

EDITORIAL
WE REALLY ARE EQUAL
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By anointing anyone as inherently superior to ourselves, however subtly or innocently, we inevitably devalue ourselves. As SGI President Ikeda points out, this would be denying the power of our faith to transform our lives, bringing forth our own limitless potential.

Human beings are infinitely complex and unique creatures, endowed with characteristics and tendencies that find expression particular to each and never duplicated in full by another. As a result, living together can be a beautiful symphony filled with harmonious melodies or an exercise in terribly frustrating discord.

This uniqueness extends into the circumstances in which we are born. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that the exact right mixture of familial strife or security, financial bounty or drought, and so on can inspire us to find the Mystic Law and give us the opportunity to fulfill our mission.

So our particularness should be a source of joy and celebration, and never be used to assign value judgments. The Daishonin is very clear about this point: "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-renge-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" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385).

The very fact that we have been born in our circumstances, with the ability to practice and spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, speaks of our innate value and undeniable preciousness. None is greater than another; no one is more inherently fortunate than the person chanting next to them at their district meeting.

But discrimination can be a slippery little negative tendency, creeping in where we might never suspect. For example, there have been some misconceptions in our organization: that those born into SGI families—sometimes called "fortune babies"—are somehow special, endowed with a charmed life and karmic immunity; that the length of one's practice equals the depth of one's faith; or that the number of times you've met SGI President Ikeda indicates the amount of your fortune.

Of course, these are wonderful things. However, we are all inherently fortunate and valuable, regardless of how our unique karma manifests.

"The Lotus Sutra does not allow for any discrimination," says President Ikeda. "All people are equally entitled to salvation. Thus, to deny equality is to deny the Lotus Sutra" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 25).

By anointing anyone as inherently superior to ourselves, however subtly or innocently, we inevitably devalue ourselves. As President Ikeda points out, this would be denying the power of our faith to transform our lives, bringing forth our own limitless potential. All human beings suffer and experience joy. The quantity of our suffering or joy is only important in our own process of enlightenment, and need not be held up to any standard of comparison.

The key is appreciation. Our lives—and the lives of those around us—have manifested in the only way they could for our journey toward kosen-rufu to continue. President Ikeda

has always encouraged us to understand the significance of our unique situation. Discussing appreciation for one's family, for instance, he told some young people: "You may wonder why you were born into your family, or why your parents aren't as kind as others, or why you are not blessed with a more beautiful home and a better family. You may even want to run away from home. But the fact is you were born to this particular family, in this particular place and on this planet Earth. You were not born into any other family. This fact encompasses the meaning of everything" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 53).

Through appreciating the uniqueness of the entirety of our lives and embracing our inherent value—and the value of everyone else—we can advance forward together without hesitation or doubt. We can help create the beautiful symphony that is kosen-rufu, a world of each person's infinite potential realized.