

“The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life” —Dawnell’s selecting the text answers for Selected Lectures on the Goshō

Q20: According to the opening portion of the lecture on the “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” what is the Buddhist view of life and death expressed in the title of this letter? (pp. 103-04)

Shōji ichidaiji kechimyaku conveys, in effect, the way the Buddha endows people undergoing the endless cycle of birth and death with the ultimate law so they can manifest it in their lives. Life and death are the two phases that all living beings must pass through. Conversely, a living being can exist only in the state of life or death.

Q21: What is the significance of our state of life in each successive moment? (p. 107)

Since our lifetime is an accumulation of moments the most important thing is the state of life we assume at each moment. Hence our state of life from moment to moment determines the overall course of our life. When we value each moment and live actively, enthusiastically, ready to greet the next moment, we go through a state of life and death free from suffering and directed toward enlightenment.

Q22: What does “the ultimate Law” (*ichidaiji*) in the title signify? (pp 108-09)

Ichidaiji also symbolizes the perfect union of the three truths: *kutai* (potential), *ketai* (form) and *chutai* (entity or source). What is meant by the ‘perfect union of the three truth’? It is that which is called Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō.” In the final analysis, *ichidaiji* is Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, the Law which perfectly incorporates the three truths. Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō is the ultimate law of life and the universe. At the same time it contains all things in the entire cosmos. It is not just an idea or something abstract and vague; it manifests itself in actual phenomena. The true entity of life completely free and unobstructed—this is *ichidaiji*.

Q23: Nichiren Daishonin states “Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless aeons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other.” Explain this passage literally and from a deeper viewpoint. (pp 121-23)

On a deeper level, however, “Shakyamuni” is intended to mean the original Buddha from the infinite past who appeared in this world as Nichiren Daishonin, and “the Lotus Sutra” signifies the Dai-Gohonzon of true Buddhism. So the above passage tells we should realize that Nichiren Daishonin, the Dai-Gohonzon and all common people like ourselves are alike entities of Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, and are in way different or separate form each other. In any event, the life of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, is Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō. And the Gohonzon is of course Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō, as the Daishonin himself states: “I Nichiren, have inscribed my life in *sumi*.” Unworthy as we are, the life of each one of us is also Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō.

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Q24: The Daishonin states: “Therefore, to chant Myōhō-Renge Kyō with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death. To carry on this heritage is the most important tasks for Nichiren’s disciples, and that is precisely what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra.” What does it mean to chant with “this realization”? (pp 121-23)

Of course it is difficult for us to “realize” subjectively the oneness of the Daishonin, the Gohonzon and ourselves. We should consider “realize to mean “have profound faith in,” and also that one should “rely on faith instead of one’s limited understanding.” Therefore to chant with profound faith is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death.

Questions 25-27 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant *Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō* with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation. When you are so united, even the great hope for kosen-rufu can be fulfilled without fail.

Q25: What does it mean to chant with “one mind”? (pp 150-55)

Here we learn that the heritage of the ultimate law flows within the group of believers who maintain perfect unity (*itai doshin*) among themselves. The passage is a concrete lesson in the way of practice to follow and thereby inherit the lifeblood which enables any and all people to attain enlightenment. The quoted passage also makes it clear that the Buddha’s lifeblood flows in the actions of people—not those who act divisively or egotistically, but within the lives of those who chant daimoku and advance together toward the common goal of *kosen-rufu*.

Q26: What relationship does diversity have to the Buddhist principle of unity? (pp 150-55)

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism deeply respects each person’s individuality, situation, and character and shows the way to display one’s particular abilities to the fullest. The *Ongi Kuden* says “Cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms all have their own qualities, and they manifest the three properties of the life of the original Buddha without changing their own character.” The members of the Soka Gakkai have always maintained mutual respect for each other and each other’s special talents. We aim at a total revolution. In its ideal form, this revolution has people from all walks of life gathering together in the garden of the Soka Gakkai, each blossoming forth in a unique way.

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Q27: What is the “true goal of Nichiren’s propagation”? (p 151)

“Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation.” What is the objective that Nichiren Daishonin strove for as he propagated the Mystic Law? He did not intend to keep the heritage of true Buddhism to himself or just to transmit it to a limited number of people. He wanted to open the way to Buddhahood and pass the heritage on to all people—those in his own country and throughout the world. He wanted to pass it on to mankind, and for all eternity. This was the spirit that underlay everything he did, and it shows us the fundamental difference between *shōju* and *shakubuku*.

Questions 28-29 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

Gold can neither be burned by fire nor corroded or swept away by water, but iron is vulnerable to both. A wise person is like gold and a fool like iron. You are like pure gold because you embrace the “gold” of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra reads in part, “Sumeru is the loftiest of all mountains. The Lotus Sutra is likewise the loftiest of all the sutras.” It also states, “The gold fortune of the believer cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water.”

Q28: What is the meaning of the analogy comparing gold and iron to a wise person and a foolish one? (pp 169-72)

Gold is one metal that will not oxidize even in fire, nor can it be corroded by water. And, because of its density, it is not even budged by a flood. In contrast, iron rusts and eventually disintegrates in either fire or water. A wise person, therefore, is one who, like gold, does not waver the slightest in his faith, no matter what suffering he meets or how difficult his life becomes. A fool, on the other hand, is as vulnerable and corruptible as iron.

Q29: In terms of our lives, what do fire and water symbolize? (pp 169-70)

Fire and water are like the trials we meet in daily life.

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Questions 30-31 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in your life. Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of life and death are nirvana. With the lifeblood of faith, it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra.

Q30: What does this passage tell us about the role of faith in terms of our practice to the Gohonzon? (pp 190-95)

Everything depends on faith. Without faith, the heritage of the ultimate law, which was taught in such length from four viewpoints as outlined earlier, would prove to be totally false. On the other hand, with faith everything the Daishonin says can be achieved. The Gohonzon is found in faith alone. This is the Daishonin’s declaration that the Gohonzon is contained only in faith.

Q31: What does it mean for our faith to be “steadfast and correct: at the moment of death, and what awareness does this teach us to pray with? (pp 191)

For faith to “be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death,” you must have an undisturbed faith in the Mystic Law at that final moment, feel the greatest joy to have been able to embrace the Law, and end your life with the deepest satisfaction that you have nothing whatsoever to regret. Therefore, the passage as a whole urges us to pray sincerely now, while we are alive, so that everything within us centers completely on Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō at the moment of our death. It so teaches us to pray with the awareness that each moment is the last moment of our life.

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Q32: Where and to what extent does the “heritage of the ultimate law” flow? (pp 193-94)

“The heritage of the Lotus Sutra flows within the lives of those who never forsake it in any lifetime whatsoever—whether in the past, the present or the future. All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-Myōhō-Renge-Kyō with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all difference among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death.” In a word, the heritage of the ultimate law flows forever within the people’s lives, from the infinite past to the eternal future. It lives vibrantly in the fusion between the Law—the Gohonzon—and the people’s lives, and in the mutual recognition and encouragement of those who uphold the Law.