Opening of the Eyes II

Background and context
Sansho Shima
The Five-fold Comparison
Six Difficult and Nine Easy Acts

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1.1. Context

October was the start of a new rhythm for Study across Europe, in which we read and appreciate the Gosho not in isolation but in conjunction with a series of remarkable dialogues between President Ikeda and SGI Study Dept. Leader Katsuji Saito.

These dialogues are not in the Western Socratic tradition with which many of us are familiar, but in the tradition of Master and Disciple, in which the common purpose is to realise the Buddha Way. One of the people on the national leaders’ Japan course said that Saito had explained his role as eliciting from President Ikeda the endless stream of realisations about the profundity of the Gosho.

It’s also instructive to note the parallels: Shakyamuni reveals to Shariputra, his devoted disciple, the heart of his teachings in the Lotus Sutra so that the Treasure Tower can be transmitted to the world; Nichiren reveals to Shijo Kingo, his trusted follower, his understanding of the core of the Juryo chapter before transmitting it to the world through the Gohonzon. Ikeda reveals his realisations about the Gosho to his trusted follower, Saito, before sharing them with the world by publishing his dialogues. And Kazuo Fujii, our trusted leader, reveals his understanding of the Dialogues to the Study Lecturers so that we can transmit them to you. This is not a process of dilution or distance from the true source, but a drawing closer or increasing reality.

This gosho and dialogue is precisely about the process of revelation and transmission. What are the conditions under which this rare event can take place? What happens when it does?

1.1.2. Historical Background

Last month, we began by looking at the Opening of the Eyes and the remarkable circumstances in which it was conceived and written and the profound determination which motivated the Daishonin.

The historical context you know – the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, the amazing escape from beheading and the moment of Hoshaku Kempon, “discarding the transient and revealing the True”, followed by exile first to the freezeng hut at Tsukahara, then to the small residence at Ichinosawa.

The Opening of the Eyes is the Gosho in which the Daishonin describes the True Object of Worship in terms of the Person. It is usually paired with The True Object of Worship in which he defines the object in terms of the universal law of enlightenment. The True Object of Worship was written in April 1273, the Opening of the Eyes in February 1272.

2. THE OPENING OF THE EYES

2.1.1. Introduction

The Opening of the Eyes, says President Ikeda, “is to open our eyes to the Daishonin’s Great Vow”.

Our Buddhist Practice is sometimes called the Buddhism of the Great Vow: the steadfast and absolute determination to teach the Law, to dedicate our lives for this purpose regardless of persecution. This is the same vow which Shakya muni states in the Juryo: “Mai ji sa ze nen. I ga ryo shujo. Toku nyu mu-jo do. Soku joju busshin.” “my constant thought: how I can cause all living beings to gain entry to the highest way and quickly attain Buddhahood.” This vow was witnessed by Many Treasures Buddha and shared with the Voice Hearers, but manifested by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. It is the same vow which Toda Sensei shared with President Ikeda and which is manifested now by Soka Gakkai members in 160 countries: “our ‘constant thought’ is to assure the happiness of all people, a prosperous society and a peaceful world.” (Lectures on the Sutra p.142)

*The Buddha, perfectly enlightened in the Three Bodies, takes the entire universe as his true body, takes the entire universe as his spiritual nature, takes the entire universe as his physical existence” (Nichiren Daishonin Gosho Zenshu, p. 563)
A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

Nichiren vows “I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the Eyes of Japan. I will be the Great Ship of Japan.” These reveal the Three Virtues of the Person of the Law:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Virtues</th>
<th>Person of the Law</th>
<th>Enlightened Property of the Buddha</th>
<th>Result in Society</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sovereign: power to protect the people and ensure their welfare. Property of the Law, inherent in all life.</td>
<td>Pillar</td>
<td>Dharma body of the Buddha: hoshin</td>
<td>Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: power to give people knowledge and wisdom, to decide with correct insight. Property of wisdom</td>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>Wisdom body of the Buddha: hoshin</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent: power to embrace people with compassion, protect them from harm and enable them to become capable and independent. Property of compassionate action.</td>
<td>Great Ship</td>
<td>Manifest body of the Buddha: ojin</td>
<td>Prosperity</td>
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This month we look at the nature of the obstacles we face when we begin to live this great vow ourselves.

### 2.1.2. Great Vow

**President Ikeda:** The “great desire for widespread propagation” is the heart of the Gosho. It is also the spiritual pillar of the Daishonin’s life:

“Great desire” refers to the boundless wish arising from the Buddha’s enlightenment. It is the “original desire of life” expressed in the heart of the Buddha awakened to the truth that life itself is the entity of the Mystic Law, the one great law that encompasses all others. To “awaken” means to recollect this original desire.

*In any event, the life-state of Buddhahood and the great desire for widespread propagation are one and the same. It therefore follows that this vast state of life is only manifest in those who strive to actualize kosen-rufu. If we remove ourselves from the struggle to “exert a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 790) toward the realization of this noble cause, we won’t be able to reveal our highest life potential. That “single moment of life” is what is called “Buddha” or “Thus Come One.” (Newsletter 5003XD)*

But what does this Mind consist in? The UKE tells us that this Gosho is about Nichiren’s thoughts before openly declaring his teaching and role, and the dilemma in which he found himself: to teach, which would result in persecution and opposition; or not to teach, which would leave the field unopposed to fundamental darkness. “I, Nichiren” says, “am the only person in Japan who understands this.”

I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this. But if I utter so much as a word concerning it, then parents, brothers, and teachers will surely censure me, and the ruler of the nation will take steps against me. On the other hand, I am fully aware that if I do not speak out I will be lacking in compassion. I have considered which course to take in light of the teachings of the Lotus and Nirvana sutras. If I remain silent, I may escape persecutions in this lifetime, but in my next life I will most certainly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose.

If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out. While thinking this over, I recalled the teachings of the “Treasure Tower” chapter on the six difficult and nine easy acts. Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline; and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. But such acts are not difficult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law.

A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts. (WND, 239–40)

President Ikeda says of this passage:

“It was as if he set sail alone into a raging storm. But he had to go. He had to rescue the people whose ship had been wrecked by the tumultuous seas of society. A “great ship” is therefore crucial to our endeavor; in other words, we must base ourselves on a great vow. This vow is found in the determination to win in the struggle against the devilish functions. And this determination must be the departure point.” (NL5089)

2.2. Fundamental Darkness

What are these devilish functions? Daisaku Ikeda says, again:

“I believe that the declaration of the establishment of the Daishonin’s teaching was the initiation of a great struggle against the source of evil hidden in the depths of human life, against the devilish nature within life, and against all fundamental darkness. The Daishonin himself states that from the time he established his teaching he waged an ongoing spiritual struggle against the negative life function known as the devil king of the sixth heaven.” (NL5089)

Fundamental darkness sounds like another dualistic conception – good/bad, right/wrong, light/dark. Here we see a variety of things: demons, devils, obstacles, fundamental darkness, evil priests etc. It sounds confusing but it’s fairly simple in reality. Demons and gods are factors we perceive in our environment. They are latent until something triggers them. More importantly, they are not inherently good or bad but take on the form which our own lifestate projects onto its surroundings. Similarly, devils or devilish functions are the things in our psyche which oppose our Buddha nature. So clearly the struggle we face is to overcome these devilish functions – our own negative tendencies or Fundamental Darkness - before they can manifest in our lived-in world. Let’s discuss the way these obstacles and ‘devils’ appear.

2.2.1. Sansho Shima

2.2.2. What is Fundamental Darkness?

Fundamental darkness is not the demon we project, but the act of demonising.

Giving in to our fundamental darkness means abandoning our own Buddha nature. We know instinctively whether a thing is right or wrong, true or false. But when an “authority” tells us something terribly logical, compelling, supported by powerful factions, we begin to distrust our own wisdom. This is why Nichiren talks about the role of priests as evil friends (akushishiki), and why he explains the 5 comparisons as something dynamic, like a mountain to climb or slide down.

Let’s try to put this in context. I’m going to risk irritating people who support the war on Iraq, but these are merely my personal views and realisations. Please listen for the similarities with your own experiences, and ignore anything you can’t accept.

As a nation, we courageously showed that negotiation based on understanding could start to resolve chronic terrorism in N. Ireland where state violence had failed; yet now we are unable to apply the same hard-won wisdom to foreign affairs.

The Mind of War, the Mind which is not at peace with itself, always works the same way. Carl Jung’s study of alchemical symbolism:

"With increasing one-sidedness the power of the king decays, for originally it had consisted just in his ability to unite the polarity of all existence in a symbol. The more distinctly an idea emerges and the more consciousness gains in clarity, the more monarchical becomes its content, to which everything contradictory has to submit...This extreme state ...always considers itself ideal and is moreover in a position to prove its excellence with the most cogent arguments. We cannot but admit that it is ideal, but for all that it is imperfect because it expresses only half of life. Life wants not only the clear but also the muddy, not only the bright but also the dark... For these reasons, too, the king constantly needs the renewal that begins with a descent into his own darkness, an immersion in his own depths, and with a reminder that he is related by blood to his adversary."

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It is a shame that we, a peace-loving nation, must be dragged into those bloody depths because of an idea which we know instinctively to be dishonest. How can we claim to be liberators when we slaughter thousands of civilians without even bothering to count them? We know at some level that if we kill even one child, the effect on his or her family is incalculable. How many tens of thousands of civilians have we killed because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time?

We do not really believe that this vast freight of misery, despair and hatred will vanish just because we have unmade a dictator we helped to make. But when the truth is unacceptable, we can turn to the comfortable argument that we are on the side of light and The Good; that we bring Liberty, a condition so valuable that ten thousand lives are a price worth paying; and that any who disagree are treacherous fools or murderous demons - not people, not even numbers.

How much of Al Qaeda’s appeal lies in the fact that we are finally forced to name our adversary? In death, a suicide bomber becomes a named person, unlike so many of his countrymen whose generic name is “collateral damage”.

For some, the answer is to make George Bush and Tony Blair into demons. This too is morally dishonest and entirely misses the point in Buddhist terms: we cannot answer disrespect for Buddha nature with more disrespect. We cannot wage peace with a mind at war.

At the end, the king is inevitably consumed in the fire of his own passion and a new vision emerges which can reconcile the two disparate world views. This has just happened to Mr. Shevardnadze and I’m sure Mr. Blair’s time will come, but only when the people abandon him.

**What does this mean for us?**

Nichiren describes this in terms of the effectiveness of our practice. If we practice correctly, we will overcome our obstacles. But if we fall prey to ignorance or bad counsel, we stop practicing correctly and fall back to theoretical teachings or even Hinayana. The Daishinin describes this in terms of a Fivefold Comparison.

**But why do we experience obstacles at all if we practice correctly?**

Because we do not accept the duality imposed on us by people with agendas. Nichiren, for example, warned about the likelihood of a Mongol invasion. But unlike most of Japan, he did not try to paint the Mongols as demons. He pointed to them as an Effect of Causes. This of course enraged the authorities, and the priests of the Kyoto schools who were helping to demonize them. Priests are very useful to secular authorities, as we’ve seen again and again in history. Nichiren detested these venal and politicised monks and said so loudly and often.

_Saito: Such priests, he says, are extremely cunning in their efforts to obstruct people in their practice of the Lotus Sutra. People are therefore deceived and ultimately abandon the Lotus Sutra for the provisional teachings. They then discard the provisional teachings for the Hinayana teachings, and finally turn to non-Buddhist teachings. In the end, he explains, they fall into the evil paths of existence (cf. WND, 239)._ 

So for Nichiren, evil priests had a double effect – they not only legitimised the actions of deluded rulers, they also destroyed the faith of sincere Buddhists.

The specific issues the Daishonin identified in each of the ‘heretical’ schools are set out in the Four Dictums – I won’t discuss them today (great sigh of relief) but you can study them in Newsletter 5089 on the website.

Nichiren also had a clear conception of the _mechanism_ by which people were driven or lured away from the Essential Teachings, which he documented as the **Doctrine of the Fivefold Comparisons**.

### 2.2.3. Doctrine of the Fivefold Comparison

Pres. Ikeda says:

“...the Daishonin uses the fivefold comparison to clarify that the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single life-moment, found in the depths of the “Life Span” (16th) chapter, is the essential teaching for all people of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood." (NL5089XD)

**Fivefold comparison:** Five successive levels of comparison set forth by Nichiren Daishonin to demonstrate the superiority of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo over all other Buddhist teachings. They are:

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1 The Daishonin states: “The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the ‘Life Span’ chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu were aware of it but did not bring it forth into the light. T’ien-t’ai Chih-che alone embraced it and kept it ever in mind” (WND, 224).

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1) Buddhism vs. non-Buddhist teachings;
2) Mahayana vs. Hinayana Buddhism;
3) True Mahayana vs. provisional Mahayana;
4) the Essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra vs. the theoretical teaching; and
5) the Buddhism of sowing (the Law of Nam-myoho-RENGE-KYO) vs. the Buddhism of harvest (the Essential teaching revealed in the latter half of the Lotus Sutra).

These reappear again and again in the Gosho, for example in The Kalpa of Decrease, The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles, and perhaps most clearly in the Comparison of the Lotus Sutra and Other Sutras and Letter to The Brothers.

“I, Nichiren, say that non-Buddhist scriptures are easier to believe and understand than Hinayana sutras, the Hinayana sutras are easier than the Dainichi and other [Hodo] sutras, the Dainichi and other [Hodo] sutras are easier than the Hannya sutras, the Hannya sutras are easier than the Kegon Sutra, the Kegon is easier than the Nirvana Sutra, the Nirvana is easier than the Lotus Sutra, and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra is easier than the essential teaching. Thus there are many levels of comparative ease and difficulty.” (A Comparison of the Lotus Sutra and Other Sutras)

Why study something so abstract?

For Nichiren, the 5 Comparisons were not abstractions but dynamic reality, like a steeply-terraced hillside or the hike to the top of Mt Ste. Victoire at Trets. Each level up gives us a clearer view of the universe, but the standing is precarious – we can easily lose our balance and fall back when buffeted by circumstance or bad guidance. So in the Letter to the Brothers the Daishonin says:

“This was this long ago—in the remote past indicated by sanzen-jintengo—that the three groups of Shakyamuni’s disciples, including Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Ananda and Rahula, learned the Lotus Sutra from a bodhisattva who was the sixteenth son of Daitsu Buddha. However, deluded by evil people, they eventually abandoned the Lotus Sutra. They fell back into the Kegon, Hannya, Dainiku or Nirvana Sutra, or further down into the Dainichi, Jinnmitsu or Kanmuryouju Sutra, or even backslid to the Hinayana teachings of the Agon sutras. Continuing this descent, they fell down through relatively blessed lives of Rapture or Tranquility and finally into the paths of evil.” (Letter to The Brothers)

In the Opening of the Eyes, he says:

Miao-lo, in his Guketsu comments on this passage as follows: “Though they are monks, they destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Some break the precepts and return to lay life, as Wei Yuan-sung did. Then, as laymen, they work to destroy the teachings of Buddhism. Men of this kind steal and usurp the correct teachings of Buddhism and use them to supplement and bolster the heretical writings. The passage on ‘twisting what is lofty...’ means that, adopting the outlook of the Taoists, they try to place Buddhism and Taoism on the same level, to make equals of the correct and the heretical, though reason tells us that this could never be. ” (Opening of the Eyes)

I’ve done a table describing the Five Comparisons as far as I can research them in the time available. I’ll hand some copies out but they really simply confirm that there is a well-established order and basis in mainstream Buddhist philosophy. In other words, it makes sense. The final comparison, between the Buddhism of the Harvest and the Buddhism of the Sowing, is Nichiren’s distinctive addition and one he comes back to again and again.

2 A renowned physician, for example, though he discerns the causes of all kinds of illnesses as well as the relative efficacy of various medicines, nevertheless refrains from indiscriminately applying the most powerful medicine but instead employs other medicines, depending upon the nature of the illness. Thus perhaps it was because, during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law following the death of the Buddha, the sickness of delusion had not yet become critical, and therefore no one urged that the five characters of Myoho-RENGE-KYO, the finest medicine in all the Buddha’s lifetime of teachings, be applied. But now we have entered the Latter Day of the Law, and people are all suffering from grave illness. This illness can hardly be cured by such minor medicines as invocations to Amida, Dainichi or Shakyamuni.

Though the moon is beautiful, the full splendor of its light can only be seen in autumn. Though the cherry blossoms are lovely, they open only in spring. All things are regulated by the time. And since that is so, may we not suppose that, during the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, the time had not yet come for the daimoku to spread? (Letter to Myomitsu Shonin)

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But the point to grasp here is that we think of this theoretically, and when someone in authority rubbishes it we feel unsure. This, Nichiren says, is due to our inability to base ourselves 100% on the Great Vow, to listen to our Buddha Nature, the voice of truth. When we determine with our entire life to become the Person of the Law, we can survive every obstacle. For the Daishonin, this was the point he reached when he considered the Difficult and Easy Acts:

[Kim: Difficult and Easy Acts]

So faced with an impossible choice, the Daishonin made his decision to follow the Sutra and act from his compassion for mankind, knowing that he faced enormous difficulties:

“The Daishonin writes that, deeply moved by the spirit and great vow of the Buddha, he was able to completely vanquish the devilish forces at work in his own heart and stand up to lead all human beings to happiness in the Latter Day. To put it another way, he defeated his own devilish nature by causing the state of Buddhahood to well forth within his life, thus making a great vow for kosen-rufu. He conveys this saying: “I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts” (WND, 240). This is an expression of the vow the Daishonin made at the time of establishing his teaching from the standpoint of having defeated the devilish functions.” (NL5089)

“This was not conceived as an attack upon the followers of other schools. Nichiren then, as we now, struggled with those who, themselves deluded, wished to force their views on others.

It is the same struggle I live with each day — to root out the negativity in my own life and to try to bring others to recognise their own great mission. It would be so easy to just dismiss Blair, Bush and the whole Neocon ballgame as irredeemably nasty. But that simply makes me part of the problem. I would be an evil priest if I advocated such a one-sided view, because that way leads to anger, victimisation, violence, disorder and contempt for life. If war is no solution, neither is burning resentment and terrorism. If I cannot see beyond this moment and sow the seeds of wisdom, who will do it?

So we have the hardest task, as usual. We do not justify war, but we do not sympathise with suicide bombing. We agree with no one, except possibly the Quakers! (I love the Quakers – more suicidal integrity than any other church). We have to stand up, fight our own fundamental darkness, and then illuminate the Buddha nature in other people, even people we hate – perhaps especially the people we hate. But then, nobody promised that Buddhism meant an easy life.
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<th>Brand X</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Basis for Comparison</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Brahmanism, Confucianism, Taoism etc.</td>
<td>“When the hearts of the people gradually diminished in good and grew adept at evil, it became impossible to restrain profoundly evil offenses because the wisdom of the non-Buddhist scriptures was shallow.” (Kalpa of Decrease)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hinayana Buddhism (Agon sutras), e.g. Sarvastivedins</td>
<td>“The Hinayana teachings are divided into two sects, eighteen sects, or even twenty sects; but in essence they all expound a single principle, namely, the impermanence of all phenomena.” (Letter to Shomitsu-bo) In the Tripitaka schools this was represented as the “Wheel of Samsara”, a cycle of suffering from which the only release was enlightenment. The Sarvastivadins held the view that the elements of phenomenal existence are actually real. This manifestly disagrees with the idea of contingent existence.</td>
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3 Note to Gosho “A Comparison of the Lotus Sutra and Other Sutras”: First four of the five periods: (1) The Kegon period, or period of the Kegon Sutra, which represents a high level of teaching second only to the teachings of the Hokke-Nehan period; (2) the Agon period, or period of the Agon sutras, which correspond to the Hinayana teachings; (3) the Hodo period, or period of introductory Mahayana; and (4) the Hannya period, or period of the Hannya (Wisdom) sutras. See also the “Five Periods”.

“The Buddha, perfectly enlightened in the Three Bodies, takes the entire universe as his true body, takes the entire universe as his spiritual nature, takes the entire universe as his physical existence” (Nichiren Daishonin Gosho Zenshu, p. 563)
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<td>2</td>
<td>Provisional Mahayana</td>
<td>• Addition of the Consciousnesses of Karma and Buddha nature</td>
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Mahayana's earliest origins are unclear, but emerging from the works of Ashvaghosa it came to be a powerful proponent of that view of Buddhism based on the Sanskrit sutras of the Madhyamika school founded by Nagarjuna in the 5th century, largely due to the work of Vasubhandu and his elder brother, Asanga, who renounced the Pali Tripitaka sutras of the Sarvastivadins in favour of the Consciousness Only school.

As an eminent scholar of the Abhidharma, Vasubhandu became a devastating critic of the "real dharmas" view of the Sarvastivadins.

Vasubhandu continued Nagarjuna's view of the emptiness of all phenomena, "and that the fact of their emptiness must be grasped through the wisdom attained in religious practice." However he also extended the Components to include two additional types of Consciousness, Mana-shiki and Araya-shiki, the Mano and Alaya Consciousnesses. This addressed the problem of Idealism in the Pali sutra traditions, i.e. that since consciousness was ultimately individual, there was no basis for a shared reality. "Each individual will perceive the external world in a different way depending on the workings of his particular mind."

"We find two flaws in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. First, [as Miao-lo says,] 'Because they teach that the Ten Worlds are separate from one another, they fail to move beyond the provisional doctrines.' That is, they do not reveal the theory of ichinen sanzen, the principle of discarding the provisional and revealing the true, or the capacity of those in the two vehicles to attain Buddhahood, all of which are implicit in the doctrine of the ten factors stated in the Hoben chapter of the theoretical teaching.

Second, 'Because they teach that Shakyamuni first attained enlightenment in this world, they fail to discard the Buddha's provisional status.' Thus they do not reveal the Buddha's original enlightenment expounded in the Juryo chapter. These two great doctrines of the attainment of Buddhahood by those of the two vehicles and the Buddha's original enlightenment are the core of the Buddha's lifetime teachings, the very heart and marrow of all the sutras. (Essence of the Juryo Chapter)

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5 Ikeda, Ibid, p. 152 This is the same problem experienced more recently by the Phenomenological philosophers, e.g. Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. The solution was also similar, the addition of a concept of 'Intersubjective Constancy'. There may also be echoes of the evolution of Jung's Collective Subconsciousness as an answer to radical Idealism as well as a discovery from analysis. "When the easy concept fails - that we are nothing but our own conscious personality - we are forced to face the proposition that "individual consciousness is based on and surrounded by an indefinitely extended unconscious psyche." (Boundaries of the Soul: The Practice of Jung's Psychology; June Singer, p. 373. Prism Press, 1972.) Jung's view was that "each person's consciousness emerges like an island from the great sea in which all find their base." (Ibid,p.373) Interestingly, ku can also be sea or water. Mircea Eliade notes that flood myths "have their counterpart, on the human level, in man's 'second death' (the dampness and the 'Humid Field' of the Underworld and so on) or in initiatory death through baptism. But both on the cosmological and the anthropological planes immersion in the waters is equivalent not to a final extinction but to a temporary reincorporation into the indistinct, followed by a new creation, a new life, or a 'new man'.” (The Sacred and the Profane, Harcourt Brace, 1959) A "good teacher is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

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| Theoretical Teaching of the Lotus Sutra | • Shomon and Engaku can theoretically attain Enlightenment  
• Theoretical ichinen sanzen of the T’ien T’ai school | The theoretical teaching reveals that people in the states of shamon (Learning) and engaku (Realization) can attain enlightenment, a possibility utterly denied in the previous forty-two years of Shakyamuni Buddha's preaching.  
The predictions in the theoretical teaching that those of the two vehicles will attain Buddhahood substantiates the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and the concept that Buddhahood is open to all.  
“The theoretical teaching states that persons in the two realms of shomon and engaku can attain Buddhahood, thus avoiding one of the shortcomings found in the sutras expounded during the first forty years and more of the Buddha’s preaching. However, since the Juryo chapter had not yet been expounded, the true doctrine of ichinen sanzen remained obscure and the enlightenment of those in the two vehicles was not assured. In these respects the theoretical teaching does not differ from the moon’s reflection on the water or rootless plants drifting on the waves.” (The Essence of the Juryo Chapter) |
| Essential Teaching of the Lotus Sutra | • Actual ichinen sanzen  
• Eternity of Buddhahood  
• People of the Two Vehicles can actually attain enlightenment  
| The reality of Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightened life (Notes to Opening of the Eyes)  
“The Daishonin states that, because the theoretical teaching (first half) of the Lotus Sutra does not reveal the eternity of Buddhahood, and since the view of life it offers is, therefore, a shallow one, it is lacking in the power to help people overcome obstacles and impediments arising from life’s fundamental darkness.” (Background to The Wonderful Means of Surmounting Obstacles)  
“In contrast to the Hoben (second) chapter of the theoretical teaching, which discusses Buddhahood as a potential inherent in the lives of all people, the Juryo chapter shows Buddhahood as a reality manifested in the life of Shakyamuni and also reveals its eternity beyond his birth in this world.” (Background to The Essence of the Juryo Chapter)  
“The theoretical teaching stresses [the truth of] Emptiness [ku] and therefore sets forth non-duality on the basis of duality. Thus, to express the aspect of duality, all the beings who hear [this sutra] equally are arranged in separate categories. 'Departed,' the last word of the essential [hommon] teaching, corresponds to wisdom that functions in accord with changing conditions and to the realm of duality. Hence the use of the word 'departed.' 'Departed' of 'they bowed in obeisance and departed' corresponds to the 'this' [nyo] of true wisdom [shinnyo] that accords with conditions.  
The essential teaching expounds duality on the basis of non-duality. Two and yet not two [nini funi], constantly identified and 'constantly differing, from past to present, spontaneous and unchanging' - one should ponder this commentary. This word 'departed' is also related to the five thousand who rise and depart from the assembly [in the Hoben-bon]. The reason is that, according to a transmission handed down, that these five thousand persons represent the five levels of defilement. These five levels of defilement bow to the Buddha who is one’s own mind and depart.” (Gosho Zenshu p. 782) |
A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

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| 5       | Essential Teaching (Buddhism of the Harvest) | Although the essential teaching (latter half) surpasses these limitations by explaining that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment numberless major world system dust particle kalpas ago, it is still unable to help people of the Latter Day of the Law, who lack the capacity to benefit from this teaching. **Only the five characters of Nam-myoho-RENge-kyo can lead them to Buddhahood.**

“Moreover, the heart of the Lotus Sutra is the essential teaching or latter fourteen chapters, specifically the Juryyo (sixteenth) chapter in which the supreme Law is implicit. (Background to The Essence of the Juryyo Chapter)

“An important distinction is later made concerning the relevance of the Lotus Sutra. “The essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra and true Buddhism are both pure teachings that lead directly to Buddhahood. However, Shakyamuni’s is the Buddhism of the harvest, and this is the Buddhism of sowing. The core of his teaching is one chapter and two halves, and for me it is Myoho-renge-kyo alone.” That Shakyamuni’s Buddhism is the harvest means that he expounded on his enlightenment as an effect, while the Daishonin’s philosophy, Buddhism of the seed, teaches the cause for enlightenment and thus instructs the common mortal in his quest for the ultimate state of life.” (Background to The True Object of Worship)

The Daishonin, by referring to the seed of Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, points toward the supreme law whereby all Buddhhas attain enlightenment - Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. This law is what lies in the depths, not on the surface, of the Juryyo chapter. Nam-myoho-rengekyo is the seed of enlightenment. Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddha of True Cause because he directly taught the original or true cause for attaining Buddhahood. And his Buddhism is called the Buddhism of sowing because it implants the seed of enlightenment in the lives of those who practice it. In this light, he possesses the virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent for all mankind. (Background to The Opening of the Eyes)

“However, Shakyamuni did not reveal the true cause which enabled him to attain Buddhahood in the remote past of gohyaku-jinente. To conclude, Nichiren Daishonin identifies the true cause or fundamental Law which enables all Buddhhas to gain their enlightenment as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws “hidden in the depths of the Juryyo chapter of the essential teaching.” As the Daishonin states, “The doctrine of ichinen sanzen is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the Juryyo chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra” (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2, p. 80)

“Now Nichiren and his disciples who chant Nam Myoho Renge Kyo are the main subjects of the Juryyo chapter. In general, bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha, in his provisional aspect, cannot uphold this chapter. For them, the theoretical teaching is primary and the essential teaching secondary, while for us the essential teaching is primary and the theoretical teaching is secondary. Even so, this chapter is not the essential teaching for the Latter Day of the Law. The reason is that this chapter confers the benefit of [reaping the harvest of] emancipation for those who lived in Shakyamuni’s lifetime, while only the five characters sow the seed [of Buddhahood] for those who would come in the future, that is, at the present time. This being the case, the Buddha’s lifetime was the age for the benefits of [the harvest of] emancipation, while the last age is the time for sowing the seed. In the Latter Day of the Law, sowing the seed is the basis. Nichiren and his disciples, who chant the Daimoku, are the parents of mankind because they save them from the hell of incessant suffering.” (Gosho Zenshu p. 753)
THE WORLD OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN’S WRITINGS

A DISCUSSION ON HUMANISTIC RELIGION


Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito: On this coming April 28, we celebrate the 750th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching [according to the traditional Japanese way of counting]. SGI members in 180 countries and territories around the world will commemorate this significant event.

SGI President Ikeda: The worldwide spread of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Daishonin’s will, as indicated by the references in his writings to the “westward transmission of Buddhism” and the “widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.” The SGI is the only gathering of individuals putting this wish of the Daishonin into practice and making it a reality. This is a solemn fact, and it is proof that the SGI is the true legitimate heir of the Buddha’s intent and decree. The Daishonin is without a doubt applauding our efforts!

Saito: I understand that 50 years ago, when the 700th anniversary of the establishment of the Daishonin’s teaching was celebrated, the Soka Gakkai’s membership numbered only about 10,000 households. In the short time since then, we have realized astronomical growth. This is a monumental achievement that shines brilliantly in the annals of Buddhism. Thinking of this fills me with deep emotion.

At a recent Headquarters leaders meeting, you talked about setting our sights 50 years hence, saying, “In another 50 years (in 2052), we will celebrate the 800th anniversary of the

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6 The Daishonin states: “The moon moves from west to east; this is a sign that the Buddhism of India, the land of the moon, will spread toward the east. The sun rises in the east; this is an omen that the Buddhism of Japan, the land of the sun, will return to India” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 589). He also declares: “It is certain that widespread propagation [of the Law] will eventually be achieved throughout the entire world” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 816).

*The Buddha, perfectly enlightened in the Three Bodies, takes the entire universe as his true body, takes the entire universe as his spiritual nature, takes the entire universe as his physical existence* (Nichiren Daishonin Gosho Zenshu, p. 563)
A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

President Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin’s declaration of the establishment of his teaching was a great proclamation to bring happiness to all people over the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. The vow to continuously aim toward the future in the endeavor to lead people everywhere to happiness is therefore the heart of the Daishonin’s teachings.

To usher in the anniversary of the Daishonin’s declaration filled with the spirit to work for kosen-rufu and brimming with hope for the future is indeed the best way to celebrate this auspicious day. This is the spirit of SGI members.

The public proclamation of the Daishonin’s teaching was also an expression of his great vow to realize happiness for all people and fundamentally relieve suffering in the Latter Day of the Law. Without grasping this, we cannot understand the Daishonin’s true intention in so vehemently denouncing the various Buddhist schools of his day.

At the time of the 700th anniversary, the Soka Gakkai was certainly much smaller in size. But that didn’t stop President Josei Toda from standing up alone and pledging to accomplish kosen-rufu.

President Toda’s gaze was fixed solely on the happiness of all humanity. He was not looking to merely expand the religion. His state of life was far broader than that. I can still hear the words that he spoke so many years ago (on April 7, 1952):

“I will become the pillar of Japan” means the sovereign. “I will become the eyes of Japan” means the leader—the teacher—of the country. “I will become the great ship of Japan” means the parent. With just a millionth part of this spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, who possessed the three virtues of sovereign, teacher, and parent, let us exert ourselves to bring happiness to the people of Japan.

Addressing the youth present, Mr. Toda conveyed his plan to realize kosen-rufu in Asia and the entire world.

Everything began with the vow to lead all people to happiness. President Toda’s impassioned determination to achieve this has made the Soka Gakkai what it is today.

Saito: Today, I would like to discuss the significance of the Daishonin’s establishment of his teaching on April 28, 1253, approaching it from such perspectives as the Daishonin’s deliberations before making his declaration, the circumstances surrounding his proclamation, and the meaning of his refutation of the major Buddhist schools of the day.

The Daishonin’s Thoughts Prior to Declaring the Establishment of His Teaching

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A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
Saito: Let’s start by examining the Daishonin’s activities leading up to the establishment of his teaching. It is clear from his writings that he gave the matter serious thought and engaged in deep contemplation before reaching a conclusion.

President Ikeda: In “The Opening of the Eyes” and “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” he describes his thinking in detail.

Saito: The passage in “The Opening of the Eyes” reads:

I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this. But if I utter so much as a word concerning it, then parents, brothers, and teachers will surely censure me, and the ruler of the nation will take steps against me. On the other hand, I am fully aware that if I do not speak out I will be lacking in compassion. I have considered which course to take in light of the teachings of the Lotus and Nirvana sutras. If I remain silent, I may escape persecutions in this lifetime, but in my next life I will most certainly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose.

If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out. While thinking this over, I recalled the teachings of the “Treasure Tower” chapter on the six difficult and nine easy acts. Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline; and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. But such acts are not difficult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts.

(WND, 239–40)

This passage plainly elucidates the Daishonin’s profound sentiments behind establishing his teaching.

President Ikeda: He is talking about a grand struggle against the devilish functions that pervade the universe. This can also be taken as the most fundamental spiritual struggle of Buddhism. The Daishonin knew that only by resolutely winning this struggle would Buddhism begin to spread. The same was true of Shakyamuni—if he spoke out, he would face great persecution. If he didn’t, he would be lacking compassion.

8 In “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” the Daishonin says: “What am I to do? If I speak up, I face fearful opposition from the world at large. But if I am silent, I can hardly escape the condemnation of failing to heed the Buddha’s stern warning. Forward or backward, my way is blocked.

“Yet perhaps it is only to be expected. For, as the Lotus Sutra states, ‘Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?’ Again elsewhere, ‘It will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe’” (WND, 695).
The sutras clearly state that one must speak out in order to lead people to enlightenment. This is what the Daishonin based his vow on, determining that once he had spoken out, he would never retreat, no matter what great persecutions may befall him. It was as if he had set sail alone into a raging storm. But he had to go. He had to rescue the people whose ship had been wrecked by the tumultuous seas of society.

A “great ship” is therefore crucial to our endeavor; in other words, we must base ourselves on a great vow. This vow is found in the determination to win in the struggle against the devilish functions. And this determination must be the departure point.

Saito: The Daishonin makes his vow after recalling the six difficult and nine easy acts described in the “Treasure Tower” (11th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

President Ikeda: Shakymuni Buddha expounded the six difficult and nine easy acts to the assembly of bodhisattvas to impress upon them that they should inherit the great wish of the Buddha and strive to realize it, no matter how harsh the persecutions they might encounter. In other words, his final injunction to them was: “I want you to actualize the great wish of the Buddha, fully aware that you will meet with enormous persecution.”

At any rate, the correct teaching of Buddhism exists today because Nichiren Daishonin began expounding the Mystic Law. He opened a great path for people across the globe to become happy. This was the first fundamental step toward worldwide kosen-rufu.

In order to engrave the Daishonin’s spirit in our lives, let’s take a closer look at the above-mentioned passage from “The Opening of the Eyes.” First of all, in the line, “I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this,” it is important that we understand what “this” points to.

Saito: “The Opening of the Eyes” has been referred to as the “teaching” of the concept of “teaching, practice, and proof” expounded in the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In this treatise, the Daishonin uses the fivefold comparison to clarify that the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single life-moment, found

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9 Six difficult and nine easy acts: The six difficult acts are to propagate the Lotus Sutra widely, to copy it, to recite it, to teach it to even one person, to hear of the sutra and inquire about its meaning, and to maintain faith in it. The nine easy acts include such feats as walking through fire carrying a load of hay on ones back without being burned, kicking a major world system into another corner of the universe with one’s toe, or picking up Mount Sumeru and hurling it across the universe over countless Buddha lands. Although the nine easy acts appear impossible, they are nonetheless easy when compared with the extreme difficulty of embracing and propagating the Lotus Sutra in the evil age that Shakymuni predicted would come after his passing.

10 Teaching, practice, and proof: The Buddha’s teaching, the practice of the teaching, and the actual proof resulting from the practice of the teaching. Twenty-sixth high priest Nichikan Shonin said that “The Opening of the Eyes” elucidates the “teaching,” that “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind” elucidates the “practice,” and that “The Entity of the Mystic Law” elucidates the “proof.”

11 Fivefold comparison: Five successive levels of comparison set forth by Nichiren Daishonin to demonstrate the superiority of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo over all other Buddhist teachings. They are: 1) Buddhism vs. non-Buddhist teachings; 2) Mahayana vs. Hinayana Buddhism; 3) True Mahayana vs. provisional Mahayana; 4) the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra vs. the theoretical teaching; and 5) the Buddhism of sowing (the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-
in the depths of the “Life Span” (16th) chapter, is the essential teaching for all people of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood.

But he also says that, in actuality, most people discard their faith in the Lotus Sutra because of negative influences, and fall into the evil paths as a result.

**President Ikeda:** As for these negative influences, the Daishonin specifically alludes to priests “who were in fact possessed by devils” (WND, 239).

**Saito:** Such priests, he says, are extremely cunning in their efforts to obstruct people in their practice of the Lotus Sutra. People are therefore deceived and ultimately abandon the Lotus Sutra for the provisional teachings. They then discard the provisional teachings for the Hinayana teachings, and finally turn to non-Buddhist teachings. In the end, he explains, they fall into the evil paths of existence (cf. WND, 239).

**President Ikeda:** In short, the Daishonin boldly points out the absurdity of a situation in which priests, who by rights are meant to function as “good friends” to the people, actually become “evil friends” and destroy the goodness in people’s lives. Swayed by these misguided priests, many people discard their faith in the Lotus Sutra. This is the basic pattern.

Nichiren Daishonin was the only person in all of Japan to grasp this fundamental contradiction within Buddhism. That is why he stood up alone to battle the devilish nature that had taken control of Buddhism and the people. His sentiment is expressed in the statement, “I, Nichiren, am the only person . . . .”

**Saito:** Wondering whether he should speak out on this matter or not, the Daishonin consults the sutras.

**President Ikeda:** To speak out would be to confront the devilish functions. To not speak out would be to run from this battle. Words were the driving force behind the Daishonin’s struggles. In light of the sutras, he naturally concludes that his only recourse is to speak out.

**Saito:** Moreover, he realizes that speaking out will not only bring reproach upon himself and his “parents, brothers, and teachers,” but may also cause those very loved ones to censure him. He further understands that this action is sure to bring persecution from the ruler of the nation.

But if he does not speak out, he will be lacking in compassion. As taught in the Lotus and Nirvana sutras, if he doesn’t use his voice, he may still enjoy a peaceful and secure existence in this life, but would surely fall into hell in the next. On the other hand, the sutras also clearly state that speaking out would mean definitely facing persecution. That’s because he would be opening the path to the attainment of Buddhahood for all living beings. The Daishonin thus concludes that, in light of the sutras, he has no choice but to speak out.

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kyo) vs. the Buddhism of harvest (the essential teaching revealed in the latter half of the Lotus Sutra).

12 The Daishonin states: “The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life is found in only one place, hidden in the depths of the ‘Life Span’ chapter of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu were aware of it but did not bring it forth into the light. T’ien-t’ai Chih-che alone embraced it and kept it ever in mind” (WND, 224). A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.

President Ikeda: “But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose”—this judgment was clearly based on the sutras. The sutras are the words of the Buddha. They are a mirror in which the Buddha’s spirit is reflected. For us, the Daishonin’s writings serve this function.

The Daishonin states that he reached his decision through his investigation of the Lotus Sutra. It wasn’t a superficial question of securing social standing or protecting himself. It was an issue he dealt with at the depths of his life—whether to fall into the cruel hell of incessant suffering, or to take the difficult road of enveloping all people in the warm embrace of compassion while willingly facing persecution. Naturally, the latter course was correct in light of the sutras.

However, to battle against the devilish functions would not be an easy matter. The Daishonin therefore strove to solidify his vow even further.

To spread the teachings of Buddhism in reality is no easy task. If we are halfhearted, then we’re better off not doing it at all. These were the Daishonin’s thoughts.

Saito: Yes, he feels that if he is not up to taking on the persecution of the state, then he had better give up the idea of establishing his teaching. This realization gives him pause.

President Ikeda: The Daishonin explains that at that point he recalled the Lotus Sutra’s teaching of the six difficult and nine easy acts. That was the moment when he defeated the devilish nature within his own life once and for all.

Saito: In connection with the nine easy acts, he states:

Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire at the end of the kalpa of decline; and persons like myself who are without wisdom might still read and memorize as many sutras as there are sands in the Ganges. . . . (WND, 239)

It would be utterly impossible for an ordinary person to manifest either the know-how, or the physical or even supernatural strength to be able to do something like fling Mount Sumeru into the distance. That would be like trying to calculate the orbital parameter of a space rocket using a pocket calculator!

But there are tasks even far more trying than these; namely, the six difficult acts. In other words, to continue embracing one passage or phrase of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law is the most difficult of challenges.

President Ikeda: To maintain faith in the Lotus Sutra in this evil age of the Latter Day is an endeavor of unparalleled difficulty. And to spread the Sutra is the most difficult enterprise of all.

In an age defiled by the five impurities, to maintain the lofty spirit that every person is a Buddha and enable others to realize that potential, and to further strive to expand the network of people working in that spirit, is without a doubt an undertaking of extreme difficulty. While the nine easy acts seem impossible, there is a chance that advances in science and technology may create conditions
under which they in fact become possible. But no matter how science progresses, changing the human heart will always be a difficult task.

Saito: The Daishonin single-handedly initiated the incredibly hard challenge of spreading his teaching in the Latter Day of the Law.

President Ikeda: This is why he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. We should take pride in the fact that we, the members of the SGI who are dedicated to kosen-rufu, are taking concrete action along this supremely lofty path.

For that reason, when we see fellow SGI members working in the same noble spirit as the Buddha, we should revere them as we would the Buddha. With firm conviction that it is the people who are Buddhas, SGI members strive day in and day out amid the vicissitudes of reality, carrying out their Buddhist practice and sharing the Daishonin’s teachings with others. Their actions are worthy of the utmost respect.

Saito: So, in essence, the teaching of the six difficult and nine easy acts indicates just how difficult it is to embrace the Lotus Sutra in a polluted age, how great a feat is the act of embracing it, and how noble are those who do so.

President Ikeda: Exactly. Shakyamuni Buddha strongly encourages his listeners to uphold and spread the Lotus Sutra after his passing. And he does this while telling them just how daunting a task it is. This point is highly significant.

The Daishonin writes that, deeply moved by the spirit and great vow of the Buddha, he was able to completely vanquish the devilish forces at work in his own heart and stand up to lead all human beings to happiness in the Latter Day. To put it another way, he defeated his own devilish nature by causing the state of Buddhahood to well forth within his life, thus making a great vow for kosen-rufu. He conveys this saying: “I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts” (WND, 240). This is an expression of the vow the Daishonin made at the time of establishing his teaching from the standpoint of having defeated the devilish functions.

On the other hand, while the famous passage in “The Opening of the Eyes,” “I will be the pillar of Japan. I will be the eyes of Japan. I will be the great ship of Japan” (WND, 280–81), can be taken as a declaration of his vow, it also indicates the ultimate realization of that vow.

The Daishonin’s vow remained steadfast from the time he made it when he was 32, through his exile to Sado Island, until his life came to a close. It did not change in the least. A vow can only be called a vow when it is carried through to the very end. Genuine, living Buddhism is only found in unceasing struggle.

To illustrate, let’s take the example of shooting an arrow at a target. As soon as the string is released, the arrow flies straight toward the target. If, however, the arrow goes off course from the outset, or isn’t shot with sufficient strength, it will lose its momentum and miss the target. In other words, no one can stop a person who stands up with profound determination.

Saito: In the “Ongi Kuden” (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings), the Daishonin states:

A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
Now when Nichiren chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, he is enabling all living beings to attain Buddhahood in the ten thousand years of the Latter Day of the Law. Is it not right, therefore, to say, “What I long ago hoped for / has now been fulfilled?”

“Has now been” refers to the daimoku, which was chanted for the first time on the 28th day of the fourth month of the fifth year of the Kencho era (1253). Hence we may think of it as something that has already taken place. (Gosho Zenshu, p. 720)

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which the Daishonin first chanted on the day he proclaimed the establishment of his teaching, is the great Law that enables all people over ten thousand years and beyond to attain Buddhahood. In other words, the great wish for kosen-rufu had already been realized when the Daishonin established his teaching.

**Declaration of a Humanistic Religion That Battles Life’s Destructive Tendencies**

**President Ikeda:** The Daishonin’s establishment of his teaching was the first lion’s roar that would resound through the lives of all people over the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day. His implicit vow will without a doubt continue to brilliantly illuminate humankind over the course of eternity. The Daishonin states: “It is certain that kosen-rufu will eventually be achieved throughout the entire world” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 816). The establishment of his teaching lit the flame of kosen-rufu that will forever shed light upon the darkness that shrouds humanity.

The Daishonin made his declaration at midday. Appropriately, his teaching is called a “light that dispels darkness.” It is also noteworthy that the *nichi* of Nichiren means “sun” or “day.”

**Saito:** At noon on April 28, 1253, the Daishonin stood at the southern side of the image hall in the Shobutsu-bo at Seicho-ji temple and delivered a sermon refuting the Nembutsu school. His audience included the priest Joen-bo and a number of rank-and-file priests of the temple.

**President Ikeda:** The Daishonin’s declaration began with a searing refutation of mistaken teachings. The Nembutsu was practiced widely among both priests and lay people. The Daishonin attacked this religion head-on. He would later write about his frame of mind on that occasion.

**Saito:** He says, for example: “With thoughts such as these uppermost in my mind, I decided that I must begin to speak out” (WND, 727); “I made up my mind to speak out” (WND, 607); and “Resolving to bear whatever might befall me, I began to speak out” (WND, 828). He spoke out because at the time, a vast many people were chanting the Nembutsu [that is, the name of the Buddha Amida, the practice of the Pure Land school of Buddhism].

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13 In “Letter to the Priests of Seicho-ji,” the Daishonin writes: “On the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253), I pointed out the errors of the various schools for the first time to a priest called Joen-bo and to some of the people on the southern side of the image hall in Dozen-bo’s quarters at Seicho-ji temple in Tojo Village of Awa Province. During the more than twenty years since, I have spoken out with unremitting zeal” (WND, 651).

A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
**President Ikeda:** The question, then, is what exactly did the Daishonin declare when he established his teaching. Of course, there is no doubt that his declaration involved the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. There is substantial literary proof that testifies to this. It was also at that time that the Daishonin discarded the name Zesho-bo Rencho, and took the name Nichiren.

This was discussed earlier, but the name Nichiren includes the meanings of “sun” and “lotus flower.” The Daishonin says he chose this name because he attained enlightenment on his own. Without help from anyone, he awakened to his mission to dispel the darkness in people’s lives, like the sun, and to cause the flower of the Mystic Law to bloom pristinely in society, like the lotus flower blooming in a muddy swamp.

**Saito:** The Daishonin says, “The Lotus Sutra is the sun and moon and the lotus flower. Therefore it is called the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. Nichiren, too, is like the sun and moon and the lotus flower” (WND, 186).

**President Ikeda:** The name Nichiren encompasses the Daishonin’s great vow of compassion “for all people for ten thousand years and more.” From April 28 forward, he began spreading Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental path that enables the people of the Latter Day to manifest their Buddha nature. In the sense that it was the Daishonin who set down this path, it could be said that he founded the “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo school of Buddhism.” His teaching, however, goes beyond the narrow margins of a single school, in that its doors are open to all people everywhere. In other words, the Daishonin initiated a religion for all humanity.

**Saito:** Sixty-fifth high priest Nichijun Shonin (1898–1959) also once stated that the Daishonin’s Buddhism was a religion not just for a single school, but for all living beings.

**President Ikeda:** In that respect, Nichiren Buddhism is really a “human” religion, a world religion in the truest sense of the word. I believe that the declaration of the establishment of the Daishonin’s teaching was the initiation of a great struggle against the source of evil hidden in the depths of human life, against the devilish nature within life, and against all fundamental darkness. The Daishonin himself states that from the time he established his teaching he waged an ongoing spiritual struggle against the negative life function known as the devil king of the sixth heaven.

**Saito:** He says:

14 In “Remonstrations with Bodhisattva Hachiman,” the Daishonin states: “During the twenty-eight years from the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month of the fifth year of the Kencho era, I, Nichiren, have been single-mindedly endeavoring to place the five or seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo into the mouths of all the people of Japan. Mine is like the compassion of a mother trying to breast-feed her baby” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 585). And in “The One-eyed Turtle and the Floating Log,” he says: “I alone first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in Japan. In the more than twenty years since the summer of the fifth year of the Kencho era (1253), I alone have been chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo day and night, morning and evening. Those who chant the Nembutsu number ten million” (WND, 959).

15 In “Letter to Jakunichi-bo, the Daishonin says: “My giving myself the name Nichiren (Sun Lotus) derives from my own enlightenment regarding the Buddha vehicle” (WND, 993). A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
The devil king of the sixth heaven roused his ten forces and, amidst the sea of life and death, battled with the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra for this defiled realm where the unenlightened and enlightened exist together, to see who would take it and who would lose it. I, Nichiren, in that role, have been leading the mighty forces [of the Buddha] for twenty years. [In all that time] I have never once retreated. (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1224)

The Significance of the Four Dictums

President Ikeda: From this perspective, it is clear that the Daishonin absolutely did not aim to attack the followers of specific Buddhist schools or to simply expand his own school. The essence of the Daishonin’s practice lay in the struggle against the devilish nature of power and authority that treats the people with contempt. Fundamentally, it is a struggle against the forces that seek to keep people from entering the path to enlightenment. I think we can say that the Daishonin’s declaration of the establishment of his teaching was a proclamation of an active, living philosophy of humanism that opens the path to attaining Buddhahood for all.

Saito: So the basis of his practice was the struggle against the devilish forces, and not the exclusion of other schools.

As he pursued this struggle, the Daishonin harshly condemned the Nembutsu, Zen, True Word, Precepts, and other schools. His criticism can be summarized into what is called the four dictums. That is: 1) “Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering”; 2) “Zen is the invention of the heavenly devils”; 3) “True Word is an evil doctrine that will ruin the nation”; and 4) “Precepts is traitor to the nation” (cf. WND, 1016). But because of his severe criticism, the Daishonin’s Buddhism came to be seen as self-righteous and exclusivist.

President Ikeda: The four dictums were gradually formulated in the course of the Daishonin’s struggle against the devilish functions in order to lead the people of the Latter Day to happiness. They were the crystallization of his compassion and wisdom. They were neither self-righteous nor exclusivist, but rather served as logical critiques of these schools.

To take the four dictums simply as attacks on particular Buddhist schools would be to deny the Daishonin’s true intent. He was in no way motivated by self-righteousness, exclusionism, or sectarianism.

Saito: It seems that criticism of the Nembutsu teaching figured prominently in the sermon the Daishonin gave at Seicho-ji when declaring the establishment of his teaching.

President Ikeda: At the time, other Buddhist schools recognized the Nembutsu as the easy-to-practice way.16 In addition, Honen’s followers actively propagated the exclusive practice of Nembutsu.17 As a

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16 Easy-to-practice way: One of the two categories of Buddhist practice taught by the Pure Land school. Established for those of lesser capacity, it means to call upon the names of Buddhas, relying upon their power of salvation. The other category is the difficult-to-practice way.

17 Exclusive practice of Nembutsu: To devote oneself solely to the practice of calling on the name of Amida Buddha in order to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. In his work The Nembutsu Chosen A “good teacher” is a priest who is innocent of any wrongdoing in secular affairs, who never fawns upon others even in the slightest, who has few desires and is satisfied with little, and who is compassionate, a priest who trusts to the scriptures, reads and upholds the Lotus Sutra and also encourages others to embrace it. Such a priest the Buddha has praised by calling him, among all priests, the finest teacher of the Dharma.
result, the Nembutsu teaching had gained very wide acceptance. Of course, behind this popularity was the deep-seated pessimism characteristic of the Latter Day of the Law.

**Saito:** I think the Daishonin’s reasons for initially directing his criticism toward the Nembutsu school can be summarized as follows:

First, in advocating that salvation is gained by rebirth in another land, the Nembutsu goes against the Lotus Sutra, which teaches that all people can attain Buddhahood in this world.

Second, Honen’s assertion that only the exclusive practice of the Nembutsu that leads to rebirth in the Pure Land can bring salvation in the Latter Day is a teaching that clearly slanders the Lotus Sutra.

Third, traveling to eastern Japan, the disciples of Honen and their disciples manipulated and altered the Nembutsu teachings in order to gain the support of the leaders of the Kamakura government. They still, however, maintained the self-righteous advocacy of the exclusive practice of Nembutsu.

Fourth, the Nembutsu faith had taken hold in many people’s lives, giving rise to a deepening sense of pessimism in society.

**President Ikeda:** There are also other explanations for why the Daishonin began by refuting the Nembutsu.

**Saito:** The fact that a number of famous Nembutsu priests had broken out in festering sores and died terrible, agonizing deaths probably had some bearing on his decision.

**President Ikeda:** Another factor may have been that the Nembutsu had long flourished at Seicho-ji, the site where he first preached his teaching, and that the steward, Tojo Kagenobu, was an ardent Nembutsu believer.

**Saito:** Kagenobu was apparently so passionate in his beliefs that he attempted to force the Nembutsu on the priests.

**President Ikeda:** It seems it was the Nembutsu school, whose adherents were acting in league with the powers that be, that was self-righteous and exclusivist. In many ways, the Daishonin must have discerned the extremely potent devilish nature that was poisoning people’s minds within the Nembutsu faith of the day.

Any religion will assert the absolute correctness of its teachings. For precisely this reason, it is easy for religion to take on malign aspects that lead people astray. And the negative influence will change depending on how that correctness is asserted.

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(above All) Honen, the founder of the Japanese Nembutsu (Pure Land) school, maintains that if people wish to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha, they should practice the Nembutsu exclusively.

18 In “On the Nembutsu Believers of the Present Age Falling into Hell,” the Daishonin says: “You should consider the various severe diseases, including foul sores, and the madness that has appeared in the sages of the Nembutsu of the present age along with the major lay followers at the moment of their deaths” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 105).

19 In “Letter to the Priests of Seicho-ji,” the Daishonin says, “The villainous Tojo Saemon Kagenobu once hunted the deer and other animals kept by Seicho-ji, and tried to force the priests in the various lodging temples to become Nembutsu believers” (*WND*, 651).
Responding to the specific changing conditions of the times, the Daishonin refuted one by one the intensifying devilish nature of the other Buddhist schools.

**Saito:** When declaring the establishment of his teaching, he almost simultaneously refuted the Zen school along with the Nembutsu school. After returning from exile in Izu, he focused on the True Word (eastern esotericism) and Precepts schools. And lastly, when dwelling at Mount Minobu, he refuted the esoteric teachings maintained by the Tendai school.

**President Ikeda:** Leaving a discussion of the details of his refutations for another occasion, in general terms, they could be likened to the diagnosis of a physician—a diagnosis based on the symptoms of the fundamental pathologies inherent in life. The Daishonin could therefore be said to have begun by treating the surface symptoms and then working into the source of the illness.

**Saito:** The good medicine that he prescribed for curing this illness was of course Nam-myoho-RENge-kyo.

**President Ikeda:** That’s right. Nam-myoho-RENge-kyo is the supreme and wonderful beneficial medicine that enables us to manifest the world of Buddhahood.

The Daishonin’s actions were motivated above all by the compassionate desire to alleviate the sufferings of the people. It is also surmised that the Daishonin strictly and methodically identified the devilish nature of the representative Buddhist schools of the day in order to carry out the great mission of bringing happiness to all people living in the Latter Day of the Law.

**Saito:** It could perhaps be said that the four dictums are descriptions of the ailments inflicting each of the major schools at the time, based on their actual condition.

**President Ikeda:** Each dictum ingeniously condenses into a short phrase the essence of the pathology, the specific characteristic of the illness, and the prognosis of the treatment.

**Saito:** To apply them just as they are today, when circumstances are completely different, would be to miss the point.

**President Ikeda:** Exactly. While the beneficial medicine of Nam-myoho-RENge-kyo is unchanging, other things change with the times. With regard to illness, there are cases when the archaic name for a disease fails to convey the essence of the illness.

**Saito:** Let us examine just how the expressions of the four dictums were formulated. First is “Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering.” As we discussed earlier, the Nembutsu school, with its exclusivist assertion that one could only gain rebirth in the Pure Land by practicing the Nembutsu, was gaining popularity. By saying that the Nembutsu led people to the “hell of incessant suffering” rather than

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20 The True Word school founded by Kobo was referred to as eastern esotericism, while the Tendai school of Mount Hiei, was called Tendai esotericism.

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to “rebirth in the Pure Land,” the Daishonin plainly refuted that teaching’s slanderous denial of the Lotus Sutra.

**President Ikeda:** He did so because the *Lotus Sutra* explains that those who slander the Lotus Sutra will fall into the hell of incessant suffering. Through and through, the Daishonin’s criticism is based on the sutras and his insight into the true nature of these schools.

**Saito:** “Zen is the invention of the heavenly devils” was a commentary on Zen priests who conducted themselves like enlightened sages, and were revered by members of the warrior class and others. Zen priests such as Doryu of Kencho-ji temple were heavily employed by the military government in Kamakura.

**President Ikeda:** Doryu enjoyed the patronage of the fifth Kamakura regent, Hojo Tokiyori. The Daishonin identifies the priest as one of the chief perpetrators behind the persecutions that befell him.

**Saito:** The Daishonin openly called the Zen priests “heavenly devils” for their shameless arrogance in claiming a “separate transmission outside the sutras,” and in feigning to have attained enlightenment when they clearly hadn’t.

In calling True Word “an evil doctrine that will ruin the nation,” he was refuting the True Word school, whose selling point was its prayers for the protection of the nation. As fears of an impending Mongol invasion mounted, the imperial court and the military government turned extensively to those prayers. The Daishonin therefore accused the True Word school of ruining the nation rather than protecting it, decrying its empty, occult practices.

**President Ikeda:** This criticism was based on the fact that the prayers of True Word Buddhism, without the foundation of the principle of a single life-moment encompassing three thousand realms, were nothing but formality.

The True Word school’s lack of this principle meant that it was devoid of the broadmindedness and philosophical insight to understand and be able to fundamentally change human life. Even so, its formalistic practices of prayer and mysticism developed, giving the impression that

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21 The “Simile and Parable” (third) chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* describes the retribution that a person who slanders either the *Lotus Sutra* or a person who embraces the sutra will face, saying, “When his life comes to an end / he will enter the Avichi hell” (LS3, 74).

22 Doryu (1213–78): A priest of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, also called Rankei. A native of China, he came to Japan in 1246. When Hojo Tokiyori built Kencho-ji temple in Kamakura in 1253, Doryu was invited to become its first chief priest. He opposed Nichiren Daishonin and plotted against him with Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple and others, including Hei no Saemon, an official who served two generations of Hojo regents, Tokimune and Sadatoki.

23 A doctrine of the Zen school that expounds that the Buddha’s enlightenment and his true teaching have been transmitted apart from the sutras. The Zen school asserts that the Buddha’s enlightenment has been wordlessly transmitted from mind to mind, handed down from one Zen patriarch to another. This is also referred to as a “special transmission apart from the sutras” and as a “separate transmission out of the scriptures.”

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President Ikeda: I agree. The four dictums in essence express the wisdom of the Daishonin, who saw through and strictly identified the self-righteousness of the various schools of the day, as well as their duplicity in concealing their true nature behind religious authority. It also goes without saying that at the foundation of the four dictums is the Daishonin’s compassion to protect the people.

In other words, upholding the four dictums means manifesting the wisdom to refute philosophies and religions that obstruct people’s happiness in any age.

Saito: I think that today this would mean exposing and refuting the true nature of the Nikken sect.

President Ikeda: To merely repeat the four dictums simply because they came from the Daishonin, while ignoring people’s feelings and the changing times, is to overlook the Daishonin’s spirit. The four dictums are then nothing but dogma. That is what gives rise to the devilish aspects of religion.

It is people and the heart that count. The four dictums are the manifestation of the Daishonin’s firm conviction to resolutely battle the devilish functions that serve to confuse people. To lose sight of this important point and interpret the four dictums in a superficial or dogmatic manner, and then criticize on that basis the Daishonin’s Buddhism as exclusive or intolerant, is extremely shallow.

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24 Jokyu Disturbance: A struggle that broke out between the imperial court and the Kamakura shogunate in 1221. The imperial forces were defeated, and the shogunate deposed the reigning emperor, placed another on the throne, and exiled the retired emperors to distant islands.

25 Ryokan (1217–1303): Also known as Ninsho. A priest of the True Word Precepts school who was a contemporary of Nichiren Daishonin. He received the precepts from Eizon, who was revered as a restorer of the Precepts school in Japan. In 1261 Ryokan went to Kamakura. Later he became chief priest of Gokuraku-ji, founded by Hojo Shigetoki. During the drought of 1271, he vied with Nichiren Daishonin in praying for rain but failed. After that he contrived to have accusations brought against the Daishonin, which resulted in the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and Sado exile.

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Saito: In *Human Values in a Changing World*, Dr. Bryan Wilson of Oxford University states that there is “a difference between conscious and actively promoted toleration and the indifferentism that can obtain within a polytheistic or syncretistic tradition.” This sounds rather complicated, but what it means is that in a spiritual climate such as Japan's, religious indifference can easily be mistaken for tolerance. By the same token, firm religious conviction can also be mistakenly branded as exclusivist or intolerant.

President Ikeda: The four dictums are neither exclusivist nor intolerant. For at their core is the Daishonin’s reasoned religious criticism illuminated by the wisdom of the Mystic Law.

In other words, on one level these four schools illustrate four unbalanced religious archetypes. The critique of them therefore affords a glimpse of a fully developed religion as conceived by the Daishonin. This is a completely balanced teaching that harmoniously incorporates the fundamental characteristics of religion without bias or distortion. In a word, it is a religion for human beings.

The doctrines of these four schools can be summed up as: 1) salvation through the external power of an absolute being (Nembutsu); 2) attainment of enlightenment only through the direct perception of one’s own mind and being content with that self-enlightenment (Zen); 3) gaining benefit in this life through occult means (True Word); and 4) being controlled from without by means of precepts or standards (Precepts).

The perfectly balanced teaching does not succumb to any one of these extremes, but expounds the fusion of internal and external power as the means to transforming the life of the individual as well as the surrounding circumstances. Combining internal and external power means discovering within the self a power that is greater than the self. This is what is referred to in the Daishonin’s teaching as “inherent” and “manifest” Buddhahood, and it is the essence of Nichiren Buddhism.

Saito: The “object of devotion for observing the mind” that enables us to reveal the world of Buddhahood in our own heart is the key to this complete religion.

President Ikeda: Let's discuss the object of devotion on another occasion.

In the Daishonin’s Buddhism, these four religious archetypes take on a positive meaning in that they support the transformation of the individual by manifesting the following qualities: 1) the ability to embrace the sick and weary with the life-state of Buddhahood and provide a sense of absolute peace of mind; 2) the ability to believe and actually sense that we possess within us the power to change ourselves; 3) the ability to courageously challenge our circumstances; and 4) the ability to control earthly desires and eliminate evil through our inner wisdom.

The modern significance of the four dictums is not limited to the simple refutation of Japanese Buddhist schools, but in fully developing the positive power of human life. This is the Mystic Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect inherent in human life, and to embrace it is to create boundless value.

In establishing and announcing this perfect teaching, the Daishonin raised the curtain on a religion for all humanity. He thus revealed the eternal and fundamental path leading to enlightenment for all humanity.

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