

# Living BUDDHISM

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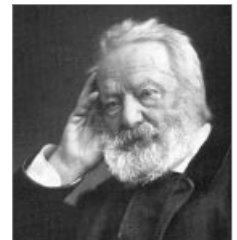
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**COVER:** LAFD Firefighter Amir Kaspian, a recent graduate of the Los Angeles Fire Academy, with his proud mother, Lily Ajar. Photo by Martin Cohen.

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# From Our Readers

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## TERRORISM AND NONVIOLENCE

I was shocked to read some statements in the article by Dr. Arun Gandhi ["Terrorism and Nonviolence"], in the October 2001 issue. Specifically: "When Israel bombs the Palestinians we either rejoice or show no compassion. Our attitude is that they deserve what they get. When the Palestinians bomb the Israelis we are indignant and condemn them as vermin who need to be eliminated."

Perhaps this was written to get an emotional reaction from readers, but in any case I felt the element of nonviolence was in fact missing from Dr. Gandhi's own words. It could be a rhetorical device, since I don't think he himself thinks those things. Was this a call to action to those of us who have been deeply upset by all the violence in South Asia and the Middle East? In that case, I would be very interested to know what type of action he would like us SGI-USA members to take. Although I make a firm determination every morning, particularly since September 11, that there must never ever be a World War III, and that my own workplace, family and community are my battlegrounds of peace and my human revolution, I welcome his additional suggestions.

But I honestly do not feel that most SGI members can include themselves among those who feel "they [Palestinians] deserve what they get"—except in terms of cause and effect, in which case we all do deserve what we get. I am not happy to be included as part of such an unconscious group of individuals. It made me less open to the wonderful statements he does make later in the article.

*Brigid Witkowski, Jackson Heights, New York*

*Reply from the author:*

The article was obviously written for the general public and the criticism was toward the general public. If we are against our policy toward the Israel-Palestine dispute we haven't expressed it firmly, which means we tacitly approve of what the government is doing. I have had nastier letters from SGI members who condone what the government is doing but I cannot hold the SGI responsi-

ble for what individual members believe. People don't have to wear the hat if it does not fit them.

Truth is often unpleasant, and unless we have the humility to swallow the bitter as we do the sweet, we will never change. Believing in Buddhism alone does not make one nonviolent. One has to demonstrate this in one's life. Nonviolence requires that we demonstrate tangibly the positive principles of love, respect, understanding, compassion and appreciation for all individuals in our day to day living.

There are many ways in which individually and collectively we can help reduce violence, prejudice, misunderstandings and misconceptions in society. We need to be willing to constructively help others; learn about other cultures and religion and especially help those who are economically challenged in our society and our world.

The Institute has started a Help for Humanity Fund through which we are urging communities in affluent countries to build relationships with communities in poor countries by saving a coin or a dollar every day for constructive programs. That fund can then help the community in a Third World country like Afghanistan or anywhere else attain some of the basic amenities in life that we take for granted. For instance, we spend \$1 billion on ice cream every year, which is enough to provide clean water and sanitation for all those who live in Third World countries. What we need is a people-to-people movement that is compassionate and constructive. If we reach out in this way, we will not have people hating us so much that they are willing to sacrifice their lives to express their hate.

Arun Gandhi

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## GANDHI'S NONVIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi's pacifism found expression in the political tool of nonviolent protest, non-cooperation and passive resistance against British colonial rule. In comparison with the Nazis, British soldiers and policemen were not violent, and therefore, passive resistance worked very well. By contrast, even though the Jews of Europe were entirely nonviolent in their response to the Nazis, they were annihilated in the death camps. Even though Gandhi claimed that his

brand of nonviolence would work against fascists bent on world domination, in the end, only a stupendous military effort by the Allies could stop them. After the Nazis and the Japanese fascists were defeated, it was then possible for nations of good will to reach out the hand of friendship toward Germany and Japan. Regrettably, the same holds true in dealing with Bin Laden and Afghanistan under the Taliban.

The claim that an endless cycle of violence would be initiated does not hold up to historical facts. After the end of the Second World War, neither Germany nor Japan held resentment against the U.S.; both nations were thankful that the Allies got rid of the fascists.

I don't think that any American likes the idea of civilians getting killed and maimed by American bombs, and it is heart rending that the Afghan people are caught in the middle of this war. But just like the fascists, the terrorists must be stopped.

*Nicholas Bergman, New York City*

## THROUGH THE EYES OF THE PARENT

I read with interest the article "Through the Eyes of the Parent: Helping Children Cope With Tragedy" that appeared in the October 2001 issue. While I found it extremely interesting, one paragraph provoked me to respond:

"We must then speak to them [children], striving to reconcile the dilemma of first advocating the importance of nonviolence as Buddhists, while explaining terrorism, and why armies are maintained and the act of going to war."

Although you don't literally say we must explain the need for armies to be maintained or for the act of going to war, you leave enough room for suggestion that these two compromises of the resolve to seek solely nonviolent solutions are O.K. both as actions in and of themselves. This should be explained to children, but not without asserting the even greater need to propagate absolute respect for the sanctity of life, as well as the need for people to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to subdue and win over the almost impossible-to-control negativity inherent in their and all others' lives.

For this reason, I strongly urge all of us to explain to our children how superior nonviolence is to the retaliation to violence with more violence.

*Marc Ginsburg, Staten Island, New York*

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## Frequently Cited Sources

*For convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:*

— *The Writings of Nichiren*

*Daishonin:* **WND**, followed by the page number.

— *Gosho Zenshu:* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese) **GZ**, followed by the page number.

— *The Lotus Sutra*, by Burton Watson: **LS**, followed by the chapter and page number.

# The SGI Is a Great Light of Hope for the World

In his message commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, SGI President Ikeda said: “We now embark on a new phase in our journey toward the eternal spread of Buddhism and the realization of a world where humanism and peace prevail” (*World Tribune*, May 11, p. 11). In the aftermath of September 11 and the uncharted waters we are now navigating, these words resonate with even deeper significance. For all of us, for all people seriously dedicated to creating a world of peace and humanism, we truly have embarked on a new, more serious phase.

I have been talking with members around the country about how we can conclude this significant year. We all have challenged ourselves this year. I hope that we can reflect on our goals and efforts this past year and make this — the first year of the new century — historic and victorious.

Think about the determinations you made at the beginning of the year. What progress have you made? I strongly believe that SGI-USA’s victory in this coming era hinges on the personal victory of each of us. I repeatedly emphasized this point when I first became general director. And that means our victory as individuals right now.

Every day, we hear news about threats of terrorism, biological and otherwise, and the reality of the United States’ military engagement in Afghanistan. In such a time, it is difficult to maintain a sense of hope or optimism about the future. It seems natural

to question the meaning of our individual efforts or of pursuing our dreams. As we look around, it seems that anxiety or despair is indeed the climate of our society.

But I would like to remind everyone of the basic principles of our faith: each life is precious and irreplaceable; each of us possesses the ability to transform our lives and the lives of others; and through transforming our lives, we can create the world that we want.

In President Ikeda’s May 3 message, he said: “The great lesson of the 20th century, therefore, has been that global change and even our very survival hinge on our own inner transformation. When human beings change, all else will follow. The humanism of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, which sheds new light on the human being and enables people to draw forth their infinite potential, is the sun of hope for humankind in the 21st century” (*World Tribune*, May 11, p. 11).

The pursuit of our dreams fuels the transformation of our lives and reveals our deepest potential. Faith, conviction in our mission and confidence in the value of our own lives — these are our tools to eradicate fear, anxiety and feelings of powerlessness. These also ignite hope in the hearts of our friends and loved ones in this time of uncertainty. Each of you is a precious beacon of hope.

This summer and fall, we worked in beautiful unity toward the success of the Victory Over Violence

***It is time for humankind to turn away from narrow, individual self-interest and toward the welfare of the planet as a whole. It is time for humankind to develop a common identity as global citizens.***

Family Youth Festivals. Our movement for victory over violence has created bridges of friendship and understanding with people from many different sectors of society. These fifty-plus events gathered more than 100,000 people across our nation and showed people what we in the SGI believe in and stand for.

On October 7, the day that the United States began bombing Afghanistan, I was in Los Angeles attending the VOV festival there. Though news of the attack came as a shock, the dominant mood was one of determination. As I spoke to many participants, the prevailing feeling was that “now, more than ever, we must work to establish victory over violence.” Bernard Parks, the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, changed his schedule and made an unexpected visit to the event. Chief Parks shared with me later that he came because he was so inspired to see such a diverse array of youth taking a stand to eradicate violence, starting with their own lives.

I believe that all of our festivals were timely and significant. This is a message of hope that we offer, not only for ourselves, but for the world. We should not underestimate the significance of our role at this crucial time in history. In truth, it is up to us — individually and collectively — to determine whether we become an organization that merely reflects the trends of the time or one that creates the positive direction in which our society will move.

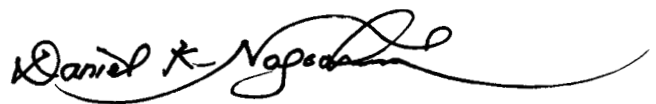
In this regard, President Ikeda’s May 3 message points us clearly toward the future: “The world is becoming increasingly borderless and interconnected. It is time for humankind to turn away from narrow, individual self-interest and toward the welfare of the planet as a whole. It is time for humankind to develop a common identity as global citizens. In this respect, the harmonious solidarity of the SGI is a great light of hope for the world. ... Dialogue and

exchange are the most effective means to achieving [the creation of a global human community]. I will therefore energetically continue to conduct sincere, ongoing dialogue. Always holding fast to hope, I will continue, today and tomorrow, engaging in exchange for the sake of peace. For I believe that bridging the differences between cultures and civilizations will be one of the biggest challenges of this century” (*World Tribune*, May 11, p. 11).

During this holiday season, I sincerely pray that all of us will cherish those people we love and express appreciation for all the beauty within our lives. As we approach the end of this historic and momentous year, let us pause to reflect on our goals, hopes, efforts and struggles. Let us determine to exert ourselves at this crucial juncture, to accomplish what we set out to accomplish — in our personal lives, in our professional lives and in our organizational responsibilities. Whether we do this or not is entirely up to us. If we don’t, it is possible that nobody but us will even notice. But we should understand that the effort to accomplish our goals, the effort to realize our inner transformation, and the effort to expand our movement are the efforts that can transform our world. Perhaps nobody will notice if we don’t. But the world will change if we do.

Once again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you all for your dedicated and sincere effort this year. Please take the very best care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Daniel K. Nagashima



SGI-USA General Director

# The Greater the ILLUSIONS Humanity Suffers,

*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* is a compilation of letters and theses by the founder of the Buddhism practiced by the SGI. Studying his teachings is a crucial component of the Buddhist practice and faith. Study meetings are held regularly for this purpose.

The study material for SGI-USA in December is an excerpt from Nichiren Daishonin's letter, "The Kalpa of Decrease." The excerpt and commentary appeared in the November issue. The following article is supplemental material.

## the More PROFOUND Is the Teaching Required

### *The Kalpa of Decrease — A Time to Overcome Greed, Anger and Foolishness*

**T**he title, "The Kalpa of Decrease," is taken from its opening passage: "The kalpa of decrease has its origin in the human heart. As the poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness gradually intensify, the life span of human beings gradually decreases and their stature diminishes" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1120). *Kalpa*, a Sanskrit word, is an extremely long period of time. Sutras and treatises

differ in their definitions, but kalpas fall into two major categories, those of measurable and immeasurable duration. There are three kinds of measurable kalpas: small, medium and major. One explanation sets the length of a small kalpa at approximately sixteen million years. According to Buddhist cosmology, a world repeatedly undergoes four stages: formation, continuance, decline and disintegration. Each of these four stages lasts for twenty small

kalpas and is equal to one medium kalpa. Finally, one complete cycle forms a major kalpa.

The *kalpa of formation* is the period of time in which a world takes shape and living beings appear. The *kalpa of continuance* is the second stage. In this kalpa a world and its inhabitants continue to exist. In this period the life span of human beings is said to repeat a cycle of change, decreasing by a factor of one year every hundred years until it reaches ten years, and then increasing at the same rate until it reaches 80,000 years. It then decreases again until it reaches ten years, and so on. A period when the human life span is lengthening is called a *kalpa of increase*, while a period when it is diminishing is called a *kalpa of decrease*. The *kalpa of decline* is the period of time during which a world decays. And the *kalpa of disintegration* is the last of the four-stage cycle in which a world disintegrates.

## Greed, Anger and Foolishness Diminish People's Life Span

**T**he explanation of life span in such Buddhist cosmology may not be taken literally in terms of years. Rather, it may be understood in terms of life-condition, that is, the diminished life span as the enfeebled and confused state of life and the prolonged life span as the empowered and sound state of life. As the Daishonin points out, “The kalpa of decrease has its origin in the human mind,” meaning that the enfeebled state of life is caused by life’s own delusions. Grasping the concept of “the kalpa of decrease” from the perspective of the inner workings of human life, the Daishonin explains that in a kalpa of decrease, people’s lives are so consumed by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness that their life span diminishes. In Nagarjuna’s *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the three poisons are regarded as the cause of all illusions and earthly desires. The three poisons are so called because they pollute people’s lives and cloud their self-knowledge, that is, their understanding of their Buddhahood. When deluded by the three poisons, therefore, people lose respect for human life and act inhumanely.

When he says, “As the poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness gradually intensify, the life span of human beings gradually decreases and their stature diminishes,” the Daishonin explains that when we are consumed with greed, anger and foolishness, our ability to live long is lessened and our physical appearance is affected. We may interpret this to mean that our delusions diminish the life force and wisdom necessary to live long, healthy lives. People’s diminished stature in a kalpa of decrease may be also taken to indicate not only people’s weak physical conditions, but also their inner powerlessness—how small they feel about their own existences. If people’s diminished life span is caused by their delusions, as the Daishonin suggests, the secret to living long and productive lives must be found in our efforts to cleanse our minds of the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness.

## The Three Calamities of Warfare, Pestilence and Famine

**T**he Daishonin explains that on a societal level, the three poisons are the underlying causes of the calamities of warfare, pestilence and famine, which are said to occur at the end of each kalpa of decrease. The calamity of famine is also called the calamity of high grain prices or inflation; this term may be also interpreted generally as an economic recession. During the Daishonin’s time, people suffered from violent conflicts, the Mongol invasions, pestilence, famine and repeated natural disasters such as earthquakes, drought and flood.

Seeing many people suffering before his eyes, the Daishonin could not help wondering why people had to suffer and started to seek the causes of human misery. In this regard, the Daishonin states: “In the kalpa of decrease, the three minor calamities will occur, namely, famine, pestilence, and warfare. Famine occurs as a result of greed, pestilence as a result of foolishness, and warfare as a result of anger” (WND, 989). The Daishonin identifies the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness as the prevalent characteristics of the people living in a kalpa of decrease and as the cause of their major sufferings.

## The Three Poisons of Greed, Anger and Foolishness

**T**he poison of greed is a tendency to be controlled by desires, instead of using them as a means to attain happiness. People in this condition suffer because they never feel satisfied. Yet they desperately try to possess and consume more to satisfy their own desires, never wanting to share with others. No matter how much they possess, they cannot even enjoy their possessions because they are never enough and there's more to be acquired. At the core of greed lies the insecure self that seeks to validate its meaning with the possession of external objects.

The poison of anger is a condition in which people are compelled to control their circumstances yet unable to do so, resulting in deep frustration and hatred for themselves and others. Their inability to control their environment frustrates them and wounds their pride; they are always angry at whatever does not go their way. People who are controlled by the poison of anger cannot exercise wisdom to create value, that is, joy and happiness; instead, they act to bring more suffering and unhappiness upon themselves and others. At the core of anger lies people's deep-seated powerlessness, which they try to compensate for with their control over the externals, rather than enriching and empowering their inner lives. Often their desire to control the external objects takes an extreme form — destruction. Angry people feel compelled to destroy others or things of value to others in order to compensate for their inner powerlessness. When they are prevented from destruction, their destructive tendency often points to themselves.

The poison of foolishness is a lack of wisdom to use reason and create genuine happiness. The poison of foolishness particularly clouds people's understanding of the law of cause and effect at work within their lives. People in this condition are at a loss as to the cause of their suffering; therefore, they always complain and lament their circumstances while blaming others for their own misery. Because of their inability to perceive the cause of their prob-

lems or the solution, they are pessimistic about their lives and make more negative causes, further intensifying their suffering. The poison of foolishness is the inability of self-reflection.

T'ien-t'ai also explains greed, anger and foolishness as a part of the five delusive passions.<sup>1</sup> According to his interpretation, people steeped in the poison of greed favor whoever agrees with their own views; and people touched by the poison of anger resent whoever disagrees with their own views; and people confused by the poison of foolishness cannot understand that their views are false and actually the cause of their suffering.

## The Three Poisons and the Current Global Problems

**A**s we closely examine each of the three poisons and the current situations in the world, we can understand how people's greed, anger and foolishness are leading to the three calamities of warfare, famine and pestilence. War breaks out when people, controlled by the poison of anger, forget that compassionate dialogue, rather than violence, is the ultimately effective means to solve conflicts and create peace. Freedom and equality decline, and authoritarianism and dictatorship increase when people favor only those who hold the same view and hate those whose opinions differ from theirs.

Broadly interpreting famine as a shortage of various resources needed to sustain and enrich our lives, we can understand that this condition is caused more often by people's greed than by uncontrollable factors in nature. Many people, in both developing and developed nations, are suffering from an inequitable availability of food, energy, medical care, social welfare and education. Often driven by greed, some people selfishly seek material wealth and actually create "famine" for many others.

Pestilence may be considered a malfunction of a living organism caused by mental or physical disharmony, and many disharmonies of the body and mind are often caused by our own foolishness. Furthermore, the global destruction of the envi-

ronment, in one sense, can be regarded as a “sickness” of the Earth. In this sense, it may be said that the global destruction of the environment is caused by our foolishness in creating disharmony with the environment — our lack of wisdom to understand the symbiotic relationship between ourselves and the environment.

## Self-control for Greed, Compassion for Anger, Wisdom for Foolishness

While the Daishonin identifies greed, anger and foolishness as the causes of famine, warfare and pestilence respectively, he attributes the most fundamental cause of these calamities to ignorance of the fundamental law of life, that is, the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. To understand the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is to see one’s own Buddhahood and awaken to the absolute dignity of every person. The Daishonin teaches that we can achieve this realization through our sincere faith and prayer to the Gohonzon.

The Daishonin, therefore, refutes any Buddhist teaching that attempts to cure the three poisons on a superficial level without dealing with the people’s fundamental ignorance of their innate Buddhahood, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In “The Kalpa of Decrease,” the Daishonin says: “Thus, the extremity of greed, anger, and foolishness in people’s hearts in the impure world of the latter age makes it difficult for any worthy or sage to control. This is because, though the Buddha cured greed with the medicine of the meditation on the vileness of the body, healed anger with the meditation on compassion for all, and treated foolishness with the meditation on the twelve-linked chain of causation, teaching these doctrines now makes people worse and compounds their greed, anger, and foolishness” (WND, 1121).

The three kinds of meditation the Daishonin mentions above are the methods of what the Daishonin calls “the provisional teachings” to cure people of the three poisons. Greedy people see the impurity of their attachment, thus learning self-control; angry people see the importance of compas-

sion; and foolish people gain the wisdom to perceive the causal law of life. These methods are also illustrated by one of the “four ways of teaching” (Jpn *shishitsudan*). The Daishonin, however, points out that those methods would be ineffective or even harmful if practiced without understanding the fundamental law of life.

The human mind is complex. The delusions that cause us suffering are similarly complex. While some illusions are relatively simple, others are deeply rooted in our lives. The greater the illusions we suffer from, the more profound the teaching that is required. As the Daishonin explains in “The Kalpa of Decrease:” during a kalpa of decrease, the negative functions of human life intensify, overwhelming its positive functions. If we wish to control our profound illusions, we need the teaching that reveals life’s innermost strength.

Simply meditating on self-control, compassion and wisdom may not be effective without tapping into our innate power to manifest those qualities in reality. When we awaken to our own Buddhahood through prayer to the Gohonzon, however, our conscious efforts now become effective. As the Daishonin states, “One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha” (WND, 1121). Thus, our awakening to “the root of good” within us allows us to control “the root of evil” within us. We might sometimes think, “Because I practice Buddhism, I don’t necessarily have to worry about my behavior,” assuming that our actions automatically befit those of a Buddhist without much conscious effort. However, the qualities of self-control, compassion and wisdom only have impact when they are actualized in daily life through the strengthening of our Buddha nature. ☸

*By the SGI-USA Study Department*

1. The five delusive passions are greed, anger, foolishness, arrogance and doubt; they are the illusions of the threefold world. The five delusive passions are explained in Vasubandhu’s *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*. Dharmapala, one of the ten great scholars of the Consciousness-Only school, includes the five delusive passions along with the five false views in a list of ten fundamental earthly desires, and T’ien-t’ai includes them in the illusions of thought and desire, which constitute the first of the three categories of illusion.



In his travels for peace, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda engages in dialogues with thousands of people from all walks of life. In this series, he shares his thoughts about some of these encounters.

SGI President Ikeda meets with former Turkish President Süleyman Demirel, Tokyo (December 3, 1992).

*SGI President Ikeda's Essay Series*  
WONDERFUL ENCOUNTERS

*Former President Süleyman Demirel  
of the Republic of Turkey*

# A TOWERING EXPERIMENT IN *Dialogue Between Western and Islamic Civilizations*

In Turkey, travelers from the West can experience the exotic East, and those from the East can experience the modern West. To both sets of travelers, it is here that the world begins to show a different face.

Every country offers a different perspective. For example, in Japan an apartment with a western exposure is usually cheaper, because it gets very hot in the afternoon, but in sun-starved northern Europe such an apartment is especially desirable. In some cultures it is rude to look directly into another's eyes, while in others it is rude not to. In Japan it is perfectly acceptable to hold one's rice bowl as one eats, while in Korea this is regarded as

impolite. Whereas in some countries it is etiquette to keep a polite distance when talking to someone, in other countries being close enough to feel each other's breath is a sign of friendship and keeping one's distance is a sign of coldness.

Attitudes toward one's country vary as well. There are those who dedicate their lives to their country. There are those who think of the state merely in terms of a large social service provider and who are happy



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*“Turkey, as a pivotal center linking East and West, North and South, has a singular role to play in fostering harmony among humankind.” Above, the Sulmaniye Mosque sits atop an Istanbul hill, over the Golden Horn.*

to live in any country that provides such services well.

Instead of passing judgment about these differences, it is important to acknowledge that differences in opinion and outlook exist.

An Indian businessman visiting Japan was taken by his Japanese hosts to a karaoke bar. When they urged him to take the mike and sing, he was shocked and said, “I’m not a performer!” For his part, he simply wished to talk seriously about business, and he was no doubt weary of the insistence in Japanese corporate culture on such demonstrations of camaraderie. He apparently also voiced surprise at the racial discrimination and emphasis on academic standing he found in Japanese society.

As the world continues to grow smaller, understanding of other cultures is an increasingly pressing issue.

Several years ago, in New York, there was a conflict between Korean grocers and Haitian patrons, partly due to cultural differences. When Haitians speak to each other, they frequently reach out and touch the other person’s hand or shoulder. They

regard such gestures as a sign of warmth. But in most East Asian cultures this is not considered polite. The aversion of the Koreans to personal contact was perceived by the Haitians as a snub and discrimination.

The Korean grocers also prided themselves on arranging their products neatly on their shelves, and they didn’t appreciate having customers picking up and handling goods unless they were going to buy them. On the other hand, to Haitians, it is only natural to handle something and look it over carefully before deciding whether it’s worth the price. These kinds of cultural misperceptions contributed to the friction between the two communities that eventually escalated into a boycott against Korean-owned grocery stores by the Haitian patrons.

Where strong bonds of friendship exist, cultural differences can lead to new insights and mutual respect. Sadly, in the general run of things, such differences often result in misunderstandings and conflict.

There is nothing worse than forcing one’s culture on others.

## Japan's Rigid Social Conformity

I have heard an account of a family, here in Japan, in which the father was Muslim. The child of that family attended a Japanese school. Sometimes the school lunch contained pork, the consumption of which is prohibited in Islam. The parents requested that on such days their child be allowed to bring a bag lunch from home, but the school refused, saying that learning to eat what everyone else ate was part of the pupils' education. The child ended up having to skip lunch entirely on those days.

An old saying has it, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Voluntary adherence is one thing, but forced conformity is wrong. Some Japanese, though aware that followers of Islam may not drink liquor, try to impose it on them, saying, "It's Japan, so drink up!" "If you don't drink, I can't trust you!"

There is a proclivity in Japan, fostered by a strong sense of group identity, toward rigid social conformity. Some non-Japanese comment that the most unpleasant thing about living in Japan is the idea that everyone must behave the same way, that what's right for the majority is right for everyone.

It is crucial that we inquire after the other person's views and thoughts. Unfortunately, the arrogance to ignore others' opinions is often hard to recognize in oneself.

We are living in an age of intercultural encounters. What is needed so that those encounters will not be discordant clashes but joyous symphonies?

## Weathering Fierce Storms Undefeated

Former President Süleyman Demirel of the Republic of Turkey is affectionately called Baba ("Father") by his fellow citizens. It is a term perfectly suited to this man who exudes a quiet dignity and strength reminiscent of a massive tree that has sunk deep roots in the earth. He has been a prominent figure in Turkish politics for four decades, through the end of his presidency last year. In that time, he has been buffeted by many fierce storms. He has served as prime minister seven times, and twice he was toppled by military coups.

During the second military takeover in 1980, he

was placed under arrest. At that time he lamented that it was not he who had been imprisoned, but the Turkish people; it was not he who was in chains, but Turkey's fledgling democracy. The military ordered him to disband his political party and to refrain from any political activity for a decade — and in fact he was constrained in this way for seven years, until a 1987 referendum lifted the political ban.

I met Mr. Demirel five years later, in December 1992, when he was visiting Japan as Turkish prime minister, having been elected for his seventh and final term. He had the commanding presence of one who has weathered the vicissitudes of the times, and the depth and breadth of character of one who has turned all adversities into a source of strength and growth.

## Crossroads of East and West, North and South

Our meeting came after the end of the Cold War and the end of the Gulf War. Mr. Demirel remarked that the world was changing, changing dramatically, and that this made efforts for peace all the more imperative. I noted that Turkey, as a pivotal center linking East and West, North and South, has a singular role to play in fostering harmony among humankind.

Turkey straddles Asia and Europe. Six months before our meeting in Tokyo, I was in Istanbul gazing at the Bosphorus Strait. It was my first visit to Turkey in thirty years. The land on the west side of the narrow strait was Europe; that on the east, Asia. Travelers from the West can experience the exotic East, and those from the East can experience the modern West. To both sets of travelers, it is here that the world begins to show a different face.

To the north lie Russia and the Slavic world; to the south, the Mediterranean and Africa. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey forged fresh ties with the five newly independent Turk republics in Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

Turkey — land of Homer's birth and Alexander the Great's early conquests. Greek (Hellenistic) civilization had once flourished there. In the time of the

Byzantine Empire, it was a leading center of the Christian world, and later under the Ottoman Turks, it was a center of Islamic civilization. Mirroring its kaleidoscopic history, Turkey today is a place of immense ethnic diversity. One can see people with Arab and Mongolian features, people with faces like those of Greek statues, Russian faces, Eastern European faces. It is as if the land of Turkey is trying to encompass all humanity and make it one, calling out: “West, become East in my embrace! East, become West in my home!”

### ***“Audi Alteram Partem— Hear the Other Side”***

**M**r. Demirel is known as a prodigious reader, but when he told me he had read my dialogue with British historian Arnold Toynbee, I was surprised. The Turkish-language edition of the book had only come out when I was in Turkey, about six months earlier.

I remember Dr. Toynbee fondly. Turkey also held a very special place in his heart. It was because of events in Turkey that he was able to become a pioneer in rejecting a Eurocentric view of history. During our conversations in his London apartment, he told me that he was once forced to quit London University because he had “angered people prejudiced against Turks” by reporting on events in Turkey as he witnessed them.

Dr. Toynbee told me that this visit to Turkey had taken place back in 1921, so he must have been about thirty-two years old. He had gone to observe the Greco-Turkish War that had been raging for two years. First he observed from the Greek side, then from the Turkish. For Dr. Toynbee, this was absolutely crucial; he had always made Saint Augustine’s injunction “*Audi alteram partem*” (Hear the other side) his motto.

He placed particular importance on listening to the side that was “the more in danger of not being given a fair hearing.”<sup>1</sup> And he asserted: “If one was to see straight, one must also see things from the mute party’s point of view.... In the present conflict and controversy between Greeks and Turks, the Greeks



*SGI President Ikeda held a dialogue with British historian Arnold Toynbee at Dr. Toynbee’s apartment (May 1973). [During a meeting with the SGI leader, former Turkish President Süleyman Demirel mentioned that he had just finished reading the newly published Turkish edition of the dialogue with Dr. Toynbee (Dec. 3, 1992)].*

were the vocal party once again. The Greeks had the ear of the West, and the West was in the ascendant in the world. I was familiar with the Greeks’ case; I felt that it could take care of itself; the Turks’ case was the one that I must take pains to understand.”<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Toynbee traveled to a town where Turkish civilians had been massacred. He witnessed the suffering of Turkish refugees, and he realized that these atrocities went completely unreported in the West. He wrote articles on what he had seen as a special correspondent for the Manchester Guardian, a leading British newspaper. The editor of the paper courageously went ahead and published Dr. Toynbee’s reports.

Why was it courageous? For centuries the Turks had been regarded in the West as uncivilized savages. In addition, the memory of the 1915 Armenian Massacre carried out by the Ottoman Turks was still fresh in people’s memories.

After the articles by Dr. Toynbee appeared, a storm of criticism descended on the newspaper, charging it with publishing articles sympathetic to the “unspeakable Turk.”<sup>3</sup> But the paper’s admirable stance of refus-

ing to bend to what Dr. Toynbee saw as a “traditional ‘Christian’ prejudice against Muslims”<sup>24</sup> shines to this day.

The article made a deep impression on the Turks. They were astonished that a young Englishman had visited a Turkish refugee camp, that he had impartially recorded what he had seen, and that a British newspaper had published it. It was the first time their side of the story had been revealed to the world.

Years later, Dr. Toynbee animatedly recounted how Turkish people gathered around the newspaper, their faces radiant as they read his account.

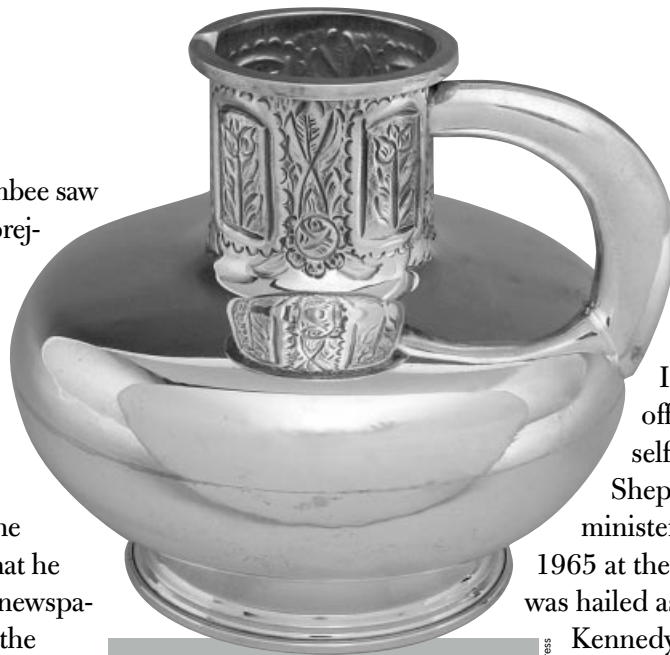
We cannot gain a true picture of the world from a Western perspective alone, relying solely on information from the West. There is a world seen from Africa, a world seen from the Middle East, from Latin America, from the eyes of various ethnic minorities. International society and Western society are not one and the same.

On his homeward journey by train from Istanbul, Dr. Toynbee began to jot down notes for the outline of what would become his lifework, *A Study of History*. Later, based on those notes, he developed a groundbreaking global historical perspective that he was to bequeath to humankind.

Within a short time of returning to Britain, Dr. Toynbee was forced to resign from his teaching position at London University over what was seen as his support for the Turks. For the next thirty-three years, he made his living writing reports on international issues for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, an independent research organization.

## “Mr. Rebound”

**P**resident Demirel was born in 1924, the very year that Dr. Toynbee resigned from London University. He herded sheep when he was a



A silver pitcher engraved with the Turkish national flower, the tulip, was presented from Mr. Demirel to SGI President Ikeda.

Sallyo Press

boy, helping his parents, who were farmers. He attended junior and senior high school on scholarships.

In his first campaign for office, he introduced himself as Demirel the Shepherd. He became prime minister for the first time in 1965 at the youthful age of forty. He was hailed as Turkey’s John F.

Kennedy. His long journey has continued from that day.

Modern Turkish history has been, in a certain sense, a towering experiment in dialogue between Western and Islamic civilizations. The Turkish revolution

carried out by first president Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) pushed the nation down a road of swift modernization — a modernization that was actually Westernization. To accomplish this, the nation underwent sweeping reforms. Islam was unseated as the state religion, a clear separation of religion and the state was instituted, and education was secularized. The Arabic writing system that had been used thus far was replaced with a new romanized Turkish alphabet. The weekly holiday was switched from Friday to Sunday, and the Islamic calendar retired for the modern Gregorian calendar. The wearing of veils by women or the traditional fez by men was banned. The radical social transformation was not unlike that experienced in the Meiji Restoration in Japan in the late nineteenth century.

Naturally, there was strong opposition to these changes, but President Atatürk was determined to make Turkey part of the West, and he pressed forward relentlessly. Westernization did occur, but social problems such as the gap between rich and poor remained. From the 1970s, an Islamic revival movement arose and grew in strength, fueled by such discontent.

Unsettled by the conflicting demands of Westernization and Islam, of being a nation of Islamic heritage yet a member of the Western bloc,

increasing numbers of people sought refuge in tradition. With growing resentment for the West, the trend took shape as an increasingly radical political movement. Forces from the right and the left collided, and ethnic conflict also broke out. Acts of terrorism and destruction surged.

History teaches us that in such situations the power of the military always grows in the name of restoring social order. And it was as a result of a military takeover that, in 1980, Mr. Demirel was ousted as prime minister and arrested.

In the midst of this turmoil, no matter how many times he was beaten down, the Turkish leader always rebounded to defend freedom and democracy. He was even the target of an assassination attempt.

In 1993, after the death of President Turgut Özal (1927–93), whom I had also met in 1990, Mr. Demirel was chosen as his successor. He has another nickname: “Mr. Rebound.”

## The “Tyranny of Images”

Mr. Demirel’s warm smile changed into a serious gaze as he said to me: “Nothing is more important than peace. For peace, we must trust each other and work together. Strengthening our bonds of trust as we cooperate, we must resolve in a friendly fashion any problems that arise.” I agree completely. We need to get to know each other, to become friends. We should not jump to the conclusion that talking will get us nowhere.

The young Dr. Toynbee told himself that it was wrong to stereotype people as the Turks had been, because it dehumanized them; it was important instead to become acquainted with individual Turks. And he put this conviction into practice. He learned Turkish and made friends with Turkish people. He believed that if we personally got to know others, whatever their religion, nationality, or ethnicity, we would realize that they were human beings just like us.<sup>5</sup>

Has the danger of stereotyping people lessened since Dr. Toynbee’s youth? I don’t believe so. In fact, what I call the “tyranny of images”—that is, the propagation of stereotypes and ready-made images—may have even increased.

For example, a certain Japanese journalist had heard

the oft-repeated statement that while Scandinavian countries had advanced social welfare policies, many of the elderly were lonely and had a high suicide rate. When he visited Sweden, he offended the local people by asking what park he could visit to photograph lonely old people sitting on benches.

Much of the information that floods our world has been selected and tailored to fit our preconceived notions and stereotypes.

If a journalist wants to emphasize the “examination hell” that students in Japan go through, he can take a photo of students, with headbands tied around their foreheads, sweating over their books late at night in a “cram school.” But this is not a complete picture, for actually many teenagers in Japan are out partying or hanging out on the street with their friends until late even on weeknights.

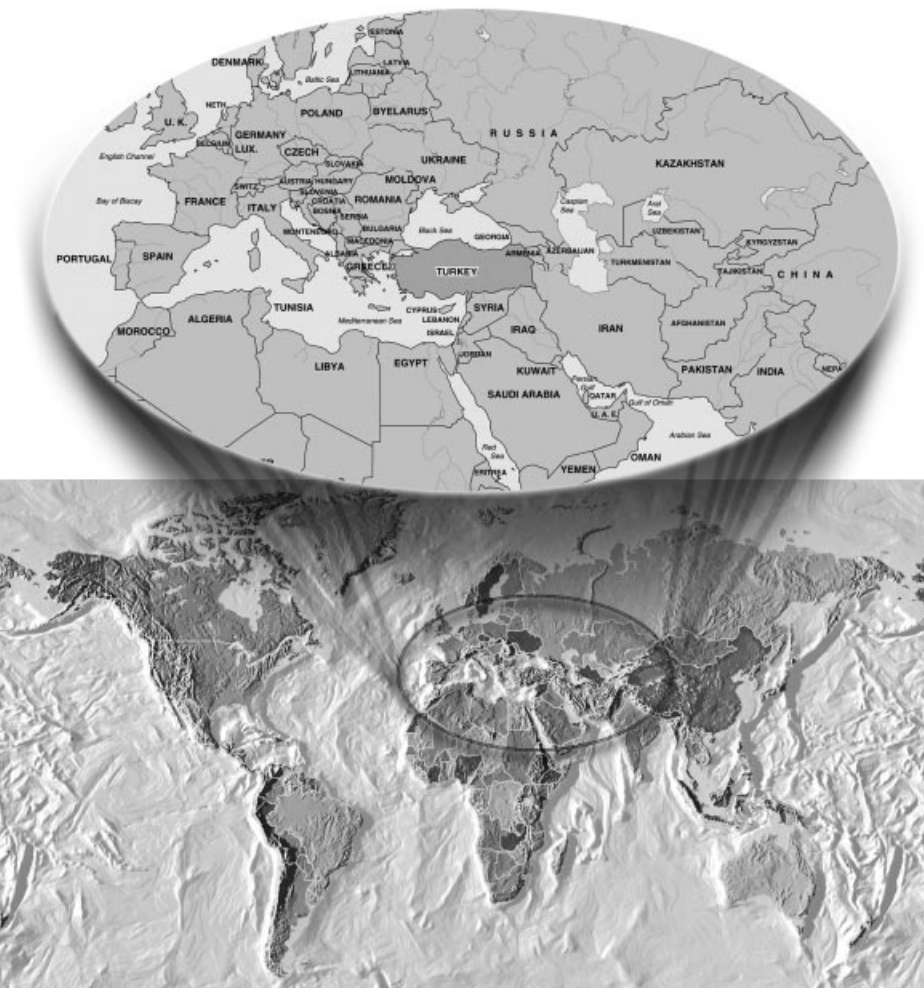
If, during a military conflict, the aim is to fan public anger, scenes of that country being attacked will be repeatedly televised. In such a situation, scenes of the same country’s counterattacks and the resultant suffering and destruction will rarely be aired.

While the growth and development of the mass media has many positive aspects, it also carries the danger of widely spreading stereotypes and ready-made images. This hazard lies in wait everywhere.

## Start by Asking Yourself

It is vital, therefore, to begin by asking yourself some important questions. Are you accepting without challenge the images provided to you? Are you accepting unconfirmed reports without scrutinizing them? Have you allowed yourself to become prejudiced? How much, when all is said and done, do you actually know? Did you confirm it yourself? Have you been to the scene? Have you met people involved? Have you listened to what they have to say? Are you being swayed by malicious rumors? This dialogue with yourself is very important.

Those who at least recognize that they may have all kinds of unconscious prejudices are likely to engage far more amicably in intercultural dialogue than those who are convinced that they have no prejudices. When we stop reflecting on ourselves and asking ourselves questions, we become dog-



tative for the sake of peace and act with resolution. That is surely the best way to carry out the spirit of Japan’s war-renouncing Constitution.

## We Are All Citizens of the Earth

People are not born as Turks or Americans. They are not born as Palestinians or Jews. These are merely descriptors. Each of us is born as a precious life, as a human being. Our mothers didn’t give birth to us thinking, “I’m giving birth to a Japanese” or “I’m giving birth to an Arab.” Their only thought was that we be born healthy and alive.

In any country, a rose is a rose, a violet is a violet, though they may be called by different names.

Perhaps the clouds and winds high above the blue waters of the Bosphorus murmur as they gaze down below: “Wake

up! From our vantage point, the world is one. You are all citizens of the earth. There is no such thing as Americans, no such thing as Iraqis. There is only this boy, this life, called Bob, who happens to live in America; there is only this boy, this life, Mohammed, who happens to live in Iraq. Both are children of the earth. And yet they are divided by the names of their countries and taught to hate each other! Wake up to this foolishness, this arrogance, this cruelty of carrying hatred and resentment over into the next generation.”

Dialogue for peace starts with a humble and honest dialogue with ourselves.

## A Bridge Between the Arab World and the West

When President Demirel was a student at Istanbul Technical University, he told a friend about a dream he had: He wanted to build a bridge across the Bosphorus and link Europe and Asia. Eventually, with cooperation from Japan among others, his dream was fulfilled and two such magnificent bridges have now been built.

Building bridges is important. Without bridges, we cannot connect. Once a bridge is built, others can pass over it.

Shouldn’t Japan make an effort to build a bridge of dialogue between the Arab world and the West? Japan has no legacy of antagonism with the Arab world, and it also has close ties to the West. Let Japan take the ini-

What humankind needs now is a global consciousness. We will not find it someplace far away. We will not find it on a computer screen. It lies in our hearts, in our sympathy for the pain and suffering of our fellow human beings. It is the spirit that says: “As long as you are suffering, I am suffering — whoever you are and whatever your suffering may be.” ☸

1 Arnold J. Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 244.  
 2 Ibid.  
 3 Ibid., p. 230.  
 4 Ibid.  
 5 Ibid., pp. 243, 248–49.

# *Killing*

## **THE WILL TO KILL**

### *A Buddhist Perspective on the Ethics of Life*

BY SHIN YATOMI, SGI-USA VICE STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

*The Buddhist approach to the problem of violence is based on the inner reformation of each individual, that is, an awakening to the supreme potential of Buddhahood both within his or her life and within the lives of others.*

Americans are experiencing a collective awakening of a new kind. We are sensing that our lives are connected in human fellowship. We are beginning to think of people and of peace beyond the boundaries of nationality, religion, and culture. While the old trumpet of war and retribution is vigorously sounded, more and more Americans are straining to hear the quiet melody of life's universal dignity. We are beginning to realize that our "homeland security" is no longer possible unless peace and security encompass the world beyond our national borders.

#### **The Oneness of All Life**

Certainly, this idea that our lives are connected is not new. In modern America, in 1963, while jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote on the margin of a newspaper, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. King was referring to the human-rights violations against African Americans in the South and the pervasive indifference of people who were not directly

affected by racial oppression. Today, his words have taken on a new meaning as the U.S. military campaign continues in Afghanistan, reports on anthrax exposure flood the airwaves, and we adjust our lifestyles to the need for greater security at our airports, office buildings, and even our ballparks.

In 1260, witnessing the profound sufferings of the Japanese from repeated warfare, famine, pestilence, and natural disasters Nichiren Daishonin wrote "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." Seven centuries before Dr King said that "whatever affects

*That all people are endowed with both the fundamental nature of enlightenment and fundamental darkness is called the oneness of “good and evil.”*

one directly, affects all indirectly,” Nichiren Daishonin wrote:

“If marauders come from other regions to invade the nation, or if revolt breaks out within the domain and people’s lands are seized and plundered, how can there be anything but terror and confusion? If the nation is destroyed and people’s homes are wiped out, then where can one flee for safety? If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?”<sup>2</sup>

In this treatise, the Daishonin suggests that peace begins with people overcoming their selfish view of security as merely a personal concern.

Over time, though many wise teachers have continued to point out the dangers of our tendency toward a selfish detachment from others, we have failed to awaken to our shared humanity. Instead, we have clung to the divisive feelings of “us and them,” based on superficial and artificial differences that have prevented us from honest and open dialogue. As we enter “the first war of the twenty-first century,” some of us—maybe not many, but enough to make our presence felt—are starting to question our feelings of separateness from others. We are sympathetic toward the plight of Afghan

refugees even though we can only describe our sense of connection with them in abstract terms such as “life’s dignity” or “shared humanity.” The sentiment, however, does not seem to diminish with time; rather, it grows stronger and more real in our hearts. The idea of the interconnectedness of all lives provides a fundamental solution to violence when it goes beyond mere abstract theory and becomes the basis of collective action.

### The Will to Kill

**H**umanity’s efforts to build lasting peace have been unsuccessful largely because we have lacked a philosophical foundation that allows us to see past our diversity and embrace our shared human dignity.

The Buddhist approach to the problem of violence is based on the inner reformation of each individual, that is, an awakening to the supreme potential of Buddhahood both within his or her life and within the lives of others. A decade ago, on September 26, 1991, in the wake of the Gulf War, regarding a Buddhist view on the ethics of life, in his speech delivered at Harvard University, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda said:

“Shakyamuni was once asked, ‘We are told that life is precious.

And yet, all people live by killing and eating other living beings. Which living beings may we kill and which living beings must we not kill?’ To this simple expression of doubt, Shakyamuni replied, ‘It is enough to kill the will to kill.’

“Shakyamuni’s response is neither evasion nor deception, but is based on the concept of dependent origination. He is saying that, in seeking the kind of harmonious relationship expressed by respect for the sanctity of life, we must not limit ourselves to the phenomenal level where hostility and conflict (in this case, which living beings it is acceptable to kill and which not) undeniably exist. We must seek harmony on a deeper level—a level where it is truly possible to ‘kill the will to kill.’ More than objective awareness, we must achieve a state of compassion transcending distinctions between self and other. We need to feel the compassionate energy that beats within the depths of all people’s subjective lives where the individual and the universal are merged.”<sup>3</sup>

The question posed to Shakyamuni is specifically about killing animals. In the Buddha’s response, however, such preoccupation with the distinction among species seems to melt away. Furthermore, the Buddhist view of



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*In Aeschylus's play *The Eumenides*, the angry goddesses of vengeance Erinyes ("the Furies") transform themselves into Eumenides ("the Kindly Ones") through their collective prayer. Through their prayer the "Furies" begin to listen to their inner voice of wisdom and reason and transform themselves into the "Kindly Ones" to end the vicious cycle of violence and retribution and bring about peace and security in the land.*

life's sanctity is usually discussed in terms of sentient and insentient beings, as opposed to human and nonhuman beings. The Buddha is said to have compassion for all living beings. In this regard, we may expand the underlying principle of the Buddha's response to include humans, as President Ikeda seems to be doing here. The questioner here is obviously seeking an answer in rule-based ethics, and Shakyamuni's reply points him to the direction of wisdom-based ethics. Instead of giving him a set of rules to follow, Shakyamuni encourages the questioner to direct his gaze into his own life, into his own lust for the destruction of life.

Some may ask, "If we are not to kill, is it permissible then for us to destroy any living being — plants, animals, or humans?" Unfortunately, the task of killing the will to kill is not easy, as any-

one who has seriously tried to develop his or her inner strength to do so can attest. To kill the will to kill, that is, to achieve the state of harmony in which we can transcend distinctions between self and other, as President Ikeda suggests, we have to go either down or up the ladder of evolution. We can either descend into the pure animal state in which we feel but do not think, and therefore, have no will of any kind. Or we can ascend to the state of wisdom and compassion in which our lives embrace the environment and all life.

In their purely animal state, sharks sometimes attack surfers (usually mistaking them for a seal or other sea animal) not to kill per se, but to eat for their survival. Sharks are sentient but they are not conscious of self, that is, they are not aware of their own being, actions and thoughts. The Lotus

Sutra describes the state of animals such as camels or donkeys: "He will think only of water and grass / and understand nothing else" (LS, 75).

For us to descend into such a state of animal existence is impossible without losing our rational consciousness. So, if we are to kill our will to kill, our only choice is to ascend to a higher level of consciousness. We must develop wisdom to see other living beings and the environment as an extension of our own lives; and we must develop the compassion to feel the joys and sorrows of fellow human beings as our own. We must come to appreciate all living beings as a blessing without which our lives are not possible. Even our sincere yet feeble attempt to cultivate such a state of being will, without doubt, dramatically reduce the suffering and misery caused by our will to kill,

*The awareness of our universal goodness leads to confidence instead of arrogance, and the awareness of our universal evil leads to humility instead of despair or hatred.*

*When we pray to challenge the fundamental darkness within ourselves, we can truly unleash the power of our prayer and transform our lives and the environment.*

which now seems rampant.

## The Oneness of Good and Evil

**T**he will to kill — a deliberate wish for the destruction of life — is the underlying source of all violence. The Daishonin metaphorically describes such destructive inner drives as demons and devils within us saying that demons “deprive people of their lives, for a demon is also known as a robber of life. Moreover, devils...deprive people of benefits; another name for a devil is a robber of benefit” (WND, 87).

The Daishonin explains that those demons and devils stem from fundamental darkness, or our deep-seated ignorance of our innate Buddhahood. This negative potential exists in the lives of all people, including Buddhas:

“The heart of the Lotus school is the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, which reveals that both good and evil are inherent even in those at the highest stage of perfect enlightenment. The fundamental nature of enlightenment manifests itself as Brahma and Shakra, whereas the fundamental darkness manifests itself as the devil king of the sixth heaven” (WND, 1113).

The Buddhist concept that all people are endowed with both the fundamental nature of enlight-

enment and fundamental darkness is called the “oneness of good and evil.” Here, good means enlightenment, or absolute freedom and happiness resulting from profound self-knowledge, and evil means the fundamental darkness, or life’s innate delusion that causes suffering for oneself and others. In the context of the Daishonin’s teaching, good and evil are better defined in terms of our innate tendencies, rather than the social constructs of morality or ethics, which are often different from one culture to another. The concept of the oneness of good and evil suggests that we can develop compassion even for people we consider “bad” if we see within them our own potential for wrongdoing. By the same token, when we make mistakes or commit wrongs, we must not only reflect upon our negative aspects, but also see the potential for good within us. Thus, our innate goodness and evil are mutually tempered in our judgment of others and ourselves. So, the awareness of our universal goodness leads to confidence instead of arrogance, and the awareness of our universal evil leads to humility instead of despair or hatred.

According to the Daishonin’s teachings, all people are equal in their potential for both good and evil. 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). He further explains:

“To separate self from others and say, ‘I am Never Disparaging, and they are the four groups of arrogant people’ and to make a distinction between good and evil, viewing Never Disparaging as a good person and those arrogant people as evil—this is delusion. When one makes his bow of obeisance, he should do so keeping in mind that Nam-myohorenge-kyo is the oneness of good and evil and the oneness of right and wrong” (GZ, 768).

As Bodhisattva Never Disparaging demonstrates in his episode in the Lotus Sutra, through tenacious dialogue imbued with the courage to speak the truth of life, it is possible to form a constructive relationship with arrogant people and eventually help them reveal their dormant goodness. In the above passage, the Daishonin suggests that Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s success is due to his ability to transcend whatever separates

himself from others. He does not regard himself as superior to those around him, viewing himself as always good and others as purely evil. Rather, he sees goodness in others and evil within himself. This awareness of people's connectedness on the fundamental level of life's innate workings enables him to continue his nonviolent engagement with arrogant, hostile people and eventually awaken their inner goodness. (For more on Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, see the August 1999 issue, pp. 8-15.)

America's and our allies' current war on terrorism has been described as "the monumental struggle of good versus evil." The assumption underlying this expression suggests that there are two fixed categories of human beings — either good or evil. The Buddhist teaching of the oneness of good and evil, however, provides us with the wisdom to see that, in fact, the real war is the monumental struggle against our ignorance of the good and evil within.

Only as we become aware of our own evil through honest self-reflection will we be capable of waging a genuine, steadfast struggle against the evil manifested in our environment. We will be victorious when we have recognized and conquered the evil within. In

this regard, the Daishonin states, "Although I, Nichiren, am not a man of wisdom, the devil king of the sixth heaven has attempted to take possession of my body. But I have for some time been taking such great care that he now no longer comes near me" (WND, 310). Without self-reflection, we are essentially ignorant of the true nature and force of human evil, which may be understood only through one's resolute inner resistance to it. As fish are so accustomed to living in water that they become unaware of how it feels to be wet, when we do not challenge our innate fundamental darkness, we cannot possibly know what it means to fight the evil manifested outside ourselves. As the Lotus Sutra describes a person in such a state of self-complacency: "He will constantly dwell in hell, strolling in it as though it were a garden, and the other evil paths of existence he will look on as his own home" (LS, 76-77).



*The current moral and ethical picture of humanity is like an unfinished jigsaw puzzle, in which some pieces remain loosely joined while others are still out of place.*

Robert Kozma/  
CORBIS

It must be noted, however, that the oneness of good and evil does not mean that evil is good. To understand this teaching, it is crucial for us to be aware of the fundamental darkness manifested both within us and within the lives of others. In fact, our Buddhahood is revealed as we challenge our fundamental darkness. In other words, Buddhas

***The idea of the interconnectedness of all lives provides a fundamental solution to violence when it goes beyond mere abstract theory and becomes the basis of collective action.***

are precisely those committed to this unending process of self-reflection and self-improvement. In the “Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin writes, “A sharp sword to cut through the fundamental darkness is to be found in faith alone” (GZ, 751). Our faith in our innate Buddhahood is a driving force behind our continuous struggle against the fundamental darkness within us.

## Prayer Is A Power for Peace

**P**rayer, when born out of our resolve to challenge our fundamental darkness and tap our inner Buddhahood, becomes a genuine power for peace. Such prayer transforms terror into hope and anger into compassion. Sometimes prayer is misunderstood as inactivity rather than action. To the contrary, prayer is a means to strengthen our faith in the Buddha nature as we pray to have more confidence in ourselves. Prayer can change our reality when our prayer challenges inner darkness and sincerely affirms the power of life. Such prayer transforms the way we see ourselves, the way we live our lives, and the way we relate to others. Through such prayer is born unshakable confidence in life’s sanctity that informs our action to create value for life.

In “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” the Daishonin states,

“Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil” (WND, 15). Some may interpret this passage as denying prayer’s efficacy, seeing the Daishonin’s statement instead as reliance on the secular authority to legislate what is essentially a matter of one’s belief and conscience. However, from the context of the Daishonin’s treatise, “this one evil” specifically refers to the teaching of the Pure Land school. The Daishonin was concerned about the Pure Land teaching because, based on the belief that individuals were powerless to help themselves, it promoted one’s absolute reliance on Amida Buddha, who was said to live in the Land of Perfect Bliss. The Daishonin understood that the Pure Land teaching was leading its believers astray from a path of self-awakening.

The Pure Land teaching stressed power over people instead of power within people. It was essentially authoritarian in nature, teaching the necessity of submission to an external power or control. In this sense, we can interpret “this one evil” as our tendency to be confused about our inner strength and to accept an authoritarian view that we should rely on an external entity. In other words, “this one evil” is our fundamental darkness that keeps us ignorant of our innate Buddhahood. In light of what the Daishonin meant by “this one evil,” we can interpret the above passage from “On Establishing

the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” as the Daishonin’s affirmation that the power of prayer can be manifested only when we seriously challenge our fundamental darkness. The efficacy of “ten thousand prayers” may be realized through our recognition of this one evil and our struggle against it. When we pray to challenge the fundamental darkness within ourselves, we can truly unleash the power of our prayer and transform our lives and the environment.

Prayer is a process of self-reflection and determination in which we recognize our destructive tendencies and determine to transform them into the creative energies to propel our lives forward. In the classical Greek play, “The Eumenides,” the angry spirits of vengeance known as the Furies transform themselves into the Kindly Ones through their collective prayer. Encouraged and guided by Athena, the goddess of wisdom, they voice their prayer: *Let not the dry dust that drinks The black blood of citizens Through passion for revenge And bloodshed for bloodshed Be given our state to prey upon. Let them render grace for grace. Let love be their common will... Much wrong in the world thereby is healed.*<sup>4</sup>

In the classical world, Athena was often used as a metaphor for reason and wisdom. In this play, the Furies symbolize the barbaric past in which violent retribution called for further violence, to the

point where there was no sense of fairness and justice — only self-righteous claims and counter-claims, much like the cycles of violence we see throughout the world today. Through prayer, however, the Furies begin to listen to their inner voices of wisdom and reason, transform themselves into the Kindly Ones to end the vicious cycle of killings and revenge, and bring about peace and security in the land. As this play suggests, the key to

building peace lies neither in the eradication nor in the rejection of the Furies, but in their inner transformation.

Out of the horrendous loss of precious lives on September 11, we are beginning to see each other as human beings, instead of Americans or Afghans, Christians or Muslims. This may be one of the good things to come out of such tragedies. We must not allow this feeling to fade away. That would be a tragedy more than we

can bear. With earnest prayer and dialogue, we can encourage our growing sense of connectedness to spread across our borders and grow deeper against our own prejudice, until it becomes a global conviction that the most powerful leaders of the world cannot help but to follow. ☸

1. *Why We Can't Wait*, p. 65
2. *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 24.
3. "The Age of Soft Power," *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda*, pp. 210-11)
4. Lines 976-87, trans. Richmond Lattimore

# Seeking Answers in a Sea of Complexity

One barrier to building peace is the host of complex ethical issues we face. The current moral and ethical picture of humanity is like an unfinished jigsaw puzzle in which some pieces remain loosely joined while others are still out of place. Each piece is separated from the rest by the superficial lines of race, gender, religion, nationality, and ideology. These lines are hardened by approaches that ignore the intricately woven circumstances and motives that underlie the issues.

Finding clear answers to ethical questions is difficult because such questions usually embody one or another dilemma or contradiction. Take the issue of the

"sanctity of life," for example. Some advocates of nonviolence who oppose killing may take a pro-choice stand on the abortion issue, while others who oppose the taking of an unborn life may support capital punishment. These contradictions raise the ethical dilemma, "Are some lives more sacred than others?"

Any time we insist on simple or absolute answers to complex questions, we hamper our ability to carry out dialogue that would respect a diversity of opinions. To have a sound discussion of the profound issues raised by our need to respond to the attacks of September 11, we need to temper our approach and avoid the pitfalls of dogmatism, opportunism, and blind pragmatism.

Dogmatism relies on a narrow attachment to a particular view or idea with complete disregard for reality and without a sense of purpose. If we try to dogmatically force one idea on everyone in every situation, disregarding circumstances and motives, we may be able to fit that particular piece into our ethical and moral puzzle. However, by doing so, we run the risk of pushing out other pieces or causing the whole picture to buckle under pressure. Even the lofty idea of the sanctity of all lives can cause misery if applied dogmatically. For example, suppose an operation to separate conjoined twins could save only one of them, yet both would inevitably die without the operation. Would it be ethical or

humane for those concerned to refuse the operation, based on a dogmatic view of the sanctity of life? Most of us would find it problematic to justify the resulting death of both twins if saving one of them is entirely possible. To avoid dogmatism, we must keep in mind that philosophy or religion is a means to achieve our genuine happiness and freedom, not an end in itself.

Opportunism uses an idea or teaching to achieve an end without regard for principles or consequences. Using this approach, an opportunist usually misapplies or distorts an idea or teaching to advance an agenda or improve personal circumstances. For example, during World War II, under the cloak of priestly authority, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood justified their support of war and violence with distortions of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings on peace. They did this by limiting the Daishonin's notion of "peace and security in the land" to Japan alone, arguing:

"It is the purpose of the founder's advent for us to realize the principle 'the world is the Japanese nation' through loyally dedicating our lives to the nation. ... The contribution of good timber from our sacred grounds was made so that it may be turned into ships to crush the United States and Great Britain, and this accords with the honest desire of the Buddha to secure the peace of the land through establishing the truth (*rissho ankoku*). ... These old cedar trees and the large bell,

which have donated [sic], shall respectively become a ship to carry the soldiers, supplies and weapons of the Imperial Army and bullets to penetrate the breasts of fierce enemies as intended by the Buddha."<sup>1</sup>

To safeguard the integrity of an idea or teaching from opportunists, its practitioners must be educated and ever vigilant against any distortion.

Blind pragmatists often oversimplify ethical questions by dismissing an idea or method simply because it does not immediately produce the desired, tangible results. As the causes of violence lie unseen in the minds of people, the real progress we make toward eliminating violence is necessarily difficult to see or measure. Since the purpose of terrorism is to terrorize, our "war on terrorism" must be waged essentially in the hearts of people to remove the motives of terrorists and strengthen the lives of ordinary citizens so they cannot be terrorized. The real progress of our "war on terrorism," therefore, cannot be measured simply in terms of numbers and data.

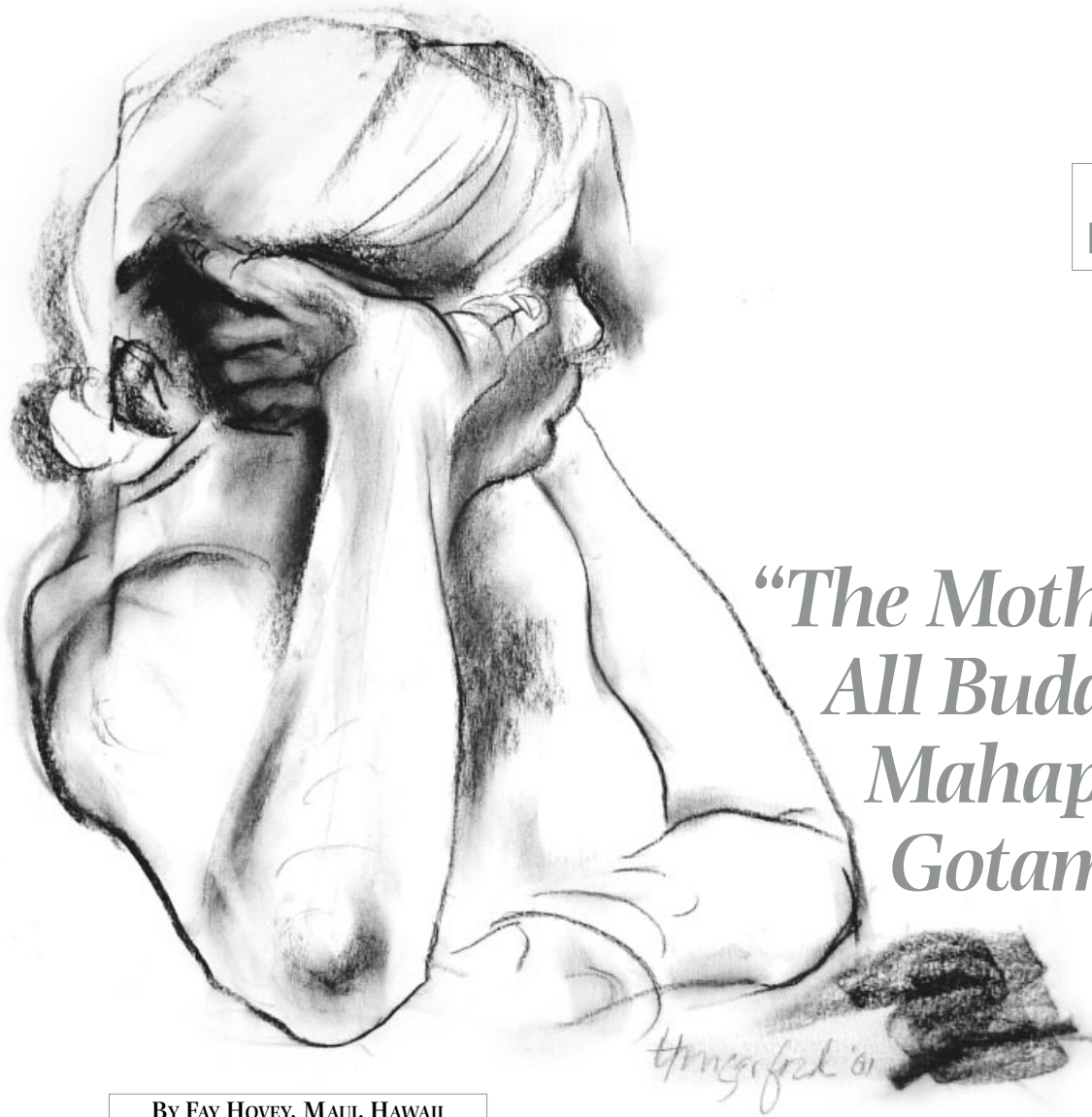
With this in mind, we should not dismiss the nonviolent philosophies and methods of such leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. as "impractical" merely because they were killed violently. Nor should we reject their approach because it did not quickly transform our society into a peaceful Utopia. In fact, if we are looking for results, we cannot help but

notice that Gandhi's India was the only nation in history to gain its independence from England without prolonged violent confrontation. And, though the transformation is far from complete, Dr. King's vision did not die with him. Furthermore, without closely examining the kind of world that was created after the defeat the likes of Hitler and Saddam Hussein, it is impractical to continue our reliance on guns and bombs to "make peace" simply because they stopped such tyrants in the past. The true pragmatist would ask, "Was the violence of September 11 the ultimate outcome of violent solutions to past conflicts?" Without taking a critical look at long-term outcomes, those with a blindly pragmatic approach are often misled about the reality and practicality of their goals and methods.

To solve other ethical and moral issues related to violence, we need to develop all-encompassing wisdom that enables us to see our problems as a connected whole on the level of life's inner workings. In other words, we need an approach that allows us to respond to each situation in a way that creates the utmost possible value for life, that is, people's happiness and freedom.

Buddhism calls such wisdom "the wisdom of ultimate truth manifested in changing relations" (Jpn *zuïen shin'nyo no chi*), which derives from "the unchanging law of ultimate truth" (Jpn *fuhen shin'nyo no ri*). ☸

1. *The Untold History of the Fuji School*, p. 114.



## “The Mother of All Buddhas”— Mahaprajapati Gotami

BY FAY HOVEY, MAUI, HAWAII  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATE HUNGERFORD

**B**uddhist stories have been passed down from century to century. Early accounts were communicated in the great oral tradition of India, but eventually were written and carried over mountains and seas from land to land. Though variations and inconsistencies exist, they may be ascribed in part to individual tellers — those scholars and monks without whom we might never know the story of Mahaprajapati.

Just as in the science of archaeology, where one may have nothing but a few bones or pottery shards to reconstruct history, the accounts of Prajapati Gotami (the honorific *maha* meaning “great,” was added later) — one of the great disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha — has been pieced together from fragments of her life and achievements.

It is said that when Siddhartha of the Shakya tribe was born to King Shuddhodana and Queen Maya, the special nature of the infant was divined from the beginning. Queen Maya experienced significant dreams prior to his birth. The fact that she was weakened by childbirth and would die soon must have grieved her greatly, as she feared she would not see him grow to manhood. Perhaps near the end of her life, Maya took her sister’s hands in hers and asked through her tears to protect and care for her son and husband. Sister to sister, Prajapati’s tender promise to do so would have eased the queen’s passage into death. After her death, the king took Prajapati as his wife and entrusted her with the child’s care.

Life at Shuddhodana’s court and palaces has been described as luxurious; no effort was spared to make the young prince happy and to surround him



with beauty and delightful distractions. What pride Prajapati must have taken in him, and how seriously she undertook her duty.

The closeness between mother and child is intimate in the early years. Indeed, Prajapati would have witnessed childhood signs of Prince Siddhartha's sensitive and insightful character. How many of us, as parents, have recognized in our own children our greatest teachers? In the world of ancient India, death, life and subsequent rebirth were deeply accepted facts. Prajapati no doubt had recognized her own karmic relationship to her stepson early on.

As all children eventually do, Siddhartha, or Shakyamuni as he came to be known, left his mother and father to follow his own way — to seek his own understanding of the true nature of suffering and of life. His eventual awakening or enlightenment and subsequent teachings must have sparked a desire for liberation and true happiness within Prajapati. The seeker in her might have yearned to follow him, even though her role as a woman and a queen was laid out before her as solid as the stance of a mountain.

As time passed, many male members of Shakyamuni's family left secular life to join him as *bhikkus*, male religious mendicants who followed in his footsteps on the path to enlightenment. One by one, they departed to the hillsides and forests of India — even the Buddha's son, Rahula, expressed the desire to leave the palace. Imagine Prajapati and the women of her household left more and more to themselves, gazing out the windows, pondering their lives.

Theirs was a privileged life, but it was severely bound by social convention. In the world of the common people, after they had finished bearing children, women were considered little better than slaves. In Prajapati's society, men were allowed to assume a religious life after living as husbands and fathers but women had no such tradition. Women throughout the ages have chafed at such social bonds that held them in restriction. No matter how refined and wealthy a woman might have been she was still a woman and her spiritual needs would not have mattered much.

SGI President Ikeda offers his perspective in *The*

*Living Buddha*: “We know from Indian literature in general that women were looked upon as lustful and quarrelsome by nature, and the low status forced upon them by society no doubt helped to bring out the less admirable traits in their characters. . . . The point to be noted about the Buddhist view of women, I believe, is not that it regarded them as by nature less suited for the religious life than men, which was a truism of the time, but that it held out the possibility that they could overcome this handicap” (pp. 120–21).

The aging King Shuddhodana fell ill, and when it became obvious that he would soon die, Shakyamuni traveled from his winter quarters at Vaishali to Kapilavastu to attend his father’s passing. By some accounts, he traveled there to console his stepmother after his father’s death. At any rate, he would have had private time with Prajapati there, and it was said she expressed a desire to follow him as a *bhikkuni*, “asking if it were appropriate for women to go forth from home to homelessness under the guidance of the Blessed One” (*The Way of Siddhartha, A Life of the Buddha*, p. 155).

Shakyamuni refused to grant her request and returned to his quarters at Vaishali, saying: “It is not possible. In Rajagaha, there are also a number of women who want to be ordained but I do not believe it is the right time yet. Conditions are not yet ripe to accept women into the *sangha*” (*Old Path White Clouds, Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha*, p. 291).

He knew the negative traits of men as well, and although he had not originally encouraged followers, he eventually assented to the formation of the *sangha* or community of male believers or monks and was beginning to see the fruits of his teaching in them. He was reluctant to include women for many reasons. Foremost among them was a concern for their protection from the dangers of the homeless life of mendicancy and the shocking effect that it would have upon society in his time.

Prajapati, however, would not be denied. It is generally accepted that she and fifty-one female members of her household shaved their heads and cast off their costly garments for rags, leaving to follow the Buddha

to Vaishali, a distance of several hundred miles. Upon their arrival at Vaishali, their feet were badly swollen and cut from walking barefoot. They waited near the Buddha’s quarters where they might have a word with him. Ananda, one of Shakyamuni’s chief disciples, saw them there, quietly weeping. Recognizing Prajapati, he inquired why they were there.

When Ananda learned why they had walked all the way from Kapilavastu, braving the dangers that must have accompanied women traveling alone, he took it upon himself to speak with Shakyamuni on their behalf. He asked Shakyamuni if it were true that women had the same capacity as men for the attainment of enlightenment. The Buddha replied that, without a doubt, women could attain enlightenment. The tender-hearted Ananda then pressed his case, saying that Prajapati had been like a mother to Shakyamuni all these years and had loved him as her own son. After all, she had renounced all her possessions. Would the Buddha show compassion for her and the other women who had traveled so far and admit them to the *sangha* as *bhikkunis*?

Thinking on this, the Buddha must have seen the problems this would cause among the numbers of male followers who had begun to tame their desires and observe his rule of chastity. He discussed it with others and, eventually, he assented, with caution and a code of eight rules for the nun’s order. Prajapati has been quoted as saying: “Just as a young girl accepts a garland of lotus flowers or roses to adorn her hair after washing it with perfumed water, I happily accept the Eight Rules. I will follow them all of my life if I am granted permission to be ordained” (*Old Path White Clouds, Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha*, p. 295). That day, by some accounts, Mahaprajapati was ordained as the first Buddhist nun along with as many as 500 other women.

She took her position humbly and with a great sense of responsibility, and her efforts resulted in the compassionate application of the code and the best instruction possible for women followers. Buddhist documents record that Prajapati eventually attained enlightenment. It was in her persistence and determination that Shakyamuni saw the great potential of women’s inherent enlightenment.



According to Indian studies specialist Dr. Hajime Nakamura: “The appearance (in Buddhism) of an order of nuns was an astonishing development in world religious history. No such female religious order existed in Europe, North Africa, West Asia or East Asia at the time. Buddhism was the first tradition to produce one” (*World Tribune*, “The Enlightenment of Women,” May 26, 2000, p. 4).

Repeatedly in his letters to women followers, Nichiren Daishonin encouraged them, comparing them to bodhisattvas and to Mahaprajapati. In “Reply to the Lay Nun Myoho,” he states: “The Buddha at Eagle Peak surely perceives that you surpass the nun [Mahaprajapati] as greatly as clouds do mud. The name of that nun, the Buddha Gladly Seen by All Living Beings, is no unrelated matter; it is now the name of the lay nun Myoho” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1106). What great resolve this must have kindled within the nun Myoho and others in thirteenth-century Japan!

When Mahaprajapati died, her body was carried to the funeral pyre for cremation by the Buddha’s

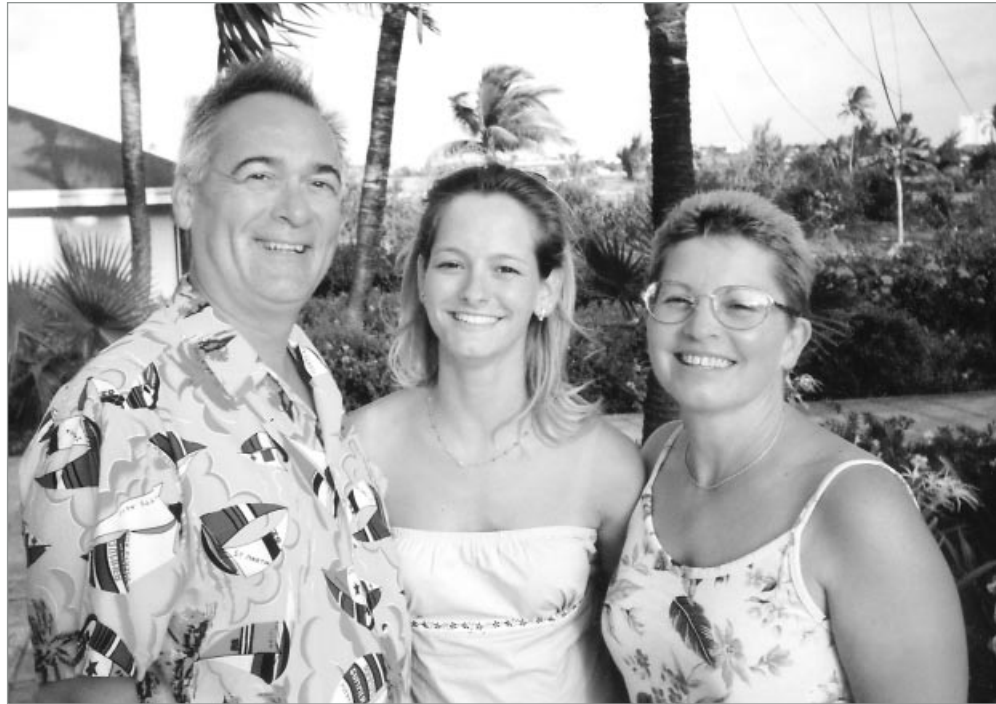
disciples, while Shakyamuni walked alongside holding her hand. What little we know of her comes down through the ages as a poignant portrait of a mother’s love and a profound karmic relationship. What we owe Mahaprajapati is difficult to fathom. We can never know how long it would have been before women’s equal capacity for the indestructible happiness of enlightenment would have been recognized or encouraged. In this light, she has been called “The Mother of All Buddhas.” ❁

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*Raising Buddhist Children*  
IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

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## *Helping Your Child Manage* **ANGRY FEELINGS AND** **AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS**

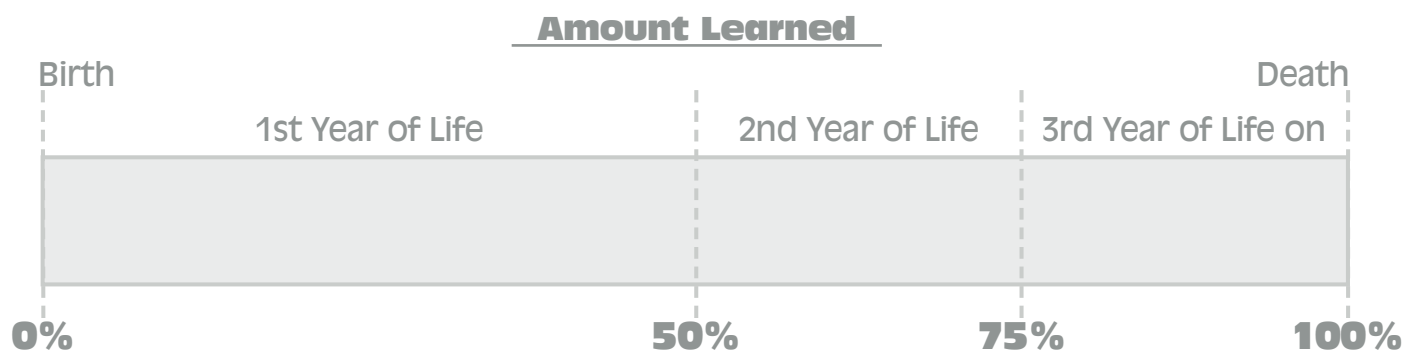
BY ROXANNE RAE, LCSW, BCD AND DOUGLAS K. PRYOR, PH.D.

**A**s humanistic parents, we struggle to teach values to our children. It can be discouraging and confusing to receive a call that your child faces suspension for an aggressive act. Whether your fifteen-year-old is fistfighting or your three-year-old is biting another child, angry feelings and aggressive behaviors can be frustrating to deal with. What's important is that we learn about and challenge our children's anger and aggression as we would any other obstacle. When a child is often angry or aggressive, it is useful to look at his or her overall life experience and consider what it is that he

or she needs. What is the function of the child's anger? What are they trying to communicate to us?

As parents who study and practice the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, we learn intellectually that each life contains the ten worlds, from Hell to Buddhahood, at all times. However, in our daily lives this awareness tends to recede from our grasp. It may be difficult to look at a beautiful child and recognize that he or she may have a negative influence on our lives. Conversely, when parents experience their child as exhausting, demanding and disobedient, it may be hard to remember that each

## LIFETIME KNOWLEDGE



child has a Buddha nature. Trust that they do.

From a Buddhist perspective, Anger is an expression of the fourth of the ten worlds or life-conditions. It is one of the four evil paths, a state dominated by a selfish ego. People in this state value themselves but hold others in contempt. They are attached to the idea of their own superiority and cannot bear to be inferior to others. It is noteworthy that Buddhism acknowledges that Anger can function as both good and evil, as noted in the definitions below.

In the field of psychology, there are a wide variety of definitions of anger. We have chosen to share two with you from popular writers. We find these to be the most helpful, as they are commensurate with the Buddhist view of life. Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., describes anger as a signal. It “may be a message that we are being hurt, that our rights are being violated, that our needs or wants are not being adequately met, or simply that something is not right. . . . The pain of our anger preserves the very integrity of our self.”<sup>1</sup> Hendric Weisinger, Ph.D., defines anger as having four components. He describes it as an emotion that is “physically arousing and has unique physiological correlates; secondly, as a feeling which impacts the way we experience life; thirdly, as a communicator of information and lastly as a cause.”<sup>2</sup>

Aggression, which is not the same as anger, refers to the motor activity, or physical acting out, with the intent to hurt someone or something through physical contact. Anger does not necessarily cause aggression, but rather may add to an aggressive response.

Most often parents want to know what to do, how to “fix it” when their children don’t act the way

they want. If we take action without understanding the individual child, however, we may only increase his or her problems in coping with angry feelings and aggressive behaviors. As Nichiren Daishonin writes: “[W]hen giving medicine to a sick person, one should know what kind of medicine was administered before. Otherwise, different kinds of medicine may conflict and work against one another, killing the patient.”<sup>3</sup> Life is a dynamic process and children are readily influenced by the life-condition of their parents. Therefore, it is important for parents to monitor their own anger process as well. (For more information on this topic, see “Transforming Our Angry Nature,” *Living Buddhism*, February 2001). As parents, we need to attend to our children based on their developmental needs and how they may be experiencing life.

Prior to helping your children change their behaviors and cope with feelings, it is important to understand more about their developmental process in general. This also means that in order to understand emotional issues or problems, it is necessary to review a child’s early life experiences. For parents with older children, this may seem redundant, yet a child’s response patterns, including those involved with anger, develop in their earliest years (please see diagram above).<sup>4</sup>

Although part of a child’s brain has developed at birth to allow for reflexes and the instincts for biological existence, a baby cannot survive without human contact and care. Though not a blank slate, a baby’s brain is a very immature organ at birth. It is pliable and extremely receptive to the external envi-

ronment, forming its internal organization in part through integrating experiences in response to that environment. As Buddhists we recognize this as a manifestation of the principle of the ‘oneness of person and environment.’ Rothschild states: “How a brain first organizes is dependent on the infant’s interactions with its environment. How a brain continues to grow, develop and reorganize is dependent on the subsequent experiences throughout a child’s life. . . . It is now believed that the nurturing interaction between caregiver and infant goes a long way in promoting healthy emotional development, because that relationship, in itself, stimulates normal maturation of the brain and nervous system.”<sup>5</sup>

Infants do not place different values on their emotions; they all have equal value — including anger. “To be sure, parents can encourage some emotions and discourage others. But avoiding an emotion that is part of the definition of humanity is dehumanizing — even though it is an emotion that is difficult and sometimes frightening to deal with.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, instead of disapproving and cutting off our child’s angry feelings we can give him or her tools to tolerate this welling up of feelings, to communicate them, and to learn to manage both feelings and actions.

The ways we can help our children manage anger begin at birth. The Greenspans’ developmental model provides a clear understanding of normal development (see sidebar: A Baby’s Requirements to Meet Each of His or Her Emotional Milestones).<sup>7</sup> To help children tolerate the welling up of angry feelings, parents can acknowledge these and teach soothing skills. It is also important to teach the use of words and ideas so children have choices to move from direct physical expression to pretend play. As anger is a signal that something is not right, they can also be taught how to assert themselves verbally to create change when there is a problem. Teaching is a basic task of parenting. Daisaku Ikeda has stated: “Only a human being can foster another human being. It takes a truly humanistic person to raise a truly humanistic person.”<sup>8</sup> Eventually children can also be taught to observe and intervene in their own pattern of anger and to increase their ability to choose their own responses. This creates self-

reliance and improves self-confidence.

In the Greenspans’ model, they address specific problems and offer parents a wide variety of examples to use with children from birth to four years of age. In our own work with children, we apply these basic principles to children of all ages with adaptations for later stages of development. Keep in mind that it takes time to strengthen inner controls, so parents should expect ups and downs as they apply new ideas. Having a foundation of a nurturing environment with consistent verbal and non-verbal limits is important to children of every age. Its creation occurs in parents’ moment-to-moment engagement with their children. It is not something that is accomplished and checked off a list. It is easier to address specific anger issues on such a nurturing foundation.

Parents cannot teach children in the heat of anger. Parents must first focus on soothing and containing their children’s angry outburst. This may be holding and speaking softly to a young child or tak-

### A BABY’S REQUIREMENTS TO MEET EACH OF HIS OR HER EMOTIONAL MILESTONES

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 0-3 MONTHS   | Protection, comfort and interesting sights and sounds. To feel regulated and interested in the world. |
| 3-7 MONTHS   | Wooing and loving overtures to stimulate love.  |
| 4-10 MONTHS  | Sensitive, empathetic reading of cues to foster purposeful communication.                             |
| 9-18 MONTHS  | Admiring, organized, intentional interaction to foster a complex sense of self.                       |
| 18-30 MONTHS | Pretend play and functional use of language to foster emotional ideas.                                |
| 30-48 MONTHS | Effective limits and use of logic and pretend play and language to foster emotional thinking.         |

ing time away from each other before problem solving with a teen. Parents need to attend to what their child needs when distressed. Sometimes the physical charge of anger is so great that a physical activity to vent it is needed. This could be a sport activity, throwing beanbags at a target or socking a pillow. Also children can be encouraged to draw pictures of what they are angry about and scribble over them or tear them up. The idea is to create a safe vehicle for the energy to decrease its physical charge. After this venting, effective problem solving can begin. Some children need a period of pleasurable activity after venting to transition to problem solving.

Consider what your children's patterns are and what each one needs. Regular play periods with your children offer venting opportunities before anger can come to a head. Whether it's pretend action-figure play where the child can attack your team or smash your cars, or more structured games such as Sorry, Aggravation or Chess, there are outlets that move energy from a physical level to that of ideas, or symbolic action. Having anger is not a choice; it is part of being human. What we choose to do or not to do with anger can be under our control. The following are examples of how parents can assist their children:

CHILD (yelling): "You are so unfair! You don't care if I have any friends!"

PARENT (stays calm): "I can understand that you are really angry and disappointed that you can't stay overnight at Susie's. Becoming better friends with her seems important to you." (The parent reflects feeling and the child's need.)

CHILD (still angry): "I'm the only one who can't go to her sleepover! Why do we have to go to Grandma's anyway?"

PARENT: "I guess you are feeling left out. We have had these plans to go out of town for weeks. I am sorry that Susie's party just came up and our trip interferes with it. I want to keep our promise to Grandma just like I want to keep promises to you." (Empathy; reminds the child of the structure that the parent keeps promises.)

CHILD (angry, but not yelling): "If I am not there they'll probably talk about me."

PARENT: "I see you are concerned about being thought of as an outsider. Would it be helpful if we plan to have Susie and the others over some weekend soon when we are home?" (Sincerely interested in addressing her daughter's developmental needs).

CHILD (now more calm): "OK."

PARENT: "What kinds of things will we have to do to set that up?" (Redirects the child's energy and engages her in a concrete plan.)

A second example of an interaction between a parent and an adolescent follows:

TEEN (very angry and yelling): "You said I could go to the football game this Friday and now you say I can't. You lied!"

PARENT (remaining calm): "I can hear and see that you are very angry and upset right now that you can't go to the game this Friday. I know that you really want to be with your friends and that it's important for you to be there." (Parent reflects hearing the adolescent's feeling and need).

TEEN (still angry): "Yeah! Fine! You hear me! So why can't I go!"

PARENT: "I know that you're probably feeling you'll miss something and you feel left out. I'm sorry that this has occurred, but you might remember that we talked last week about you going to the game this Friday only if you finished all of your homework." (The parent is empathetic, but states the adolescent's responsibility).

TEEN (still angry, but calmer): "Yeah, I remember, but I got most of it done."

PARENT: "Yes, you did, and I'm proud of you because I know it was hard work and took a long time to do, but our agreement was for all the homework to be completed." (Praise for the accomplishment and reminder of the agreement.)

TEEN (much calmer): "Yeah, thanks, but I really want to go."

PARENT: "I know you do and I'd like for you to go, too. Is there anything I can do to help you meet the homework contract for the next game?" (The parent shows concern and proposes a way for the two of them to engage and collaborate.)

Note that in the above examples the parents are not angry, nor are they trying to control their chil-

dren. These parents have a high enough life-condition not to be pulled in by the child's anger. In each case, the parent's goal is to teach and support their child in a situation where the child is struggling with something that has evoked his or her own anger. The parents in these examples keep a broad view and have the compassion and wisdom to stay focused on helping their children. "How we as adults intervene to help children regain control is an important part of teaching them how to manage anger. Scolding and reprimanding after the fact has very little effect on the child's ability to learn to control impulses. In fact punishment often makes children more hostile and aggressive."<sup>9</sup> Raising our children to be considerate, empathetic human beings, who can be self-reliant and have compassion for others is a fundamental aspect of our SGI-USA "Victory Over Violence" movement.

Part of a parent's job is to hold a broad perspective of our children. This means seeing the child's current life-condition, general function as a Bodhisattva of the Earth, and potential as a human being. We must also take responsibility for our own life-conditions, educate ourselves and develop wisdom and compassion toward our children. Being grounded in this overall view of life can help parents stay calm and use life events as teaching opportunities instead of becoming overwhelmed in the moment or hooked into control battles with their children. Magid and McKevey state, "When control becomes the main issue, love has taken a back seat."<sup>10</sup> Parents must monitor their own levels of anger and the patterns that occur between themselves and their children. Without being aware of it, parents can incite angry responses from their children. Often this happens when parents don't respect children's privacy, or lecture and nag about routine issues, instead of setting up family methods with the children and holding that structure. If rules and a system are formed, they become the standard, tending to decrease conflict.

Essentially we create interpersonal harmony from our own basic life-condition. Although we have offered information, techniques and resources to assist parents, these will be most effective when

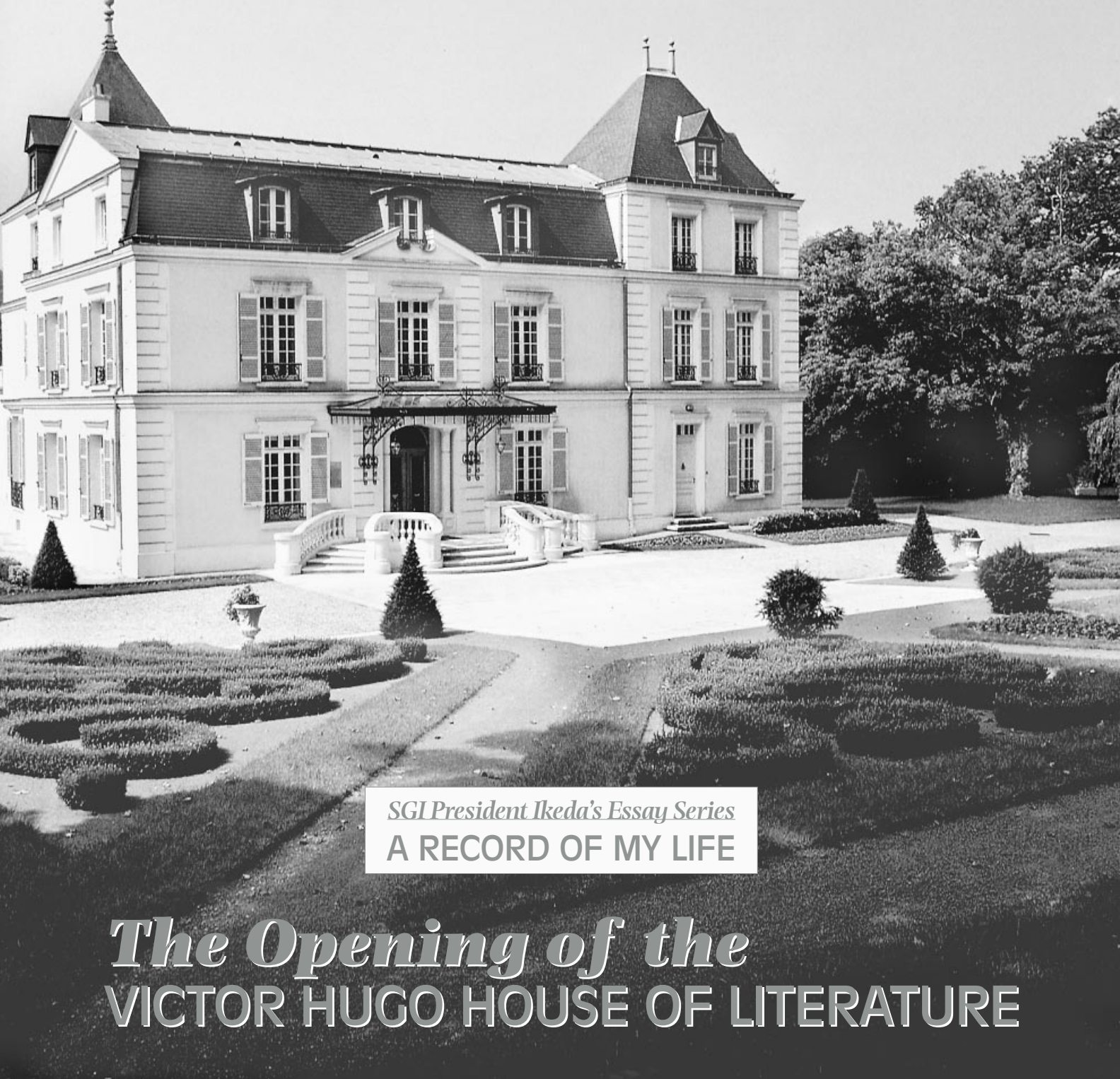
based on a foundation of the parents' daily Buddhist practice. It takes strength of character and courage to function as a healthy parent. It is the purpose of Buddhist practice in the SGI-USA to uncover and bring forth the wisdom and capabilities that inherently exist in each life. When parents do this, they open their own condition of enlightenment and can bring greater happiness to the entire family. ☸

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9. Mr. Rogers Neighborhood Child Care Partnership. *What Do You Do With The Mad That You Feel?* Pittsburgh, Pa: Family Communications, Inc., 1998.
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## CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL GOALS

Four-year-old children should be capable of:

1. Forming healthy, warm and trusting relationships with others — peers as well as adults.
2. Experiencing self-esteem, feeling good about themselves and what they do.
3. Using good impulse and behavioral control.
4. Exhibiting a rich emotional imagination and using words to express needs and feelings.
5. Separating make-believe from reality and beginning to adjust to reality's demands.
6. Beginning to deal with loss and beginning to show empathy and concern for others. Concentrating, focussing and planning as a basis for learning in those informal and formal educational settings.



*SGI President Ikeda's Essay Series*  
**A RECORD OF MY LIFE**

# *The Opening of the* **VICTOR HUGO HOUSE OF LITERATURE**

Seikyo Press

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

**T**he surrounding woods were a deep, dense green. A gentle breeze sifted through the trees. Little birds sang, bathed in sunlight. The quiet pond was a respite for those who lingered by its banks, and

stepping stones leading to the small floating island in its center stirring the imagination.

Gently enveloped in the wonderful scenery of June, the Victor Hugo House of Literature was a castle shining with the light of humanity. The beautiful house, the pond, the road, the lawn and flowers, all situated on the edge of the woods in Bièvres on the southern outskirts of Paris, were

loved by that literary giant — Victor Hugo (1802–85).

As a young man struggling against injustice, this preeminent French writer of the nineteenth century often stayed here at the Château des Roches. On those occasions, he would contemplate life, exercise his poetic imagination, engage in literary discourse with the other guests, and take up his pen and inscribe his very life. He once extolled the beautiful area of Bièvres in a poem [which is inscribed on the monument in the garden of the House], writing: “Its tranquil, inexhaustible, deep beauty makes the souls of those on earth oblivious of, and rise above, all evil.”

In Hugo there is poetry. There is boundless love and compassion for the oppressed. There is a spirit vaster than the ocean, broader than the sky. And his anger toward falsehood and injustice, as well as his thirst for truth and justice, rage fierce like a blustery storm.

Hugo is a comrade in spirit of my youth — no, of my entire life.

## Opening Day

**T**he Victor Hugo House of Literature opened on June 21, 1991. It has on public display a collection of 1,900 items that embody the spirit of this great writer, including handwritten manuscripts, personal effects and various documents.

The opening itself was attended by many distinguished intellectuals who love and admire

Hugo, and who sympathize with his eventful and turbulent life. A congratulatory message was sent to the gathering from then French President François Mitterrand (1916–96), whom I had met two years prior. Among the guests were a number of representatives from the French art and academic worlds, as well as diplomatic representatives from twelve embassies.

Honorary membership to the commemorative hall’s oversight committee was bestowed upon eight prominent individuals that day: Jack Lang, French Minister of Culture and Communications; Alain Decaux, member of the Institut de France; Hervé Bazin, president of the Goncourt Academy; Marcel Landowski, permanent secretary of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and chancellor of the Institut de France; René Huyghe, aesthetician and member of the Institut de France; Georges Poisson, the French general inspector of museums; Gonzague Saint Bris, author; and Jean Gaudon, professor of the University of Paris XII and international authority on Hugo.

Mr. Landowski, who had invited me to speak at the Institut de France [in 1989] and had received me warmly there, delivered an eloquent speech at the opening. Expressing his delight at the establishment of a “house that will bring Hugo back to life,” he discussed a number of specific qualities that characterize Hugo’s lifetime writings and activities, all of which

are still fresh in my mind. These included the courage to speak out against authority and open the eyes of the public while at the same time staying in touch with the global trends of literature, culture and society; the will to protect those who were suffering; the aspiration to lead a spiritual life; and a belief in peace.

## Hugo’s Great-Great-Grandson

**A**lso present at the opening were Madam René Cassin, the wife of René Cassin, who drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, and Françoise des Varennes, president of the French Association of Poets, both with whom I exchanged greetings. Pierre Hugo, a fifth-generation descendant of the author, was there as well. His smile bore a close resemblance to that of a young Victor Hugo. I will never forget his remark as he presented me with a photographic portrait of his great-great-grandfather that had been handed down as a family heirloom: “Now the Hugo of the Hugo family and the Hugo of Japan have met.”

Dr. Serge Tolstoy, grandson of Leo Tolstoy, was also among the guests. A physician, Dr. Tolstoy serves as vice chair of the Tolstoy Foundation and as president of the Friends of Tolstoy Society. He presented me with a certificate of honorary membership to the



Sallyo Press

*SGI President Ikeda welcomes Pierre Hugo, Victor Hugo's great-great-grandson, to the Victor Hugo House of Literature in Bièvres, France, which opened on June 21, 1991.*

ing as ambassador of the Soviet Union, to attend the opening. Mr. Aitmatov also delivered a congratulatory speech, in which he said: "Asia and Europe — East and West — are constantly searching for ways to engage in active exchange and to find a common ground." He hailed the contributions of the SGI as offering

Society, an honor that has been extended to only two others, including former French President Giscard d'Estaing. I was deeply grateful for his generous encouragement. He said that my efforts to unite people all over the world and bring human beings closer to nature were in complete agreement with the philosophy and ideals of his grandfather. He also lauded the fact that the collected articles in the Victor Hugo House of Literature were being displayed in France, Hugo's homeland, where they could be put to practical use.

Along with the certificate, I also received from Dr. Tolstoy a commemorative medal which is engraved on one side with an image of the train station at Astapovo (now Tolstoy Station) where the preeminent writer passed away. The time on the clock in the image reads 6:05, the moment when Tolstoy is believed

to have breathed his last [on the morning of November 7, 1910].

Both Hugo and Tolstoy had a profound influence on the formation of my character. As I spoke with their direct descendants, my thoughts turned to the awesome struggles of these two men of letters. Placing their bond with the people above all else, each waged a dauntless struggle against authority using the power of the pen.

Transcending all barriers of time, place and language, their spirits continue to shine with the ever-increasing light of great humanity.

### Greeting Friends From Afar

**M**y dear friend the author Chingiz T. Aitmatov drove to Bièvres from Luxembourg, where he was serv-

a fine example in this regard through its creative endeavors and concrete initiatives.

President Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner of the Club of Rome traveled from Spain to take part in the event. We had a lively conversation which began with him saying: "I have inherited the profound feelings of friendship the late founder and former Club of Rome president Aurelio Peccei had for you." Director Fabio Magalhães of the Museum of Art in São Paulo (MASP) came all the way from Brazil.

As founder of the facility, I also addressed the gathering, saying: "The immense spiritual light that the nineteenth-century author Victor Hugo shone over this great nation of France continues to emit a brilliance to the world that transcends time and place.

"It is my wish that displaying the dazzling depth of Hugo's writings in this house, the

Château des Roches, which Hugo loved so deeply during his lifetime, will serve as a rainbow of hope for the new century....

“I am overjoyed that this castle of literature has been given a new lease on life in this way, wrapped in the warm embrace of the hearts of Hugo lovers from around the world.”

## The Age Seeks the Flame of Humanism

I was compelled to mention the impact Hugo’s masterpiece *Les Misérables* had on me when I first read it as a young man. Each page had taken me far into the realm of the human heart, deeply and broadly turning my young spirit around and around.

I also talked about my mentor Josei Toda, who loved Hugo’s writings, and I introduced the unforgettable memory of learning from Mr. Toda the shining ideals of humanism, human rights and education through Hugo’s revolutionary novel *Quatrevingt-treize* (Ninety-Three).<sup>1</sup>

I said that Hugo’s life of action, which demonstrated the victory of humanism through the author’s ability to triumph over the storms of criticism and misunderstanding that raged about him, was tremendous encouragement for our [the SGI’s] popular movement — a movement aimed at creating a new culture for human happiness. And, remarking that the flame of Hugo’s humanism was needed then more

than ever, I expressed my profound wish that the Victor Hugo House of Literature would become a spiritual beacon sending the lofty spirit of France — of liberty, equality and fraternity — out into the world and well into the future.

## The Power of Literature to Bring People Together

I went on to talk about how, when Paris celebrated the tercentennial of the birth of British playwright William Shakespeare in 1864, Hugo sent a message conveying his joy from his place of exile on the island of Guernsey. In it, he stated that the French people’s celebration of Shakespeare, an Englishman, was the same as praising the Earth itself, or praising the lofty spiritual law that pervades the entire universe. The sharing of literature among the peoples of the world, he said, heralded the dawn of the harmonious fusion of humankind. I agree completely.

I concluded my speech with my determination that the year 2002, the 200th anniversary of Hugo’s birth, would see the start of a resplendent century of the people that is characterized by humanism — something for which Hugo so fervently yearned. A number of the guests voiced their sympathy with my remarks.

The year 2002 is just around the corner. And, just as Hugo envisioned, the process of unifying of Europe is well underway.

## A Person Who Doesn’t Fear Death Doesn’t Fear Anything

The House has five exhibition rooms: three on the first floor and two on the second. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Philippe Moine, the facility’s first director, and others who spent two years preparing for its opening, a collection of valuable items was carefully classified, organized and arranged in a beautiful display.

One of the exhibition rooms, the Blue Room, which is decorated in light blue, focuses on the period of Hugo’s youth. Among the works on display in this room are a book containing the poem which won Hugo, who was seventeen at the time, first prize in a writing competition; a lithographic portrait of the writer exhibiting the passion and sensitivity of an eighteen-year-old; as well as handwritten manuscripts and first-edition books. All convey the youthful energy of Hugo as he spread his wings and took flight into the vast azure skies of poetry and playwriting.

The Multi-Purpose Room is organized around the theme of Hugo’s time in exile. It houses precious articles that tell the story of the author’s invincible life and his creative and impassioned struggles against tyranny. Viewing the memos in which Hugo set down his ideas for *Les Misérables* and *Quatrevingt-treize*, along with



Hugo seated among family and friends, 1883.

his handwritten corrections and the copies of these works, enables one to trace the steps of the writer's thought process that led to the birth of many great works of literature.

The handwritten manuscript of *Quatrevingt-treize*, in which Hugo poignantly stresses the "justice of humanity" over the "justice of revolution," moved me deeply.

When I was twenty-three, I made the following entry in my diary (on January 13, 1951): "Victor Hugo, great master of literature. Finished reading his great work of revolutionary poetry, *Quatrevingt-treize*. Many thoughts and feelings. Earnestly hope that many great literary figures of his caliber will appear in our country as well. Ah, when will we see the emergence of great literary masters who base themselves on this great philosophy, thought and religion? Ah, great authors who burn with passion, revolution and profound ideals!

Your appearance could not come a day too soon!"<sup>2</sup>

That was a time of tremendous hardship and struggle. I was single-handedly supporting President Toda, whose business was in dire straits. Never compromising my ideals, I gave all I had without retreating a single step. *Quatrevingt-treize*, a novel about the French Revolution, affected me that much more because of what I was going through.

Using Hugo's writings as his base, President Toda freely and dynamically elucidated the currents at work in society and the lives of people involved in and affected by revolution.

"Revolution means death," Mr. Toda declared. A person who does not fear death does not fear anything. A person who fears nothing will not be daunted by the basest of schemes or even physical attack. A genuine youth lives resolutely, burning with ideals. A life of spirit and resolve will strike back with twice the

force of any obstacle or attack; it will rise above any onslaught of persecution or jealousy.

Hugo was driven into exile [in 1851], where he stayed for nineteen years, to avoid arrest for leading the struggle against the authoritarian Napoleon III.<sup>3</sup>

Courageously assisted by Juliette Drouet,<sup>4</sup> an actress who had appeared in one of his plays, Hugo fled France carrying a false passport and disguised in the hat and dark overcoat of a laborer. Starting in Brussels, Belgium, he was forced to move next to the British island of Jersey, and then to the island of Guernsey. Yet he never desisted in his fight for freedom. On the contrary, his war of words only intensified. He continued to mercilessly bombard the powerful with scathing words of condemnation.

At Jersey, he composed a collection of poetry, the famous *Les Châtiments* (The Punishments),<sup>5</sup> of which the final poem, "Ultima Verba" ("Last Words"), expressed his dauntless determination:

*I accept the harsh exile, which has  
neither end nor term;  
Without seeking to know and  
without considering  
Whether someone has crumpled  
who had been thought more  
firm,  
And whether many have fled who  
ought to stand fast.  
If there are no more than a thou-  
sand, well, I am among them!  
If even there are no more than a  
hundred, I brave Scylla  
[Napoleon III] still;*

*If ten remain, I shall be the tenth;  
And if there remains only one, I  
shall be he!*

Jersey, December 2, 1852

Driven from Jersey, Hugo moved to Guernsey, where he faced extreme hardship. It was on this island, situated in the English Channel to the northwest of France, that the poet of the people spent the majority of his lonely exile, from age fifty-three to sixty-eight. Still, he could not be silenced. Though the attacks on him grew fiercer, he did not relent; rather, he became more resolved to fight back, his will to engage in the struggle and write growing ever stronger. Such was his unyielding spirit and his passion for challenge.

## The Château des Roches and the Young Hugo

Another of the exhibition rooms, the Bertin Literary Salon, introduces the members of the Bertin family — the owners of the house when Hugo frequented it — as well as Hugo’s exchanges with other friends who stayed there, and the works that he produced there.

The Château des Roches was originally built in the verdant town of Bièvres by the Sun King Louis XIV (1638–1715). In the nineteenth century, it was bought by Louis-François Bertin, a well-known patron of the literary arts, and became known as a

renowned intellectual salon. Writers and artists came together to share their ideas at the salon of Bertin, who had also started the famous newspaper of the day *Journal des Débats*.<sup>6</sup>

In his greetings at the opening of the House, Director Moine touched on this history, remarking: “From 1815 until 1841, the salon continued to be patronized by highly prominent figures of the political and artistic worlds. These included the novelist and politician François-René de Chateaubriand, the composers Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt, and the painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. The most eminent of all of Bertin’s guests, however, was Victor Hugo.”

The young Hugo was extremely fond of the Château des Roches. Staying there provided him the opportunity to refresh his spirit and think about the future. Surrounded by rich nature, he met with intelligent and creative minds, and cultivated his own poetic genius. The Hugos and Bertins continued to enjoy close familial ties. This is also conveyed in the articles on display in the room.

Upstairs, one finds the warmly decorated Red Room, which covers the period from Hugo’s triumphant return from exile until the day his noble life of vicissitude came to an end. Hugo at last returned to Paris in September 1870, three days after Napoleon III was defeated by the Prussian army and taken prisoner. He was sixty-eight.

## “The Spiritual Eye Will Remain Open”

Throngsof people shouting “Long live Victor Hugo!” welcomed him when his train arrived in Paris. They cheered eagerly for this victorious champion of the spirit who had stood up to tyranny and oppressive rule on their behalf.

Hugo — who lived, sang, called out and fought with all his might — was a staunch ally of justice and the people. When he died at age eighty-three, the people once again turned out in great numbers to bid him a last farewell. Hugo’s remains were carried in a “pauper’s hearse” — an old car which he had commissioned for that purpose — from the Arc de Triomphe to the Panthéon. The procession was completely swallowed up in the more than 2 million onlookers. A photo of this solemn scene on display in the Red Room is an expression of the author’s eternal victory.

Regarding death, Hugo once said: “I shall close my terrestrial eye, but the spiritual eye will remain open, wider than ever.”<sup>7</sup>

His immense life comes to shine ever-brighter with each passing century.

## Criticism and Slander Are Proof of Greatness

It goes without saying that Hugo was the target of much criticism and slander — the decorations of all



Shilayo Press

Known as “a poet of the people,” Victor Hugo (1802–85) demonstrated to the world the power of words.

great historical figures. Commenting on the fact that even fifty years after his death, Hugo continued to be vilified, the French poet Paul Valéry (1871–1945) said: “He [Hugo] was attacked again yesterday as though he were one of the living. They tried to stifle the root of his spirit. This is the mark of true greatness.”<sup>8</sup> But Hugo remained undaunted by the stream of curses and base sneers of those who merely stood on the sidelines. To the end, he waged an eternal battle for the sake of the people, his eyes fixed on the future.

## A Treasure Trove of Books

The library on the second floor of the House of Literature contains Hugo’s complete works, along with translations of

them in various languages. For a lover of Hugo, the room is a veritable treasure trove of books.

The memorial hall was opened with the hope of contributing to the revival of the cultural heritage of the city of Bièvres and the surrounding area, and promoting the development and advancement of literature. Plans to create it were officially announced two years before the opening, but I had actually been dreaming about it for some time.

## My Meeting With Alain Poher

Ten years prior to the House’s opening, in June 1981, I met Alain Poher, then president of the French Senate, for the first time. On that occasion he graciously gave me a tour of the Senate chamber, where I saw the seat that Hugo had occupied when he served as a member of the Senate. A commemorative plaque attached to the seat praises Hugo’s immortal achievements. As I sat down in the chair, I recalled the life of this great man who kindled an impassioned war of words. The Luxembourg Palace (which houses the French Senate) contains many magnificent rooms, one of the most splendid of which is the Hugo Room. A wonderful relief of the author adorns one wall.

When I met with Mr. Poher again the day before the opening, I said to him: “The idea of establishing such a commemorative

hall occurred to me ten years ago at the time of our first meeting. It was then that I made up my mind to do what I could to preserve the history of Hugo’s literary achievements and his heroic lifetime struggles for the sake of future generations. That was the first step toward the establishment of this House of Literature. And that beginning was possible thanks to you.”

He seemed delighted as he listened to me talk about the events leading up to the realization of the commemorative hall and, smiling brightly, said that he thought it beautifully represented the spirit of Hugo. Mr. Poher, a dignified statesman who had fought against the Nazi occupiers as a member of the Resistance during the Second World War, sent a kind message to the opening:

Victor Hugo is the French author who is most famous and most widely read in other countries. Hence it should come as no surprise to us when foreigners dedicate an exhibition or a commemorative hall to this great lyric poet in their countries. However, it is something very rare and moving for a foreign friend to show the desire to honor the glory of Hugo here in our own country.

Since its opening, the facility has shown a number of exhibitions in addition to its permanent exhibits. These include “Hugo and Photography,” “*Quatrevingt-treize*,” “Hugo and Human Rights,” “Hugo and the 21st



The House of Literature is a tribute to Victor Hugo and boasts some 4,700 items. (Above) The Bertin Literary Salon introduces the Bertin family, owners of the house when Hugo visited it, as well as Hugo's exchanges with other friends who stayed there.

Century” and “Hugo and Shakespeare,” and all have been well received by the community.

The House of Literature is also carrying out joint research with a Hugo research group made up of university specialists. Its collection of more than 4,700 items comprises a number of priceless articles that are considered national treasures. I am also delighted to learn that residents of Bièvres and its neighborhood have taken a strong personal pride and interest in the facility, visiting it several times a year with friends and family. In addition, the facility welcomes a steady stream of visitors from throughout France, as well as from abroad.

Television stations, newspapers and magazines have lauded the facility as one of the “must-see” cultural attractions in the area, and as “an extremely worthy project, both educationally and culturally.” It is also visited regularly by groups of young people, which seems highly appropriate

given Hugo’s immense love for youth. One member of a group of high school students who visited from another town wrote in the guest registry: “The words of Hugo on display here will become our rules for combating violence within our school. That’s because they make us think and they teach us.”

## The Eternal Struggle Between Light and Darkness

**H**ugo, the great poet of spiritual liberation that came from France’s womb, opened the eyes of the world to liberty and justice. His tumultuous life was a grand drama, a work of art. He was a fighter who demonstrated to the world the power of words. He was a champion who forged himself through each ordeal. He was a free person who called for spiritual liberty and independence. He was a strong-minded humanist who was

bitterly indignant toward injustice. He was a person who lived his life to the full, perceiving the reality of life and death with keen sensitivity while battling the hostile circumstances that bore down on him like crashing waves.

“This is the struggle between day and night”<sup>9</sup>—these were among his last words.

The struggle of light and darkness—this is a struggle that continues eternally. But light will always succeed in defeating darkness. This was Hugo’s conviction, and his life.

The Victor Hugo House of Literature in Bièvres is a palace of the victory of the spirit. It is a “house of the light of justice” that vanquishes evil and banishes misery. ❁

1. *Quatrevingt-treize*: Set in France in 1793, in this work Hugo portrays the lives of people living amid the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. Published in 1874.
2. Daisaku Ikeda, *A Youthful Diary: One Man’s Journey from the Beginning of Faith to Worldwide Leadership for Peace* (Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press, 2000), p. 76.
3. Napoleon III (1808–73): Nephew of Napoleon I. Led a coup d’état in 1851 that resulted in the establishment of the Second Empire.
4. Juliette Drouet (1805–83): A long-time companion of Victor Hugo who was the inspiration for several volumes of poetry published by the author in the 1830s.
5. *Les Châtiments*: First published in Brussels in 1853, the original comprising ninety-seven poems all attacking Napoleon III.
6. *Journal des Débats*: Founded in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, the paper supported liberalist views. In 1875, however, with the establishment of the constitution under the Third Republic, it adopted a conservative stance. The paper ceased publication in 1944.
7. Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 524.
8. Translated from Japanese, *Paul Valéry, Bareri Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Paul Valéry) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1973), vol. 8, p. 295.
9. Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo*, p. 522.

# Living Buddhism

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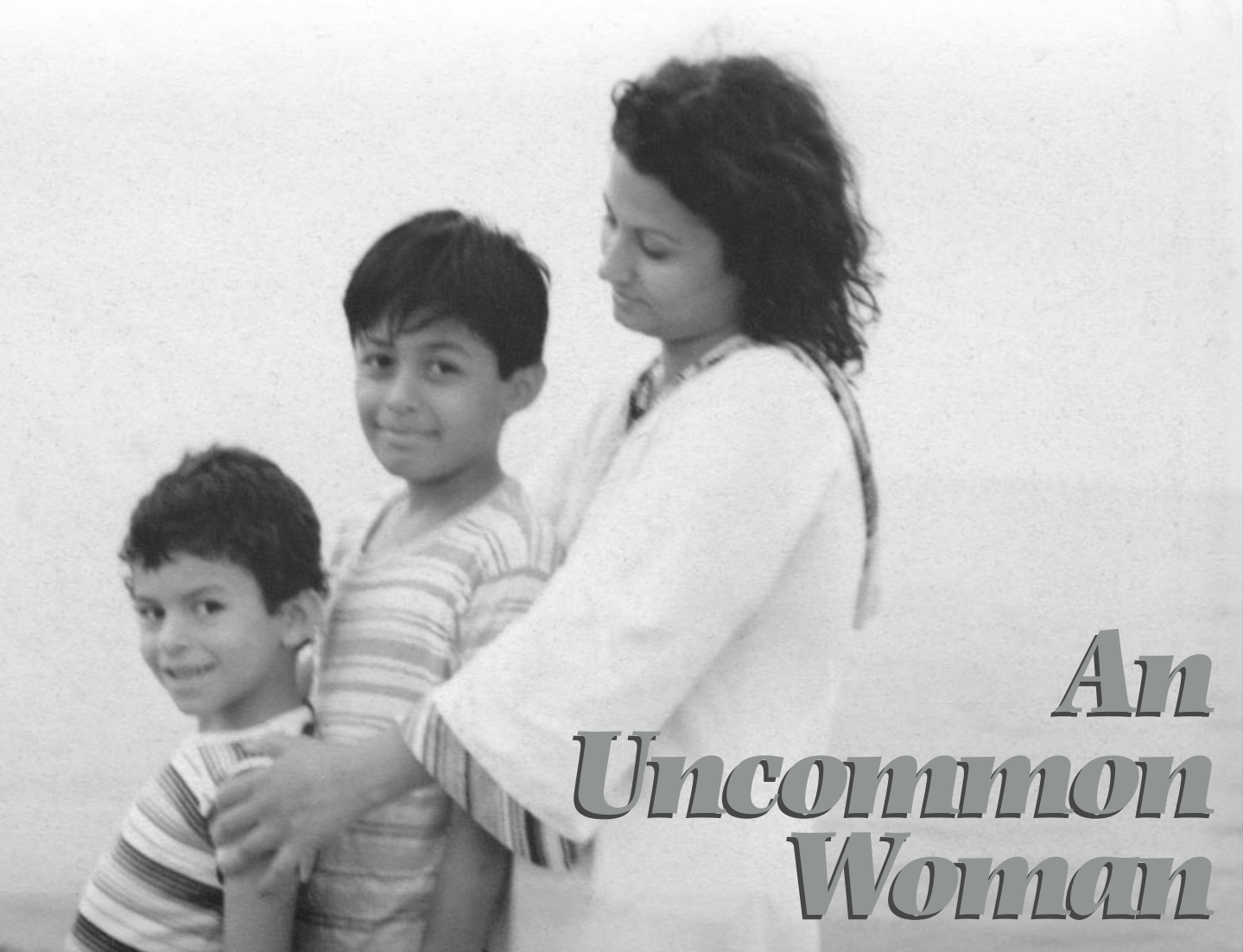
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# An Uncommon Woman

**Lily Ajdar and her two sons fled Iran to escape the Iranian Islamic Revolution. In the United States they found true freedom in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.**

BY LILY AJDAR, LOS ANGELES

I grew up in Iran, a traditional Islamic country, during a time when life was becoming very free and Westernized. From the 1920s Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, encouraged women to integrate into society and to know our rights, such as the right to dress as we wished, to divorce, to have a job, and the right to our children. At the time, many religious people didn't want to change their traditional Islamic ways; for example, women were expected to be covered head to toe when in public. However, the intellectuals willingly embraced this new liberation and the government's attempt to modernize. From the time I was born

until the beginning of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, I never experienced the oppression of a religious government and my family freely chose to practice Islam.

Fortunately, my mother, being the free-spirited woman that she was, insisted that my four sisters and I become independent. She encouraged us — especially me, since I was the oldest daughter — to receive a university education so that we would be financially independent. She wanted us to work, so when we married, our husbands would have to accept us as we were. And if anything ever happened to them, we could care for ourselves and our families.

After high school, I began teaching at an elementary school. Following my mother's advice, I attended one of the first co-ed universities at night, which was uncommon, to receive my bachelor's degree in business administration. Though my father was traditional and opposed the liberal lifestyle of his eldest daughter, I was determined and challenged his resistance. I was even the first woman to buy a car at the university.

Later, I married and had two beautiful children. Eventually, I began teaching statistics and economics at a

women's high school in Tehran.

After the Islamic Revolution began in 1979, what limited rights women developed were totally disregarded by the religious authorities. Among other things, women once again were forced to cover themselves in public. These changes were devastating. Many people tried to fight back but were imprisoned or persecuted.

The new government severely regulated education and our curriculum became heavily dominated by fundamentalist Islamic teachings. Because I believed what was happening was wrong, I constantly challenged the system. I tried to teach my students that this fundamentalism was unhealthy. I wanted them to know that studying Islam was fine, but we also needed to broaden our minds, to learn other economic, political and social philosophies to cope with the reality of the world.

My family had many luxuries, and I did not have to fight for change in society. But without freedom, I knew the repressed environment would eventually cause us suffering.

Life in Iran progressively worsened.

In March 1982, I vividly recall celebrating Iranian New Year's Eve, when suddenly our family's feast was ruined by a savage Iraqi attack. Many innocent children and people were killed in Tehran. Because of the mandatory military recruitment for young boys age fifteen and older, I feared for my two sons' lives. It was at that time, under the air raids, looking at the terrified eyes of my children, that I made a resolution: I will depart from this misery forever.

Leaving Iran was not easy. I faced many challenges emotionally, politically and legally. I suffered the loss of my father in an auto accident during the air raids, and convincing my husband, Behrouz, to let me get a passport to leave the country was no small feat. He was in the military and would not leave Iran. Although Behrouz wanted the children and me to be happy, he was afraid that we'd grow apart and never be reunited if we left. But finally in 1983, I convinced my husband to help me flee the country with my two sons to France.

Over the course of four years, I tried to make a new start for my family, while continuing to follow my own dreams. I began learning the French language and culture, and applied to a master's program in economics at a university in Paris. I started a small but successful business that provided a good living for us.

Behrouz joined us two years later but couldn't accept our freedom and the many changes in our lives. He asked me to return to Iran. When I refused, he threat-

ened to take the children back to Iran. The next few years I lived in fear of the future and became deeply depressed. I couldn't sleep at night, even with a handful of sleeping pills. However, I continued making efforts to protect myself, my children and our future.

In July 1988, in spite of my husband's opposition, I emigrated with my two sons to Los Angeles.

That August my oldest son, Ali, was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism outside our apartment. He wasn't interested, but he gave me the contact information. I invited myself to a meeting. The sincerity of the people I met inspired me and I desperately started to practice because I wanted to be happy. After two weeks of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, I felt so peaceful that I could sleep without medication. Within two months of chanting, my mother and sister joined us in Los Angeles from Iran, the answer to one of my first prayers.

Then an onslaught of challenges surfaced. During the first week of her arrival in the States, my sister, who had been tortured by the authoritarian government in Iran, fell into a deep depression and was hospitalized. Also my mother began complaining of strange headaches. Nine months later she was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer and given two months to live.

Furthermore, my husband began interfering in my life. He tried to turn my teenage sons against me. Behrouz was against me practicing and helping my sister and mother, because it was draining all of our finances; he wanted us to return to Paris. Fearing that he might try to prevent me from practicing, when he stopped supporting us financially, I decided to divorce him. Of course, my children were upset by our circumstances and began blaming me for all our problems. On top of this, cultural conflict was a big challenge for all of us. I prayed that one day my sons would understand my faith.

I became negative about everything. My life was so dark that for months I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror. My problems were overwhelming. Things seemed to just be getting worse even though I was chanting three hours every night.

In the middle of this stormy life, all I had was my Buddhist practice and my friends in the SGI-USA. One night in a desperate state, I read the following passage from Nichiren Daishonin in the *World Tribune*: "One may ask why the results of these vows should be so long in appearing. 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



Since the 1920s in Iran, women enjoyed many freedoms similar to Western countries. The religious authorities disregarded those rights after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. (Top) Lily Ajdar (with scarf) and her students at the beginning of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. (Below) Lily with coworkers in Ahvaz in Iran before the Revolution.

could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 345).

The conviction of the Daishonin’s words struck my life. I felt hope and believed that I could make it. I had the key, now I needed patience and perseverance. At this time, my sons began supporting my practice, and my mother and sister started to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

After a few months, my sister was released from the hospital and over time regained her health through the practice of faith. We all chanted for my mother to overcome her brain tumor and through strong prayer, chemotherapy and radiation, she extended her life by eight years. In helping my family, I started realizing the power of my own life and practice.

In February 1990, I experienced a transformation

when I saw SGI President Ikeda for the first time in a telecast meeting. I remember he spoke out against authoritarianism — a theme that was all too familiar in my life. I was electrified by this encounter, and immediately felt an unshakable trust toward him. I told myself this is the man I have to follow — he is my mentor. All those hardships I faced seemed to lead me to this point. The sun had begun rising in my heart, all the darkness vanished immediately. This mystic encounter shaped my life; since then I have never felt lonely in this world.

As the SGI conflict with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood manifested in 1991, I came to realize that every event in my life from my husband’s opposition to financial problems led to my understanding of challenging authoritarianism. Because I experienced religious authoritarianism in Iran, I naturally devoted myself to understanding this issue in the SGI and encouraged others to do so. My sons also got seriously involved with such activities, and as a result, a unity for kosen-rufu started to take shape in my family. As mother and sons, we became comrades in faith as well.

Now my sons, who were once too young to understand my heart, are my best friends and support me in any way they can. Three years ago, I wrote a poem about my life for President Ikeda. After reading it, my younger son, Amir, with tears in his eyes told me: “Now I understand your heart. Thank you, Mom, for everything you’ve done for us.” There’s no greater happiness for me than knowing my sons are awakening to their mission and the purpose of our journey and hardships.

Having freed myself from all my family burdens, I decided to fulfill one of my dreams. After much preparation, last year I entered a master’s program in international relations at Cal State, Los Angeles. Although it took a lot of courage, I overcame fears concerning my English language ability and competing with younger students. I learned from reading President Ikeda’s guidance to be true to myself and never give up on my dreams.

I have to mention that I am not merely seeking a degree. Rather, learning about political issues refreshes my mind and increases my awareness of the world. Eventually I hope to use this knowledge to contribute to world peace.

Since the beginning of my practice fourteen years ago, I have climbed many steep mountains. Many people asked me how I could continue. My answer: It is the deep joy and fulfillment that I gained from my Buddhist practice, and the deep connection that I have built with my mentor Daisaku Ikeda. ☸

# A Lifeline For Peace

BY AMIR KASPIAN, LOS ANGELES

**O**n the morning of September 11, 2001, I was finishing my shift at Fire Station #98, my first day of work after graduating from the Los Angeles City Fire Academy. With a dazed look, one of my fellow firefighters said: “Hey, come and check out the TV. Somebody just did a kamikaze on the World Trade Center.” As I watched the news in disbelief, old tapes kicked into play in the back of my mind, and a feeling of despair welled up within me.

I was born in Iran in 1974. I never experienced the peace and joy of the country of my birth before the 1979 Iranian Revolution when a radical Islamic government took over what had been a modern country. I vividly remember images of panic, protests and imprisonment of free thinkers. I even recall my family going out onto our balcony to shout allegiance to the new government out of fear of imprisonment — or death.

When I started school at age six, Iran was at war with its neighbor Iraq. Everyone lived in constant fear because of daily air raids on Tehran, where we lived. I remember how the government brainwashed us kids to hate and feel victimized. We would chant or sing pro-war songs in the cold mornings outside the classroom. Our heroes were thirteen-year-old children who threw themselves in front of Iraqi tanks, while holding grenades in their small hands, all for the sake of Allah. And the men we looked up to were arrogant and cunning, teaching hate and injustice. As dramatic as it may sound, this was the reality of those days.

Amid all this, my mother had a vision — no, a mission — to save us. The only protection I felt during those air raids was when my mom was holding me; in her arms I felt safe and knew that I would be fine. She always taught my older brother and me what was right and that what our government was doing was destructive to its people. She was always strong, with a soft, wise voice. Because of her determination, in 1984, after a long struggle, we left Iran for France six months before my fourteen-year-old brother, Ali, was to be drafted for the war.

My life in France was difficult. In a foreign country not very open to the people of the Middle East, I faced a lot of prejudice. My mother’s hope was for my brother



Martin Cohen

and I to be well educated, so she worked hard to send us to international schools to learn French and receive the best education possible. Again because of our mother’s strength, both my brother and I were able to adapt. After three years we began to feel comfortable in Paris. But another journey awaited us.

Ever since I can remember, my mom dreamt of coming to America, and when the opportunity arose in July 1988, we left France and headed for Los Angeles. As soon as we landed and I saw the city, I loved it. I felt safe and happy. I will never forget the joy my brother and I shared that night.

When my mom began her practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism almost immediately after arriving, my brother and I were very resistant. Perhaps as an attempt to hold on to what reminded me of my homeland, I told myself that I would never leave Allah and my belief in Islam. Gradually I saw my mom change from a woman who had to take Valium every night to sleep because of depression into a woman with hope and happiness. She even grew more tolerant of the behavior of her teenage sons. Within a few months, I began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with my mom and supported her practice.

High school was tough for me since I didn’t speak English and was unfamiliar with the culture, so I dedicated myself to learning American customs by hanging out with Americans instead of Iranians; watching a lot of television also helped. It only took me six months to catch on.

When the Persian Gulf War erupted in 1990, I experienced another surge of prejudice, and felt embarrassed about my heritage. I was called racist names like “terrorist” and “diaper head” and was excluded from social groups. It was painful, but because of this I found genuine friends.

As high school wound down, I developed an interest in the fire department but was too intimidated to tell my family. I chanted to make the right decisions for my life.

I followed my dream but soon found out how competi-

tive becoming a firefighter was. I joined the LAFD Explorer Program, which helped me learn about the career, the fire fighters and what they stood for. I felt a strong brotherhood and honor among the firefighters, and immediately fell in love with the job. I volunteered for five years and even won a prestigious award as Fire Explorer of the Year in 1996, the first time it was given to a volunteer.

Determined to become a firefighter, I tested for different departments but kept failing. I went to school, became an emergency medical technician and continued being an Explorer with the LAFD. All this time, I also had to work to support myself since my family's financial situation was in dire straits.

Knowing the danger of the job, my mom was not very fond of my goal to become a firefighter. Wanting bigger things for me, she often said: "Amir, this is just a hero-wanna-be phase for you. You'll grow out of it and become a diplomat." I always smiled at her even though I wanted her to understand my passion.

After failing many times to get into a fire department, I decided to pay my way through paramedic school. Chanting, studying six hours a day, working forty hours a week, and going to SGI activities made 1997 the hardest year of my life, but I knew it would pay off.

After graduating, I started to work for private ambulance companies as a paramedic but I still wanted to work for the fire department. Many times I wanted to give up or go into some other career; it seemed to be easier that way. But a great friend and fellow SGI member, who always stood by my family, kept encouraging me to not give up on my dream.

In 1998, I had the opportunity to go to a youth training session in Japan. That trip changed and shaped my way of thinking forever. Hearing President Ikeda and feeling his passion at meetings forced me to face my arrogance. Who I am and how I view the world came into question, creating a lot of emotions within. It took many hours of chanting and a significant encounter with great members in Fresno, California, particularly, a fifteen-year-old girl who shared her suffering with me, to bring me to the realization that to live for others is my mission.

That same year I began the testing process again with the department I most wanted to work for—the Los Angeles City Fire Department. I felt prepared, now a man of twenty-four with much more to offer. I was ready to shine.

I went through the seven-step testing process with no problems; I was ranked among the top fifty candi-

dates out of 17,000 competing for only 200 positions. I knew that this was finally my moment.

But another challenge lay ahead. I was thrown out of the process two months before starting the academy because of tardiness at my previous job as a paramedic. I fell to the floor when I got that letter. I felt deep despair, and tears of failure rolled down my cheeks. There was no way to justify my performance at my job. No matter how much I disliked the company, I had painted myself into this dark corner. I had brought it on myself.

I had the fortune to be surrounded by true friends — particularly my mom and my fiancée. They pushed and encouraged me to chant and appeal, to fight for what I deserved. It took one year of a lot of daimoku, appeals and showing the fire department that I had overcome my tendency for tardiness by being victorious at my job. I chose to become the best at what I was doing. It was tough, but by now I realized nothing worthwhile comes easy. After that grueling year, my bosses gave me a glowing review.

During that seven-year process, I had to encourage myself every single day. It seemed like every time I read SGI President Ikeda's encouragement, it was pointed squarely at me. It was always related to what I was going through, and spoke to me of courage, consistency and never giving up.

In November 2000, I was hired by the Los Angeles Fire Department. Needing me as a paramedic, they put me in the field on the ambulance. After six months, in May 2001, I was pulled back in and began my four-month training as a firefighter. I can talk about those grueling, twelve-hour, hot summer days in the academy, but I won't. I just wanted to finish and graduate.

I am currently fulfilling my one-year field probation in Pacoima, a low-income, active gang area in Los Angeles. Although my mom worries about me working in a dangerous area, I know it's where I can help the people. It's where I am needed. Whether it's reviving someone's father from a heart attack, delivering a newborn or saving a family's home from burning to the ground, I am dedicated to protecting the lives of our citizens regardless of race, status, religion or ethnicity. My job may be dangerous, but I wouldn't trade it.

Now, in light of the terrorist attacks, I face another challenge. Losing 350 fellow firefighters and thousands of innocent and courageous lives at the hands of tyrants who were born in the Middle East as I was, I struggle not to hate them and not to feel ashamed of my heritage. I am chanting every day about this, and I am hopeful.



Martin Cohen

*Amir Kaspian achieved a seven-year dream of becoming a firefighter for the Los Angeles City Fire Department on September 7, 2001. (L-r: Amir (center) with his mother, Lily; fiancée, Stephanie; brother, Ali; and LAFD Fire Chief William Bamattre)*

I believe in my heart that the way to create peace in the Middle East and the world is through education and dialogue, just as my mentor President Ikeda states: “The importance of dialogue can not be overstated. Nothing must be allowed to impinge upon its free exchange. . . . There are a number of short-term measures that may be implemented to combat violence and terrorism, but the only viable long-term solution is education. There is no other alternative but to educate people on the loftiest humanitarian values and views of life in order to establish a foundation of peace and stability for humankind in these times of tumultuous change” (*World Tribune*, September 28, 2001, p. 1).

Broadening my perspective as a young man was difficult, and at times I felt confused about my identity, but I did it. I am creating peace in my life. It is an ever-growing perspective on the world and people, a knowing of who I am and my role in this world. The significance of being a fire fighter is to take that peace with me every day to work, to my peers and to citizens in their greatest time of need.

Looking back at my experiences and knowing friends who never made it out of Iran or were robbed and brutalized as they tried to

leave, I realize the great fortune of being able to practice Buddhism. I have confidence knowing that, even though I will always face hardships, I will win through faith. And no one can take that away. I appreciate my mom for all that she has sacrificed and for helping me embrace such a profound philosophy. Because of her, I am able to claim victory at this stage of my life. ☸



Martin Cohen

*Class #1 firefighters demonstrate their skills and teamwork as part of their graduation ceremony from the Los Angeles Fire Academy.*

# Applying Buddhism to Daily Life

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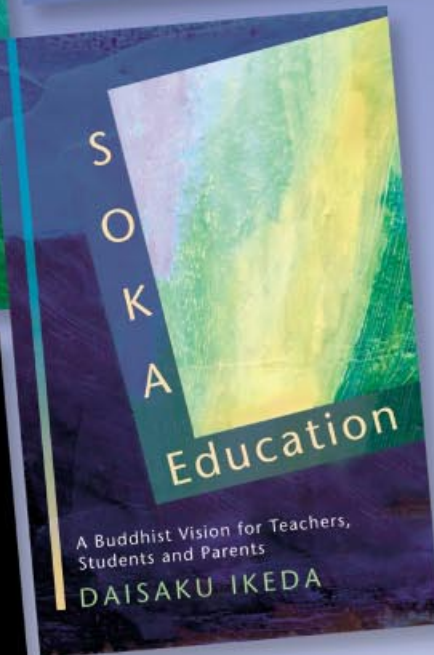
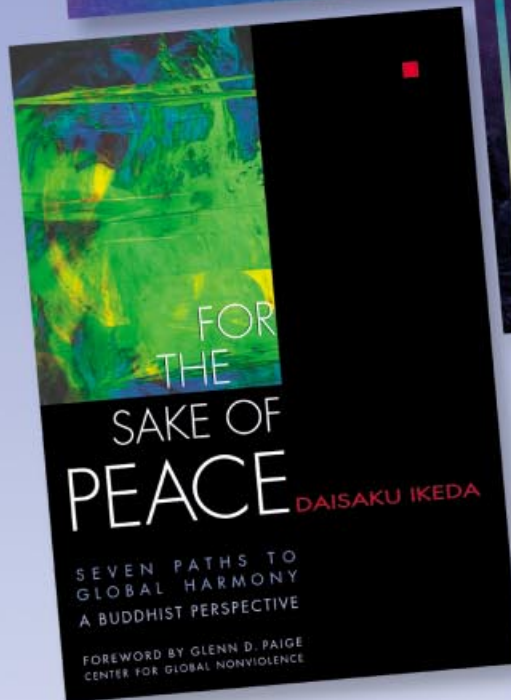
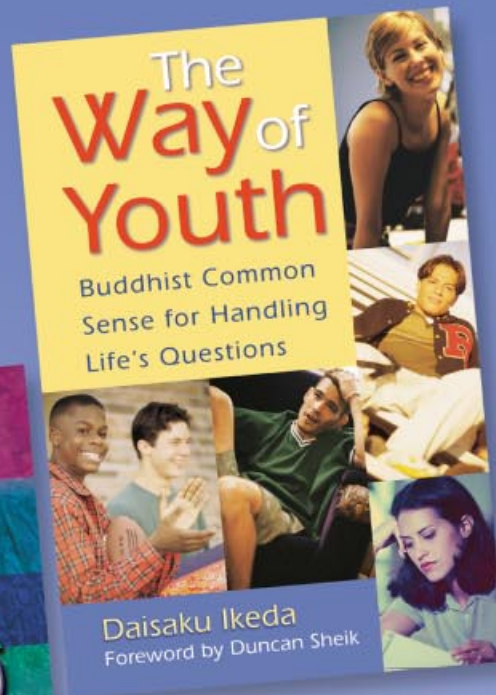
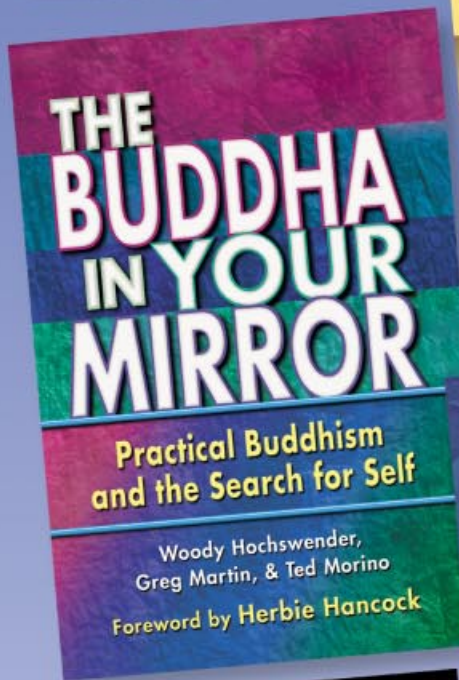
## For the Sake of Peace Seven Paths to Global Harmony, A Buddhist Perspective

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# Living BUDDHISM

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## A Tale of Two Revolutions: One Firefighter's Story

Amir Kaspien and his mother, Lily

## Dialogue Between Western and Islamic Civilizations

SGI President Ikeda's  
"Wonderful  
Encounters"



# Florida Nature and Culture Center 2002 Schedule of Conferences

January 24-27	Golden Stage Group Conference #1 (Japanese Language)
February 7-10	Arts Division Conference #1
February 14-17	Courageous Heart Group (Soka Spirit) Conference
February 21-24	Stage Crew Conference
March 7-10	Spanish/Portuguese Language Conference #1
March 14-17	Korean Language Conference #1
March 21-24	Chinese Language Conference #1
April 4-7	To Be Determined
April 11-14	Golden Stage Group Conference #2 (Japanese Language)
April 18-21	Women's Conference on Leadership (Open to all women's division members)
May 2-5	Mentor and Disciple Relationship Conference
May 9-12	Leadership Development Conference
May 16-19	Healing Arts & Legal Division Conference
May 30-June 2	Diversity Conference
June 6-9	Study Conference #1
June 13-16	Men's Conference #1
June 20-23	Educator's Division Conference
June 27-30	Young Men's Conference
July 11-14	Young Women's Conference
July 18-21	Youth Performing Groups Conference
August 1-4	Student Division Conference
August 8-11	Jr. High/High School Divisions Conference
August 15-18	Raising Our Children Conference
August 22-25	Men's Conference #2
September 5-8	Korean Language Conference #2
September 12-15	Japanese Language Conference
September 19-22	Third Southeast Asian Conference
October 3-6	Spanish/Portuguese Language Conference #2
October 10-13	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Conference
October 17-20	Chinese Language Conference #2
October 24-27	Women's Conference (Open to all women's division members)
November 7-10	Study Conference #2
November 14-17	Culture Department Conference
November 21-24	Byakuren, Soka Group and Gajokai (BSG) Conference
December 5-8	Arts Division Conference #2
December 12-15	Golden Stage Group Conference #3 (English & Japanese Language)

To sign up for a conference, or for more information, please contact your respective Zone office:

Southern California Zone

Tel: (323) 965-0025

Western Zone

Tel: (303) 893-0430

Pacific Zone

Tel: (808) 595-6324

Northern California Zone

Tel: (415) 255-6007

Pacific Northwest Zone

Tel: (206) 244-0268

Central Zone

Tel: (312) 913-1211

Southern Zone

Tel: (954) 349-5200

Northeastern Zone

Tel: (212) 727-7715

Mid-Atlantic Zone

Tel: (301) 779-3255