

**SIGNIFICANT DATES**  
**FEB. 16: THE BIRTH OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN**  
**HIS BEHAVIOR AS A HUMAN BEING**  
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Nichiren Daishonin, founder of the Buddhism practiced by SGI members, once wrote to a believer: “The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). In other words, the Buddha’s lessons aren’t to be learned so much from his words, but from his actions.

It is easy to think of the Daishonin as someone who lived above the fray of everyday human suffering. While we credit him with overcoming incredible persecutions for the sake of posterity and leaving us a philosophy that can lead humanity to peace, we may be less able to view him as simply human, vulnerable to the same feelings of inadequacy and defeat that we are.

To do this, however, belittles the Daishonin’s revolutionary life. Born of the humblest circumstances in a country plagued by war, famine and government corruption, this ordinary man created a movement that would span the globe and change millions of lives.

Despite his great accomplishments, he was very aware of his humanity. In “Letter to Misawa,” he discusses the persecution he has received as a result of his vocal opposition to the authorities: “During the past countless kalpas, I may have met the Lotus Sutra several times and aroused the aspiration for enlightenment. However, while I may have been able to bear one or two difficulties, I must have given up when faced with a succession of great obstacles. In this life, I knew that if I were truly resolved to withstand the harshest trial then I must speak out. This I did, and I encountered great persecutions one after another, just as the sutra predicts” (WND, 895).

He knew that his life, both in that existence and past ones, had been building strength to accommodate the challenges ahead, and that his overcoming of these difficulties—obstacles he had succumbed to in the past—would be the triumph of his life.

He goes on to say: “My resolution is immovable. Determined to endure any hardship, I have fulfilled the Buddha’s prediction, and I have not the slightest doubt” (WND, 895).

We can simply read this passage with the feeling of awe at the magnitude of the Daishonin’s life, or we can see him as someone who, through his own practice of faith and challenging of his circumstances, created an indomitable spirit to overcome anything. His greatest wish was for his followers to achieve this same awareness.

In a lecture on the Daishonin’s “The Opening of the Eyes,” SGI President Ikeda writes: “With this writing, he wanted to convey his immense life state to his followers, to show them that only through waging a great life-or-death struggle can one manifest a truly immense state of life. He wanted to establish this truth for all time” (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 50).

Through his actions, he did just that. He proved the greatness of the Lotus Sutra through perseverance and faith, not rhetoric, refusing to compromise his conviction in the Law and in humanity. His life stands as the greatest example of human revolution.

This Feb. 16, in commemoration of the 779th anniversary of the Daishonin’s birth, we can return to the fundamental spirit with which he lived; that we all, equally, can develop an immovable resolve and have not the slightest doubt in our inherent Buddhahood.