miles in my mind every time I chanted. Each Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was like one step closer to my goal.

We need a profound prayer when we chant, but remember, no begging. Always pray to the Gohonzon that you have determined to reach your goal, no matter what! Because we have different missions and different

karma, we will get different results at different speeds. But one thing we can be sure of is that if we put forth a ten percent effort, we will realize a ten percent result. When we put forth 100 percent effort, we certainly will harvest a 100 percent result.

## Take Action

Okay, next we have key number six—Take Action. Everything is empty without action. In Buddhism, we have to take action. We have to say, "I'm the one who has to do it. It's my karma, my destiny. When my goals are fulfilled, it's my joy and my fortune."

I'd like to share my experience in achieving my very first goals. At the beginning of my practice, which was the third year after we immigrated from Taiwan, we bought a home which carried a jumbo mortgage. My husband worried and so did I! At the time, I was so new in this practice that I even wondered: if I don't open the window when I chant, will my daimoku still reach the universe and work? However, I learned that I could set goals and chant for them. I set a very high financial target for myself, which was eight times more than I was making. This was eleven years ago. My second goal was to reduce the size of our jumbo mortgage to make it more manageable. And my third goal was I wanted my husband to love me more and more each day.

Within three months, without looking for it, I landed a sales job at a computer company. Because of my massive chanting, it was very clear to me that I received a lot of business opportunities from the Buddhist gods, the protective functions of the universe. With the wisdom and strength developed through my

daimoku, I recognized various opportunities and took action to create business. I was and still am computer-illiterate. It's amazing that I could accomplish my first two goals after two and a half years of working in the computer industry. The point is that with the benefit of this practice, I could still succeed even if I was a novice. But I would not have made it if I did not put forth enough efforts and take action.

Let me stray for a moment from the subject. I would like to share two interludes with you. One time I made a cold call to solicit business. When I introduced myself, the customer asked, "are you the genie in the bottle?" We all know the genie in the bottle from the old TV series. She is so pretty, so upbeat. Most of all, she has the magic craft to turn everything into anything you want. I saw the program before, but it never clicked until that moment. "Yes, yes, I am the genie in the bottle!" I exclaimed. I was very excited about my newfound image. From then on, I thought, breathed, and acted like I was the genie in the bottle.

The other incident occurred when I had just begun chanting about the impossible dream for my husband's career. My son printed out the horoscope for my birthday. It read, "Focus on the transformation of illusion into reality." At that time, I was still so new in this practice, I did not have the slightest idea how my goal would be fulfilled. That phrase was like a powerful affirmation to endorse my goal. Immediately, I grabbed hold of it and declared to my Gohonzon that from then on, with all my energy, I would practice this Buddhism totally focused on the transformation of my dreams into reality.

When we practice Nichiren

Daishonin's Buddhism we can tap into our immense wisdom and life force, pick up anything big or small and make it work wonders for us. Remember the whole universe is within our grasp. The question is, "will we dare to ask for it?"

As to my goal about love, I did not just pray and wait for it to happen. I did my part. Naturally, the result was beyond my comprehension. It's the smartest goal that I ever set for my life. We've been married over twenty-three years — every day, every moment is still our honeymoon. It's incredible.

This isn't the life I imagined as a child. I suffered a lot during my childhood. I was cynical and resentful. Shortly after I started to practice this Buddhism, my husband began to comment, "Why is it that anytime I see you, you are so happy? What happened?" We smile when we are with our friends but we can't fake it at home. One time he said to me: "Because you are so happy, I feel even happier than you. I am so happy I don't know what to do. It's too much. I can't stand it!"

Besides becoming happy and upbeat, as an outcome of my efforts, I found I stood out among any group of people that I became involved with. My husband could see how other people embraced me. And he became very proud of me. Also because of my human revolution, most of my shortcomings and weak points disappeared, which made his life much easier. I have proven to him, through my actions, that I deserved his dearest love. You may try this formula at home for yourself. It



HORACE BRISTOL/CORBIS

An aerial view of farmland in Taiwan, Jeanny Chen's country of birth.

works. As a result, my husband really appreciates my Buddhist practice. He is a great supporter of the SGI.

Every single key point here needs your correct action to carry it out. To build up strong faith takes action. To chant daimoku is itself an unceasing action. I hope that you get the idea how important it is to take correct action.

## Study

**T**he seventh key point is Study. When most people think about study, they think about school, and they may have hated school. And in the SGI, there are study exams, too. They think, "Man, I'm not going back to school." As humans, we take in knowledge by reading, dialogue and listening. This Buddhism is meant to be studied. The deepest aspects of this Buddhism are available through several different programs in the SGI. We have Florida Nature and Culture Center conferences, curriculum study meetings, monthly study meetings, district study meetings, Sophia group, you name it.

In President Ikeda's *For Today and Tomorrow* (p. 180), he said, "Buddhist study is the soul of the SGI." We have to make the cause by subscribing to and reading the SGI publications and President Ikeda's guidance. We need to read *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. Each day we should study even one sentence or paragraph as if every single word is directly intended for us, for our lives. When things don't seem to be going our way, or we find ourselves in a crisis, it is an understanding of the Buddhist life-philosophy that keeps us going until we win. I believe everyone should understand the importance of study.

## Share Buddhism

**T**he eighth key point is to Share Buddhism with others. The will of Nichiren Daishonin is the peace and happiness of all people on earth through the propagation of his Buddhism. There is no greater cause than chanting daimoku and sharing this Buddhism and the SGI peace movement with other people. We have to make such a great cause in order to transform our own karma. I have come to the point where I enjoy sharing this Buddhism very much. I am very proud and feel very fortunate to be able to practice this great Buddhism in the SGI organization. When I share this Buddhism, it's like a priceless gift that I give to the other person. It's a powerful tool for the other person to hold in their hand—to change his or her destiny and also pass on to others. Sometimes introducing others to this practice takes a long time—we have to plant seeds. Whether we succeed this time or not, we've made the same good cause and we get to keep the priceless gift ourselves—not bad!

The easiest way to introduce others to this Buddhism is to generate great actual proof of our own. I have quite a few experiences where without even mentioning the practice, my friends were attracted to Buddhism simply because my actual proof spoke so loudly for me. Actual proof is like a magnet for people who are seeking to improve the quality of their lives.

My older son just graduated from the University of California at Berkeley this year. One day last semester, he called home under stress. He asked me how I was able to keep my life condition so high most of the time. It was a great opportunity for me to dialogue with him; it was the first time I not only shared my Buddhist practice, but also heard his opinion of me. I always wondered what my son thought of me, seeing that every day I spent so much time in my Buddhist practice. Would he think that his mom was so dumb to spend her life chanting hour after hour?

Boy, was I relieved! His answer was very sweet and positive. He would not have called to seek consolation and encouragement from me if not for my actual proof. As a result, he began to chant.

## Share Our Experiences

**N**ow we come to the ninth key point—Share Our Experiences. In President Ikeda's *Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, (Vol. I, p. 90) he said: "One person's victorious experience can provide courage, hope and heartfelt understanding to many others." We should share the essence of our experiences, not just the results. I

would like to encourage you to chant for the wisdom to know the best way to share your struggle, your determination and the efforts you made so people will have concrete information they can walk away with—knowing how they also can do it. In this way, we create the most value out of our precious experiences.

## Continuing in Our Practice

**O**K, we've got everything covered, so what would you guess the tenth key point is? It's Continuing in Our Practice of faith. The goal of this Buddhism is to bring happiness to oneself and to others. When we have achieved our personal goals, we have more capacity to help others. In a deeper sense, it's the real beginning of our practice, not the end. The lamp we light for someone else illuminates our own way. When we make efforts for the happiness of others, we are simultaneously helping ourselves. Once we achieve our dreams and goals, we should not slacken in faith. There is a continual struggle in life between the negative and positive, between good and evil. If we stop polishing our lives, this is where a benefit can turn into an obstacle. It's also very important to support our organization in every way we can.

I hope I did not throw too many keys at you! Are you ready to take action? Will you be unstoppable? The ultimate key is in your own hands. I hope that within a short time, you will be able to declare that you have realized more benefits than anyone and that you are the happiest person in the world.

*Jeanny's e-mail address is: happy-jeanny@hotmail.com*



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President and Mrs. Ikeda in a commemorative photo with Dr. David P. Roselle (center) and Prof. Daniel F. Callahan of the University of Delaware and Mary Norton, wife of the late Dr. David L. Norton of the university.

# *Recollections* of MY MEETINGS with LEADING WORLD FIGURES

*By SGI President Daisaku Ikeda*

*In his travels for peace, SGI President Ikeda meets with world leaders from all walks of life. In this series, he introduces the lives and characters of those memorable figures. President Ikeda is the founder of Soka University and the Soka school system.*

## President of the University of Delaware, Dr. David P. Roselle

The hallmark of outstanding teachers is their ability to explain things simply. President David P. Roselle of the University of Delaware is such a teacher. In his speech at the ceremony in Tokyo at which I was privileged to receive an honorary doctorate from this distin-

guished American university, he shared the following anecdote with the young people gathered.

An expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students. As the story goes, the expert announced to the group: "It's time for a quiz." He then

pulled out a large jar and set it on the table in front of him and proceeded to carefully place large stones inside. When the jar was filled to the top and no more stones would fit inside, he asked, “Is this jar full?” Everyone in the class answered, “Yes.” He asked, “Is it full, really?”

He then reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel, which he poured inside, shaking the jar so the gravel would work itself into the spaces between the stones. Then, he asked the group once more, “Is this jar full?”

By this time, the class knew what he was up to. “Probably not,” one of the students answered. “Good!” he replied. And, he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand, which he started pouring into the jar. The sand filled all the spaces between the stones and the gravel.

Once more he asked the question, “Is this jar full?” “No!” the class shouted. Once again he said, “Good.”

This time, he took out a pitcher of water and began to pour it into the jar until it was finally filled to the brim.

What this expert wanted to teach his class was this: “You should build your life in the manner I have built this display. If you don’t put the big stones of your life in first, you’ll never get them in.”

Dr. Roselle went on to comment on this example:

Therefore, it’s important for you to decide what the “big stones” are and get them in your jar of life first. Good possibilities are your loved ones, your education, your dreams, your commitment to a worthy cause, teaching or mentoring others, doing things that you love and taking special care of your health and fitness.

We have a saying in my country: “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” If you do sweat the little stuff (the gravel, the sand), then you’ll find your life filled with little items, worrying about things that don’t really matter, and you’ll never have the quality time you need to spend on important things.

By sharing this anecdote, Dr. Roselle was trying to convey to the young people in the audience the impor-



The campus of the University of Delaware.

Kevin Fleming/CORBIS

tance of thinking first about what they want to use their lives for—what purpose they want to dedicate themselves to. Why are you at school? What is the true purpose of learning? He was trying to teach the young people present to think for themselves.

## LACKING A PROPER SENSE OF PROPORTION

When we met earlier this year, Dr. Roselle remarked that a university’s worth is not determined by the length of its history or its size, but rather by the ideals and philosophy it upholds. I wonder how well Japanese universities would stand up when judged by this standard?

The Japanese are often said to lack a proper sense of proportion. Perhaps because they have no philosophy or are too emotional, they have extreme difficulty judging what is important and what is not. As a result, both as individuals and as a nation, they tend to obsess about petty concerns and overlook the truly important matters.

University is supposed to be a place where students can cultivate a proper sense of proportion, but this will be impossible unless there exists an intellectual climate where teachers are given to philosophical introspection and humbly reflect on themselves. This is because, for a teacher to ask a student, “What are you going to make your priorities in life?” the teacher himself has to be thinking about such issues in his own life and be engaged in an inner quest. This is something that is

missing in teachers who tend to be authoritarian and place themselves in a position above students. For real, life-to-life communication to occur, teachers and students, seniors and juniors, must have an open and equal relationship. I believe this kind of humanism is crucial for universities.

## THE ONGOING EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

The University of Delaware offers a unique program that supports the instructional improvement of its faculty. The purpose of the program is to teach faculty members how to create an environment in which students can feel happy and at ease pursuing their studies.

Mary Norton, who is the widow of the late University of Delaware professor Dr. David Norton (co-author of a book on the Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's value-creating pedagogy) and a scholar in her own right in the sphere of philosophy, ethics and critical thinking, remarked that university professors have a strong tendency to view themselves as specialists in their field first and teachers second. As a result, they are disinclined to make efforts to learn and develop themselves for the sake of their students. She noted that the astonishing thing about the University of Delaware program was that in spite of this trend, some fifty percent of the faculty have participated in it.

Students don't exist for the benefit of teachers; teachers exist for the benefit of students. That is why teachers must not be power brokers. Power invariably corrupts. Arrogant individuals cannot nurture and educate others. When teachers use students as a means to further their own ends, the flame of education at a university dies.

## A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT WHO PUTS STUDENTS FIRST

Dr. Roselle is known as a president who values his students first and foremost. Often students walking on the campus will turn around to answer someone's call only to find themselves face-to-face with President Roselle. "How are your studies going?" "Is everything okay?" he asks. He says he wants to put the students at ease and develop a relationship of mutual understanding and trust. He also surprises students with his quick and careful replies to the many letters and e-mails they send him.

He is constantly working for the students' happiness and does all he can to ensure that the students have an enjoyable and meaningful time at the university. He says that what is important is the fact that all teachers

have the power to exert a great influence on students and that they should therefore actively strive to make it a positive influence. This, he says, is something that he is constantly trying to do. This is a conviction born of Dr. Roselle's own life experience.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM PARENTS

Dr. Roselle was the first person in his family to receive a college education. He relates that his father was a "one-half orphan." His grandfather died young, leaving his grandmother with several small children to look after. Lacking the means to care for them all by herself, she was forced to leave the three youngest in an orphanage, and Dr. Roselle's father was one of those three.

Orphanages at that time, he says, often "loaned" their young charges out to people who needed help on their farms. Dr. Roselle's father was sent by his orphanage in New Jersey to work on a farm in neighboring Pennsylvania. Consequently, he only ended up with three years of elementary education.

After they got married, however, Dr. Roselle's mother encouraged his father to go back to school, and after much hard work he finally completed his high school education. He was a bright man.

Dr. Roselle says that from his father, he learned that you could overcome adversity through hard work, and that from his mother, he learned determination, relating that she was a very determined person—absolutely determined that things would get better. He says that his parents had a lot of adversity in their lives, but they were always cheerful and overcame every difficulty in their path.

It was from this background, he says, that he became the first person in his family to attend college. As a result, I understand, Dr. Roselle was simply content to get an undergraduate degree and find a job after graduation. He didn't have much money for further study, either. But one of his teachers encouraged him to continue his studies, causing him to change his mind. Because of that teacher's faith in him, Dr. Roselle went on to graduate school, obtaining a doctorate in mathematics and, eventually, becoming a university president.

I was very moved by this beautiful story of a teacher and student, and I said: "It's fine when everything's going well for students, but when they're having a hard time, we must give them courage. That compassion is the very heart of a teacher. I believe it is the mission of educators to teach people how to survive difficult times and triumph over them."

## FOUNDER'S LEGACY

When I inquired about Reverend Francis Alison, the founder of the University of Delaware, President Roselle's response brimmed with the spirit of a truly dedicated educator. "What was Reverend Alison's legacy?" I asked. "His first class of students," replied Dr. Roselle without hesitation.

The university has a long history. It was founded in 1743, prior to the independence of the United States from England. The youthful Reverend Alison began with only ten students, ranging in age from eight to sixteen. He taught in his own home at first and there was a shortage of good textbooks. But none of this deterred him.

He inspired his youthful charges with his passion for creating an "ideal new world." He taught them the then-revolutionary ideas of democracy and the separation of

administrative, legislative and judicial powers. From that first class emerged governors, congressmen, doctors and scholars; three of them signed the Declaration of Independence, and one signed the new Constitution.

President Roselle also commented that nothing gives him more pleasure than seeing the wonderful growth achieved by graduates of the school once they make their way out into society. As the founder of Soka University and the Soka schools, I share exactly the same sentiments. The graduates of these schools are as precious to me as my own life.

Mrs. Norton remarked that she believes the essence of education lies in teachers caring for their students as if they're their own children.

Dr. Raymond Callahan, a noted historian and associate dean of the Arts and Science Department at the University of Delaware, made the trip to Japan with Dr. Roselle and Mrs. Norton. He stated that successfully communicating with his students was even more satisfying for him than his academic achievements—of



Dr. David P. Roselle presents President Ikeda with an honorary doctorate from the University of Delaware. Dr. Roselle called President Ikeda a peace builder who fosters the "contributing global citizen."

Shiyo Press

which he has many, incidentally. Professor Callahan also has the past distinction of being selected by students as Teacher of the Year.

## THE STATE OF HIGHER LEARNING IN JAPAN

Those who are familiar with the university systems of both the United States and Japan say that the definitive difference between them is that American universities regularly evaluate the faculty. The academic achievements and the teaching performance of the faculty are both strictly monitored by their peers and students.

Some have gone so far as to say that in Japan, in contrast, academics spend all their time before they become professors trying to curry favor with influential senior professors, and then once they actually become professors, they can virtually get away repeating the same old lectures year after year throughout long, cushy tenures.

At some universities in the United States, students make anonymous evaluations of a professor's course at the end of each semester. I'm not suggesting that Japan

automatically adopt this system, but I do believe that unless faculty members are objectively evaluated for their performance, they will tend to become complacent, snug in their cozy world of privilege, and unable to carry out the constant self-reformation so important for personal growth. This is not my opinion alone, but one shared by many in the field. Unless our institutions of higher learning change, the rest of the educational system won't change, and Japan itself will never change, either.

## THE ABILITY TO RESPOND TO CHANGING TIMES

I asked Professor Callahan what he thought determined whether a society, nation, or organization flourished or declined. His reply was admirably clear. He said it all depends upon whether that society can successfully respond to changing times. A society must constantly accommodate change. A society is headed for trouble the minute it thinks that its way of doing things is the only way.

Yes, the world is constantly changing—and changing dramatically, changing rapidly. One year now is like ten years in the past in terms of the rate of change we experience. Soon the twenty-first century will begin. The age is fast approaching when national boundaries will be rendered meaningless. In this new age, I wonder how long Japan will continue its singular obsession with test scores and academic credentials from prestigious universities.

In the United States, talented students often switch schools or do their undergraduate work at one school and their graduate studies at another. Instead of asking, “What school did you graduate from?” people ask, “What can you do?” Japanese universities are often said to be hard to get into but easy to graduate from, with the upshot that students do notoriously little study. Unless we reverse this anomaly, how can our universities hope to produce people with the ability to respond to changing times?

Dr. Roselle has said that the purpose of education is to create world citizens. I wonder how many men and women of world-class caliber our Japanese universities have produced. How many young people have they sent out into the world who not only excel in a special field but also possess the language ability, the communicative skills, the creativity, along with a solid life philosophy and, above all, a passionate and universal humanism, to be able to freely engage and communicate with others around the world?

Isn't Japan's mindless educational system, which fails to focus on education's true purpose and is intent only



North Carolina Museum of Art/CORBIS

An oil painting of Benjamin Franklin. He once remarked that unless people were educated, the experiment of democracy would fail.

on cramming as much knowledge into students' heads as possible, producing large numbers of university graduates who have neither practical foreign language skills nor democratic spirit?

## EDUCATION IS VITAL FOR DEMOCRACY TO SUCCEED

Dr. Roselle also offered his thoughts on the relationship between education and democracy. Citing one of the founders of the United States, Benjamin Franklin, he said that unless people are educated, the experiment of democracy would fail. He added that people with a strong sense of responsibility are necessary for democracy to function. Before going to the ballot box, for instance, each citizen should have an understanding of what's going on in the world, for only when each citizen has this knowledge can democracy move in the right direction, he said. With Japanese democracy “at death's door,” this is a very urgent warning indeed.

First, we must reform education! To do that, educators must reform themselves. That is the first “big stone” that we must place in Japan's “jar” in the twenty-first century. 🌀

# LITTLE VICTORIES

By Mark Bennion, Vashon Island, Washington



Nancy and Mark Bennion. Raising a family, challenging his weaknesses and contributing to the SGI-USA are what Mark is most proud of.

**T**hirty-two years ago I thought painting would give my life meaning. I was 19 years old and the world was all about me. I quit the art classes I was taking and lived in a little cabin outside of Seattle. Painting, making movies and taking drugs, not necessarily in that order, seemed to be the thing to do in 1968.

I had mixed feelings when a friend asked me to go with him to a Buddhist meeting. I had pretty much rejected religion in general and organized religion in particular. It was arguments over religion that had caused me to leave home two years before, and I still had deep, unresolved issues with my fundamentalist family. It was so out of character for my skeptical friend to be positive about anything, much less a Buddhist meeting, that I thought there might be something to it. Reluctantly, I agreed to go.

Much to my surprise, something about that first meeting was overwhelmingly familiar. I felt like I had come home somehow. It wasn't an intellectual awakening. (I don't remember much of what was said.) I started practicing right away and before I knew it, the kid who hated anything organized was on his way to a gathering in Los Angeles with a busload of singing Buddhists.

After practicing for about a year, I was fortunate enough to meet SGI President Ikeda while on a trip to Japan. We talked for just a few moments, but he treated me like I was the most important person in the world. "The road to kosen-rufu [peace based on Buddhist



Whitnie and Patrick Bennion

principles] is very long," he told me. "Try to accomplish your daily goals. With common sense, be in society. Try to become a good person."

I remember thinking on the

plane home how I would devote the rest of my life to world peace, and, of course,

achieve instant success as an artist. For the first time in my life, my worldview was beginning to change from being all about me to one of beginning to understand that there was value in trying to help other people. But the reality was that I got off the plane flat broke with no idea where I would sleep that night. Lofty ideals had run headlong into real life.

As time went on, the realization sunk in that even after some fairly successful gallery shows, I couldn't make a living through my art. "With common sense, be in society," President Ikeda had told me. OK, so I went to work building fishing boats in the shipyards. I thought at the time that this was a real setback, but I needed some kind of job so that I could keep a decent apartment where we could hold discussion meetings. Sharing the practice of Buddhism with people had become a big part of my life. I was about to get married and I needed to be, you know, responsible. My wife, Nancy, and I started a family and began the challenge of building a life together. Living in an artist's studio would have to wait. I told myself, "I'll work on my paintings when I get a bigger workspace," or "I'll paint in the evenings when I find the time."

Time passed, and finally we scraped the money together to buy a house. It was a small place on two-and-a-half acres with an outbuilding that I could use as a studio. I was so happy to finally have a place to work. Of course, the reality was that in order to pay for this place, I needed to keep building fishing boats.

I think life is occasionally about big breakthroughs, but it's mostly about little victories. "Try to accomplish your daily goals," President Ikeda had said to me. Looking back, I think he was trying to get me to see that

big dreams are accomplished one day at a time. World peace is helping one person at a time. Raising a child is taking the time to read a bedtime story.

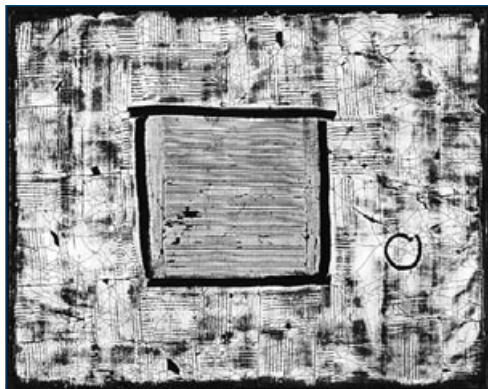
I kept painting while working in the shipyards for the next fifteen years. Every couple of years, I would have a gallery show and would usually sell a few pieces, but it was never quite enough to make a living. The gallery shows were always nice emotional highs. When a show didn't sell or got less than rave reviews—or no review at all—it was always sobering. I learned to take both in stride and challenge what's right in front of me and live my life.

Nancy and I have raised a family together. We've been through adversity of all sorts—our relationship, illness, no money, doubt, trying to teach our kids about life, our kids teaching us about life, working at a job that sometimes seemed to be going nowhere, dumb choices, really dumb choices, the death of friends and family and the feeling of being up against a wall and things were not ever going to change.

Things do change, however. What took me awhile to figure out was that just because I was practicing Buddhism, things were not going to change as a matter of course—all by themselves. As I took responsibility for all my circumstances and acted accordingly, I could see my life change for the better. I refuse to let my life be defined by my weaknesses. I have seen every seeming defeat turn into victory. The relationships have lasted and grown, the sickness has become health, the doubts have been steadily resolved, and our daughter, Whitnie, and son, Patrick, are independent and thoughtful people.

Even my stormy relationship with my father has changed. Before they died both my parents supported my Buddhist practice. While we remained at odds in our beliefs, we all learned to respect one another and solidified our bonds as a family.

Building fishing boats for twenty years has taught me how to weld, how to move heavy steel and the skills of good craftsmanship—to find beauty in simple shapes. These are all things I use in my sculptures today. Getting



Untitled, 1999, oil and paper on stainless steel, 20" x 26"

up and going to work every day taught me discipline, and as much as I hate to admit it, to challenge my lazy nature.

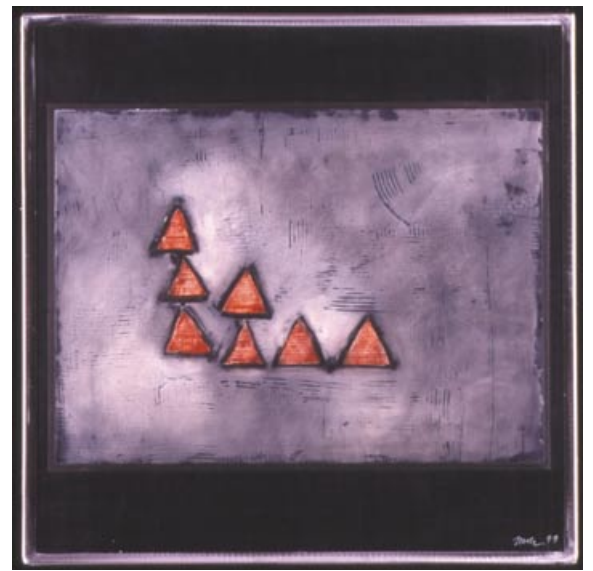
Six years ago, circumstances at work (and within me) told me it was time to finally begin working for myself. It has not been easy, but I have been able to make a living with my painting, sculpture, public art projects and designing and building architectural steel. In 1997, I collaborated with Daniel Winterbottom of the University of Washington and the Seattle Arts Commission to build a perimeter fence for a hazardous waste facility. The storyline panels that were installed tell the history of the local neighborhood. It was very satisfying to have longtime residents of the neighborhood say how much they enjoyed seeing their history come to life in those panels.

In 1998, I was selected to build a series of steel arches for the main entrance to the new King County Regional Justice Center in Kent, Washington; and my paintings and sculptures have been in four gallery shows in the last two years. For so many years I struggled with not having enough money. Now, with projects lined up for more than a year, I struggle to manage my time.

I have always had a hard time trying to explain to people what my art is about, why I've needed to do it and why it helps me understand myself. If I could put it into words, I would have become a writer. It is not everyone's cup of tea, but I'm OK with that. The great sculptor Isamu Noguchi once described his work as "Recapturing the ancient innocence." Perhaps there is a little of that in my own search. What I have found is by continuing to challenge myself in Buddhist practice, nothing is wasted—defeat becomes victory, foolishness becomes wisdom, perseverance becomes confidence and confidence becomes true happiness.

Making things with steel and paint has been something I've found I am good at. I do it because it helps me understand my life. Building a home, raising a family, challenging my weaknesses, staying married for thirty years (this is much more to my wife's credit than mine), and in some small way to have contributed to the SGI-USA are what I'm most proud of.

To me it is the teachers and plumbers and carpenters and nurses and engineers—and shipyard welders—who live with hope and confidence, who use their talents to make the world a better place who are the artists. They are the artists of humanity and my heroes. ☸



(Clockwise from above) Perimeter fence project, Seattle, Washington (Copyright Daniel Winterbottom, 1997). Untitled, 1999, oil and paper on stainless steel, 24" x 26". Untitled, 1998, oil and paper on stainless steel, 28" x 28". Untitled, 1998, oil and paper on stainless steel, 18" x 24".



# Calendars for 2001!



## The Century of Life 2001

The Century of Life datebook is back with a new edition for 2001. This gorgeous week by week calendar features stunning photography by SGI-USA members together with inspirational quotes from SGI President Ikeda. This year we've added a place for phone numbers and addresses, too.

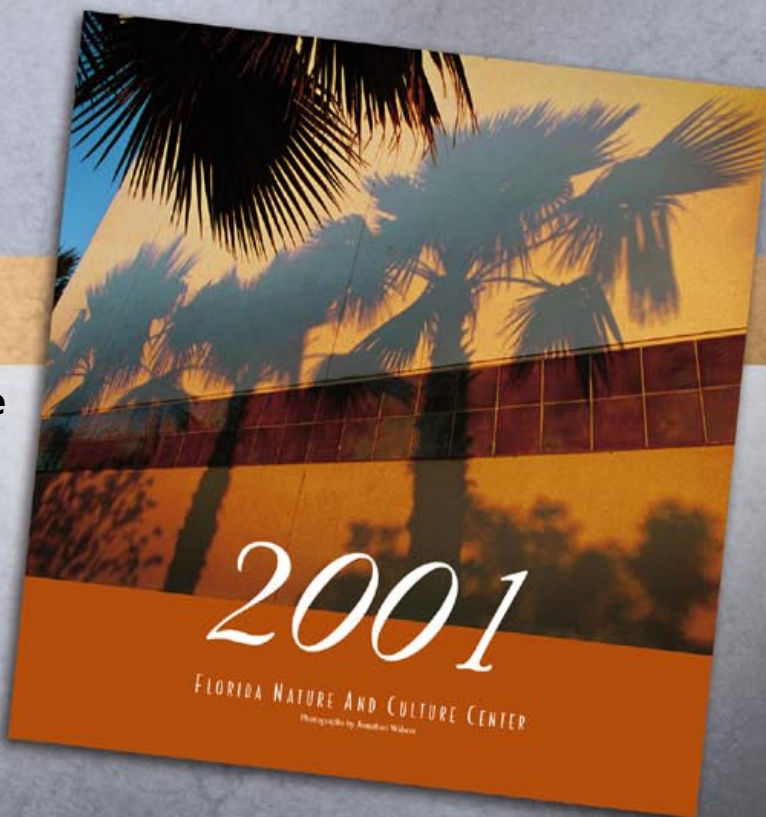
6" x 9" \$12.95 M/O # 4112

## Florida Nature and Culture Center 2001

A wall calendar featuring the unique beauty of the Florida Nature and Culture Center in photographs by Jonathan Wilson.

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THE GOLD THAT A  
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Study Material  
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"The Fourteen  
Slanders"**





## ***What Is the SGI & 'Living Buddhism' Magazine?***

### ***Building a Culture of Peace...***

Living Buddhism is the monthly journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist association that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Buddhism. With seventy-one centers throughout the United States, SGI-USA is affiliated with the worldwide SGI organization, which has twelve million members in 163 countries, with its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Our members reflect a broad range of ethnic and social backgrounds, representing the diversity of our American society.

### ***An Ancient Tradition...***

The origins of SGI-USA's philosophy can be traced to the teachings of the Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is present day India. Born Gautama Siddhartha, he abandoned his sheltered, princely life and sought instead to understand the inescapable sufferings all people share — birth, aging, sickness and death — and the means by which these sufferings could be overcome. He achieved at age 30 an awakening to the nature of life and the solution to these sufferings, and then traveled throughout India for 50 years, sharing the wisdom he had discovered. Shakyamuni's intuitive realization of a universal Law (Skt: *Dharma*) eternally permeating all life is most succinctly articulated in the Lotus Sutra, widely considered his most definitive teaching. Here the existence of the innate and universal reality, an essential enlightened nature, is revealed as being inherent in all life. The Lotus Sutra affirms that the realities of daily living provide both motivation and opportunity for spiritual transformation.

One of the most significant proponents of the Lotus Sutra was the 13th-century Japanese reformer, Nichiren Daishonin, who, the late religious scholar Masaharu Anesaki wrote, "stands almost a unique figure in the history of Buddhism, not alone because of his persistence through hardship and persecution ... [but also as] an eloquent speaker, a powerful writer, and a man of tender heart."

In one of his earliest writings, Nichiren Daishonin

declares both the purpose of his teaching and its conclusion: "If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and attain supreme enlightenment in this lifetime, you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life."

Nichiren taught all the workings of the universe embody a single principle or Law, a "mystic truth," which he expressed as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He set forth a Buddhist practice of chanting this phrase to place one's life into harmony with that universal principle. In this way, he taught, people can unlock boundless hidden potential and transform the inevitable sufferings of life into sources of growth and fulfillment.

### ***What We Believe...***

Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, writes, "Our task is to establish a firm inner world, a robust sense of self that will not be swayed or shaken by the most trying circumstances or pressing adversity. Only when efforts to reform society have as their point of departure the reformation of the inner life — human revolution — will they lead us with certainty to a world of lasting peace and true human security."

Our Buddhist philosophy is expressed in the concept of "human revolution," a process of inner transformation arrived at through Buddhist practice. It is a process by which we develop character; cultivate wisdom, courage, and compassion; and come to live and act for the happiness of others and the betterment of society as well as for personal fulfillment.

The SGI Charter, adopted in 1995, voices our beliefs and aims. These are to:

- ❖ Promote an understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism
- ❖ Contribute to peace, culture and education within society
- ❖ Safeguard fundamental human rights and eliminate discrimination
- ❖ Respect and protect freedom of religion and religious expression

*(Continued on inside back cover)*

- ❖ Work together with other religions to resolve issues affecting humanity
- ❖ Respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange
- ❖ Encourage the protection of nature and the environment

### *What We Do...*

The principle activity for SGI-USA members is the neighborhood discussion meeting. These informal gatherings, held in members' homes, bring people together to practice Buddhism, to study Buddhist principles and discuss how they can best be applied to the challenges of daily life.

In addition, through youth activities, educational seminars and exhibits, we address urgent issues facing individuals and humanity. Non-sectarian activities have included:

**Victory Over Violence:** A grass-roots campaign to raise awareness about violence, its causes, and solutions. The program is expanding to schools and community organizations.

**Religious Tolerance Through Dialogue:** SGI-USA sponsors and participates in a number of local and national inter-religious conferences and symposia, including the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies (SBCS).

**Education for a Culture of Peace:** SGI-USA traveling exhibits are recognized for their ability to inform and to evoke a sense of responsibility toward important issues facing our planet. These have recently included exhibits on global children's rights, the environmental crisis, nuclear disarmament, and on the life of the great scientist and pacifist Linus Pauling.

**The Earth Charter:** SGI-USA members have sponsored more than thirty conferences involving some 1,800 participants to educate the American people about the international Earth Charter project, and participates in the Earth Charter USA Network, the project's national coordinating group.

**Friendship Through Knowledge:** An SGI-USA educational project that collected and shipped more than 14,000 books to schools and colleges in Ghana.

### *A Modern Heritage...*

The founding Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a Buddhist and an educator who asserted that the purpose of education should be development of people's ability to create "value" (i.e., improvement, beauty and social good) in their daily

lives. The word *soka* means value creation. In pre-war Japan, where education focused on the training of workers and soldiers for the nation's growing military-industrial machine, Makiguchi's humane, student-focused views often brought him into conflict with the authorities. Arrested with other top Soka Gakkai leaders during World War II as a "thought criminal" for his unyielding opposition to Japanese militarism and government oppression of religion, Makiguchi died in prison of malnutrition and mistreatment at the age of 73 in November 1944.

Makiguchi's close disciple, Josei Toda, survived the ordeal and was released from prison in July 1945, just weeks before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Determined to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, Toda developed its membership from less than 3,000 families when he assumed the presidency in 1951 to more than 750,000 before his death in 1958. The Soka Gakkai's remarkable early growth stemmed from its commitment to helping people overcome suffering in the postwar chaos. Toda confirmed the Soka Gakkai's pacifist stance in 1957 by taking a strong, pioneering, public position against the use of nuclear weapons.

On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Within six months, he established chapters in the United States and South America, followed a year later by organizations in nine European countries. He continues to provide leadership for the global SGI organization, which now includes members in half the countries of the world. Mr. Ikeda has founded a number of educational and cultural institutions, including Soka University, which seek to foster the values of peace, culture and education.

For more information visit our web site at [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org)

#### **SGI-Affiliated Institutions**

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century  
[www.brc21.org](http://www.brc21.org)

Toda Peace Institute for Global Peace and Policy  
Research [www.toda.org](http://www.toda.org)

Soka University of America [www.soka.edu](http://www.soka.edu)

Soka University of Japan [www.soka.ac.jp](http://www.soka.ac.jp)

Institute of Oriental Philosophy

Pacific Basin Research Center [www.ap.harvard.edu](http://www.ap.harvard.edu)

Tokyo Fuji Art Museum

The Min-on Concert Association [www.min-on.or.jp](http://www.min-on.or.jp)