

The True Entity of Life
- *Shoho Jisso Sho* -

Lecture 1 of 3 from Selected Lectures on the Goshō, vol. 1.

Spirit of Buddhist Study

Seeing the sun of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism rise among each of us, I would like to speak to you about *Shoho Jisso Sho* (The True Entity of Life) with prayers for the good health of each of you. First, let me recount a story that relates to the Soka Gakkai's study movement as it opens the way for the "religion of man."

It concerns Kumarajiva (344-409 AD.) of Kucha in Central Asia. He was responsible for great waves of Buddhist thought which flowed across China over a thousand years ago. As you know, he was a priest who completed the unexcelled translation of the Lotus Sutra from Sanskrit into Chinese, and he rendered the sutra's title and essence as *Myōhō-rensō-kyō*. However, what moves me more than his work is the passion with which he went to China and dedicated his entire life to the transmission of the true spirit of Buddhism. It is said that Kumarajiva was over fifty when he entered Ch'angan, after long years of hardship. That was the starting point of his struggle to fulfill the purpose he had long cherished. From then on, the hard work of passing on the Buddhist teachings started. He carried out his translation work at a great pace, as if all the power pent up within him were released all at once. Hearing of his arrival, priests came from every district in China to form a great religious order under him.

It is said that he ended his days eight or twelve years later, and that during this period more than three hundred volumes of sutras were translated at the tremendous speed of two or three a month. His enterprise was a vivid movement of Buddhist study that went far beyond translation. According to the prefaces of various scriptures he translated, a large number of capable people --- eight hundred on one occasion and two thousand on another --- gathered around him to engage in the translation effort. Carrying the translated sutras with him, Kumarajiva unfolded his interpretation of Buddhism before these audiences. He elucidated each teaching clearly and thoroughly, explaining why the wording of a sutra had been rendered in such a way and wherein the true meaning lay. He patiently answered many questions from the people assembled under him until they truly understood the meaning of each sutra. One would think he had devoted decades to these difficult translations, confined to his study with nothing but dictionaries around him, but that was not the way he worked. He worked with the people, acutely sensing their innermost feelings as he carried on discussions about Buddhism with them. His translation of the Lotus Sutra was the fruit of this broad and sensitive approach. I am convinced this is why Kumarajiva was able to produce such a smooth and still accurate rendition of the sutra's original meaning. No matter how important or valuable the teachings of Buddhism may be, if they cannot be correctly understood, they will never become part of the lives of the people. Philosophy's true value can only shine through communication between people and in their daily experience. Without the work of Kumarajiva and his group to propagate the sutras, the development of Buddhism and its flowering with T'ien-t'ai in China and Dengyo in Japan could never have taken place.

I do not want simply to praise the greatness of Kumarajiva and his mission, but to suggest what we can learn from the way he approached his mission and apply it to our own study of Buddhism. He devoted himself to dialogue with the people, always remaining among them. In a sense we are the Kumarajivas of today. He helped introduce the Buddhist scriptures from India to China through translation, and the Kumarajivas of this day must bring to life the seven-hundred year-old scripture of the Latter Day of the Law by introducing it and propagating it to people of modern times. Our study movement follows the same pattern as Kumarajiva's. With the Goshō as our sutra, we use the forms each occasion requires --- lectures, questions and answers, and personal guidance. And we unfold Buddhism through dialogue, keeping in direct touch with the hearts of the people.

Shakyamuni Buddha also expounded his teachings among the people, sharing their joys and sorrows until he passed away. The teachings he left still shine, filled with the understanding that comes from direct confrontation with the suffering that is an inseparable part of every

man's existence. One extremist Buddhist scholar goes so far as to say that Shakyamuni did not expound Buddhism. Of course there can be no question that Shakyamuni gave birth to Buddhism, but there is something significant in what that scholar said. When someone speaks of the many sutras taught by Shakyamuni or their classification by T'ien-t'ai into five periods and eight teachings, (Note)[T'ien-t'ai's classification of Shakyamuni's teachings according to the order and content of their preaching. The five periods are the Kegon, Agon, Hodo, Hannya and Hokke-Nehan periods. During the last period Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra, fully revealing his enlightenment. The eight teachings are subdivided into two groups: four teachings of keho (doctrine) and four teachings of kegi (method). The first are: 1) zokyo, Hinayana teachings; 2) tsugyo, lower provisional Mahayana teachings; 3) bekkyo, higher provisional Mahayana teachings; and 4) engyo, or true Mahayana, that is, the Lotus Sutra. The second, a division by method of teaching, are: 1) tonkyo, to reveal the teaching of enlightenment directly; 2) zenkyo, to reveal the teaching gradually; 3) himitsutyo, to reveal the teaching to some and keep it secret to others at the same time; and 4) fujokyo, to reveal the teaching to make it understood at various levels.] it sounds as though Shakyamuni preached according to some detailed, prearranged system. The truth is that Shakyamuni taught in the form of encouragement to poverty-stricken people --- to an old woman afflicted with illness, as if he felt her pain as his own and carried her on his back, or warm encouragement to a youth in the grip of deep spiritual suffering. All his sutras were the natural result of his lifelong devotion to the people, the accumulation of every compassionate word he spoke to alleviate the pain of people oppressed by the cruel caste system. That is why the sutras consist of questions and answers throughout. The teachings of Shakyamuni sprang from his disciples' memories and records of his talks with the people and his behavior among them. These are what were finally compiled in the form of the sutras we have today.

The same is true with Nichiren Daishonin. He carried on in the same spirit as Shakyamuni. The voluminous Goshō we study is the crystallization of the Daishonin's continuous struggle to save the people through hundreds of letters and thousands of dialogues. He did not confine himself to a library to write the Goshō but talked and wrote right at the site of his battle --- among the people. He fought for the people, talking with them and writing them individual letters of encouragement. To think of Buddhism as a placid teaching expounded in a bucolic setting under the shade of a tree is a totally false image. Buddhism is intensely practical, not escapist. It lives in human society and has been handed down among the people --- this is the true flow of Buddhism.

The True Entity of Life is a comparatively short Goshō, but it contains important elements of the Daishonin's Buddhism. In the postscript Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "Those I have revealed to you in this letter are especially important.... By all means keep these matters to yourself. Nichiren has herein committed to writing the teachings of his own enlightenment." Nichiren Daishonin wrote this Goshō on May 17, 1273, a month after he wrote The True Object of Worship (April 25). In the latter, he revealed the core of Buddhist practice in the Latter Day of the Law by explaining the Dai-Gohonzon, the supreme object of worship, in terms of the Law (Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō), and the way for all people to attain enlightenment. The True Entity of Life begins with a passage from the Hoben chapter --- the heart of the theoretical teaching (shakumon) of the Lotus Sutra --- which reads, "The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, . . . and their consistency from beginning to end." It then reveals the essence of the Lotus Sutra -- - Myōhō-renge-kyō and its embodiment, the Gohonzon. Nichiren Daishonin, in other words, clarified the significance of ho-honzon, explaining the Gohonzon from the viewpoint of the Law. After elucidating the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra the Daishonin declares that only Bodhisattva Jogyō, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, can propagate it, and that the Daishonin himself was carrying out the mission entrusted to Bodhisattva Jogyō. Superficially, Nichiren Daishonin suggests that he is the incarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyō. But a deeper understanding lets us know that the Daishonin is the Buddha who is to establish the Dai-Gohonzon for the salvation of the people of the Latter Day and the original Buddha of kuon ganjo. Thus, in this Goshō the Daishonin also reveals nin-honzon, explaining the Gohonzon in terms of the Person. In terms of both the Person and Law, Nichiren Daishonin reveals the prime object of reverence to the people of the Latter Day. Thus, this Goshō contains the main points expounded in The Opening of the Eyes (nin-honzon) and elaborated on in The True Object of Worship (ho-honzon).

In the latter half of this Goshō, moreover, the Daishōnin predicts that kosen-rufu will be attained in the future, and concludes by setting down the core of Buddhist practice throughout the Latter Day on into eternity --- the way of faith, practice and study. In the final analysis, this Goshō reveals clearly and concisely the profound essence and practice of Buddhism for the Latter Day of the Law.

Because we in the Soka Gakkai stress the need for people to return to the teachings of Nichiren Daishōnin as the prime point in their lives, this Goshō has continued to have special importance in deepening the members' faith, giving them guidance and working as the guideline for our activities. I have heard that our first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, constantly gave guidance to people by referring to this Goshō. Then too, apart from his lectures on the Lotus Sutra, the first Goshō on which President Josei Toda lectured before a small group of disciples was The True Entity of Life . I was one of those present at that time.

I myself have given frequent lectures on The True Entity of Life to the high school division and selected members of the headquarters staff. But every time I read this Goshō, I am always impressed and moved anew at the strength and depth of Nichiren Daishōnin's conviction. In commemoration of the 46th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, I revised my many lectures on this Goshō and set them in context of our era. With these comments as a brief introduction, let us go on to explore The True Entity of Life in greater depth.

All Phenomena Manifest True Entity

Question: In the Hoben chapter of Volume One of the Lotus Sutra is the passage: "The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, . . . and their consistency from beginning to end." What does this passage mean?

The passage, "The true entity of all phenomena. . . ," is the essence of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and in T'ien-t'ai's Buddhism it is the core of all of Shakyamuni's teachings as well as the foundation on which to expound the principle of ichinen sanzen (three thousand conditions in a momentary existence of life). Sairenbo Nichijō, who received the letter containing that passage, is said to have been a priest of the Tendai sect before he became a follower of Nichiren Daishōnin. We can presume, therefore, that he knew about "the true entity of all phenomena" as the basic teaching of the Tendai school. He could not, however, thoroughly understand it through T'ien-t'ai's theory, and so he asked the Daishōnin to explain the exact meaning of the passage.

Answer: It means that all beings and their environments in any of the Ten Worlds, from Hell at the lowest to Buddhahood at the highest, are, without exception, the manifestations of Myōhō-rensō-kyō.

Through this passage Nichiren Daishōnin gives a clear-cut explanation of "the true entity of all phenomena," saying that, of all phenomena (shōhō), none is any different from the true entity of life (jisso). In other words, the innumerable forms and appearances in the great universe are all manifestations of Myōhō-rensō-kyō, and both the environment (eho) of the world of Hell and the people (shōhō) who suffer in Hell are ultimately Myōhō-rensō-kyō. Both eho and shōhō of the world of Hunger are also Myōhō-rensō-kyō. This holds true with the rest of the Ten Worlds including Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.

"The true entity" (jisso) of "all phenomena" (shōhō) does not, however, mean that the true entity is contained within all phenomena or vice versa, nor does it assume the existence of some being that exists beyond all universal phenomena and governs them. Western philosophers and other non-Buddhist thinkers and systems of thought have long sought some truth or essence either beyond or behind phenomena. The Christian idea of an absolute God as the creator of the world is a good example of how these other philosophies removed the ultimate truth from all real phenomena. The inevitable result was a split between God and man or between Creator and creature. Churches and priests took over as the "authorized" intermediaries between the two, and they grew so powerful that the people were treated like vassals.

Buddhism is totally different. The Buddhist finds truth in reality itself; he discovers the underlying truth by steadily and carefully observing man and the things around him. "The true entity of all phenomena" is, therefore, a philosophy that sees into the real aspect of every

reality in the universe, especially human life. All phenomena and the true entity are "two but not two," for one cannot exist without the other. This is what binds the true entity and all phenomena together, making them one and the same, even though they may seem to be different. All phenomena --- the sun and the moon as they rise and set, the ebb and flow of the seas, the bending of trees before the wind --- in the eye of Buddhism all appear as the action of Myoho-renge-kyo. Unlike the Lotus Sutra, which gives careful, deep treatment of this principle, all the other sutras deal solely with the phenomena themselves and point out only differences among them. The Lotus Sutra sees beyond the superficial differences and discovers the Mystic Law equally permeating the depths of all. This is what sets the "perfect and all-embracing Lotus Sutra" above the "provisional teachings of discrimination." The principle of equality meant by "the true entity of all phenomena" is an expression of the Buddha's great and impartial wisdom, which recognizes the potential for Buddhahood in all people alike. Nonetheless, the first half of the Lotus Sutra (theoretical teaching) only explains this theoretically, while the second half (essential teaching) gives practical meaning to the theory.

Take for instance Newton's law of gravitation. It is a law of physics and, even if it is not directly parallel to this Buddhist principle, we know that it operates throughout the universe. Regardless of who discovered it or whether it was "discovered" at all, the law of gravitation has always existed, and all things move according to it. To the eye of physics, the movement of the sun, moon, and stars, the changes in the tides, an apple falling from a tree --- all these are understood in terms of the law of physics. Without understanding gravity, people merely see an apple ripening and falling to the earth, yet a physicist recognizes the law behind this phenomenon, that gravity is working between two objects, the earth and the apple. This law keeps on working whether one is aware of it or not, but he cannot apply it to anything if he cannot first identify and analyze it. Then again, to know about gravity and not do anything with that knowledge may be a serious waste. Only when we translate this knowledge into some practical use by creating an airplane, spaceship or something else of value to man, can we enjoy the benefits of the knowledge we have gained from the law of gravity.

In Buddhism, the true entity of all the movements of the universe is Myoho-renge-kyo. Common mortals see nothing but the trees waving in the wind, yet the Buddha sees the mystic rhythm of Myoho-renge-kyo pulsing within. To him the sun's radiance is the harmonious manifestation of the Mystic Law that fosters all kinds of life on earth. Every aspect of our life is made up according to the Mystic Law, and we always act in rhythm with it. Merely to realize this fact is, however, still a theoretical understanding. Anyone who does not know how to bring his life into oneness with the Mystic Law would be like someone falling in an attempt to fly, ignorant of the law of gravitation. He would fall into one suffering and then another, only getting more and more deeply confused.

Likewise, if we grasp the principle of "the true entity of all phenomena" only philosophically, we are none the better for it. Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon to enable us to apply its principle to the creation of happy and hopeful lives. The principle was embodied in the Gohonzon by the Daishonin when he put his life and soul into it. By inscribing the Gohonzon, he gave us the entity of value creation. It is not mere philosophy any more. It is the true entity --- the very life of Nichiren Daishonin, his life of ichinen sanzen. This is why the Gohonzon is called the entity of ichinen sanzen.

"The true entity of all phenomena" is a philosophy that sees all universal phenomena as manifestations of Myoho-renge-kyo. Yet, in its essential meaning, it points to the Gohonzon as the ultimate crystallization of all phenomena in the universe. In the Daishonin's Buddhism, "the true entity of all phenomena" therefore means the Gohonzon.

Life and the Environment

Where there is an environment, there is life within it. Miao-lo states, "Both life (shoho) and its environment (eho) always manifest Myoho-renge-kyo."

Does the order of these words puzzle you? "Where there is an environment, there is life within it." We learned, after all, from the Lotus Sutra that life is like the body, and the environment like the shadow. Should it not read, "Where there is life, there is an environment surrounding it," reversing it completely?

To explain this briefly, all the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings expounded the Ten Worlds as ten different places. As you may already know, the world of Hell (jigoku) was said to be one thousand yujun underground; the world of Hunger (gaki) five hundred yujun underground; the world of Animality (chikusho) in the water, on land, and in the sky; the world of Anger (shura) on the coast and in the depths of the sea; the world of Humanity or Tranquillity (nin) on the earth; and the world of Heaven or Rapture (ten) in a palace or from the middle of Mount Sumeru upward. The four noble worlds were explained similarly: the world of two vehicles (Learning and Realization) was one of transience (hoben-do); the world of Bodhisattva (bosatsu) was one of actual rewards (jippo-do); and the world of Buddhahood (butsu) was the Buddha's land (jakko-do). Since these environments were thought to exist in different places, it naturally followed that the people dwelling in them were also different. The truth is, however, that the people (shoho) and their environments (eho) are inseparable. This is the way life exists. The Lotus Sutra, the true philosophy of life, was the first to state that an environment can only be explained in relationship with the living things in it.

Miao-lo of China states in his Hokke Mongu Ki (Annotations on the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra) that all of the ten states of environment and life manifest Myoho-enge-kyo. He explains that the essence of environment and that of life are in perfect oneness. An environment is the entity of Myoho-enge-kyo and life is also. Both are aspects of the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo, for the original Law, Myoho-enge-kyo, manifests itself simultaneously as living things and their environments. They are united on the level of life. Thus we can see the powerful principle in Buddhism that a revolution within life (shoho) always leads to one in the environment (eho).

I want to mention an article by Dr. Hisayuki Omodaka, in which he writes: "Men tend to think in terms of one large environment in which all living things exist. However, human beings, fish, birds, etc., each have their own particular environments. For each individual the environment differs. Hence there are actually countless environments. No environment exists apart from living things. Just as living things gradually reproduce themselves and develop specific features and qualities, the environment also gradually departs from living things and develops into the form that corresponds with each unique being." Dr. Omodaka insists that living things and their environments adapt to each other and that the origin of both is "primitive existence." His observation of the world of living things conforms with the principle of esho funi (oneness of life and the environment).

Buddha Is Not an Abstract Being

He also states, "The true entity is invariably revealed in all phenomena, and all phenomena invariably possess the Ten Factors. The Ten Factors invariably function within the Ten Worlds, and the Ten Worlds invariably entail both life and its environment."

This is a passage from the Kompeiron, Miao-lo's thesis on the Buddha nature inherent in all things, living and non-living. It explains the structure of ichinen sanzen. As mentioned earlier, the true entity refers to Myoho-enge-kyo and represents ichinen (the life-moment) of ichinen sanzen. "The true entity is invariably revealed in all phenomena" means that the ichinen or Myoho-enge-kyo is eternally manifested in phenomena. In the following passage, Miao-lo states the true entity by analyzing all phenomena into the Ten Factors, the Ten Worlds, and life and its environment.

First of all, the Ten Factors represent the ten aspects common to all phenomena. They are appearance (nyoze-so), nature (nyoze-sho), entity (nyoze-tai), power (nyoze-riki), influence (nyoze-sa), inherent cause (nyoze-in), relation (nyoze-en), latent effect (nyoze-ka), manifest effect (nyoze-ho), and consistency from beginning to end (nyoze-honmatsu-kukyo-to). All phenomena have these Ten Factors and all of them manifest one or another of the Ten Worlds. The Ten Factors are inherent in each of the Ten Worlds --- even in Hell and Buddhahood. This is what is meant by the reality of all phenomena.

"The Ten Worlds invariably entail both life and its environment," means that each of the Ten Worlds is certainly seen in both a living thing and its surroundings. This is the working of the principle of esho funi, the oneness of life and its environment.

Concretely, Myoho-enge-kyo exists nowhere outside our daily activities. That is what Miao-lo meant by, "The true entity is invariably revealed in all phenomena."

"All phenomena invariably possess the Ten Factors" is another way of saying that life as it changes moment by moment never loses its Ten Factors. No one can say, "I have no nyoze-so (appearance)." Everyone has a face and figure. He has also nyoze-sho (mind or nature). Could he exist as a stone? Even that is impossible, for a stone, too, has its own nature. The same is true for nyoze-tai (entity).

Also, everyone has his own specific power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, and manifest effect. A person's life-condition, whatever it is, as it is, is reflected simultaneously in all the nine factors, from the first, "appearance," to the last, "manifest effect." This is "their consistency from beginning to end," of the Hoben chapter.

The true entity, if it were not to exist as phenomena or possess the Ten Factors, could not be true any more. For example, such Buddhas as Dainichi (Skt., Mahavairochana), who appear in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, do not possess the Ten Factors. They do not even have nyoze-so (form or appearance). Who on earth has ever seen Dainichi Buddha? Buddhas who are not endowed with appearance, nature and entity have no power to save people.

The Judeo-Christian religions may assert that their supreme beings do not appear in any real form, but the Lotus Sutra proclaims that there is no true entity outside of phenomena or the Ten Factors. Shakyamuni Buddha was a real person, and Nichiren Daishonin also plunged into the midst of actual society, shared the people's sufferings and gave his enlightenment equally to all mankind. I insist that the Buddha is not an imaginary or an abstract being but one who clearly expresses himself in real behavior through the function of his Ten Factors.

"The Ten Factors invariably function within the Ten Worlds" --- the Ten Factors are not indifferent to suffering and joy. Each factor represents a facet of the same momentary life-condition, and for that reason, all the Ten Factors are involved in any one of the Ten Worlds. The Ten Factors reflect Buddhahood just as easily as they reflect Hell. When you did not know about the Gohonzon, you created the causes for and received the effects of suffering. Your power and influence were weak. When filled with joy, it is impossible for you to look fierce; when overcome by sorrow, you cannot laugh with joy. When you suffered, all of your Ten Factors at one time reflected Hell or other lower conditions. But now you embrace the Gohonzon and are changing your life, so that you appear blessed with good fortune, with a gentle and generous nature, and you develop great power and influence to support your family and direct all your causes and effects toward creating a happier life. I hope that all of you will keep your Ten Factors this way throughout your lives.

Lastly, "the Ten Worlds invariably entail both life and its environment" --- the Ten Worlds we experience become apparent both within ourselves and our environment. When a person is in the state of Hell, he finds his environment in Hell, too. Conversely, a man whose life-condition is Buddhahood makes his place the Buddha's land. This is what we can attain by human revolution. Even if you enshrine the Gohonzon at home, if you leave your home untidy and remain inconsiderate to your neighbors, you are not practicing what the above passage tells you. Only when you each make a golden castle of your own home, fill it with pleasant laughter and contribute to the prosperity of your community can you advance toward making the whole world the Buddha's land. I hope you do so. Then you are truly making this passage part of your life.

The deepest meaning of this passage of Miao-lo comes out when we think about it in terms of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It exactly represents the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws. Phenomena are composed of three thousand conditions including the Ten Worlds, and all are perfectly represented in the Gohonzon. All of the Ten Worlds are contained in the one Law, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. This is the Gohonzon. To be more specific, "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nichiren" written down the center of the Gohonzon represents the true entity of all phenomena of the Ten Worlds, while the representatives of the Ten Worlds on both sides are the Ten Worlds of the Daishonin's life, the ten differing activities of life illuminated by the eternal light of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

In the upper part on both sides of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo are the names of Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas. Sitting on each side of the original Buddha, they represent the state of Buddhahood. Further to their left and right are inscribed the names of the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo and Anryugyo. They represent the state of Bodhisattva. Lower down Shariputra and Mahakashyapa represent the two vehicles (Learning

and Realization); Bonten and Taishaku, the gods of the sun and the moon, and the Devil of the Sixth Heaven represent the state of Heaven or Rapture; the Wheel-Rolling King represents the state of Humanity or Tranquillity; King Ashura represents the state of Anger; the Dragon King's daughter represents the state of Animality; Kishimojin and her ten daughters (Jurasetsumyo) represent the state of Hunger; and Devadatta represents the state of Hell. All these representatives of the Ten Worlds "consist of the Ten Factors."

The statement that the Ten Worlds are manifest in life and its environment can be interpreted to mean that the Daishonin's life is manifest in the scroll of the Gohonzon and its environment is the Buddhist altar.

And, "Both the life and environment of Hell exist within the life of Buddha. On the other hand, the life and environment of Buddha do not transcend the lives of common mortals."

This also comes from the Kompeiron. Even the world of Hell and the people in it are entirely within the supreme life of the Buddha himself. On the other hand, the supreme life and land of the Buddha exist within the lives of common mortals. In short, this reveals the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds through the examples of Hell and Buddhahood.

If we look deeper into this passage, we see that because both the supreme life of the Buddha and the life of common mortals are entities of Myoho-enge-kyo, even a Buddha has the potential to manifest the state of Hell, and common mortals equally have the potential to manifest Buddhahood.

Such precise explanations leave no room for doubt. Thus, all life in the universe is clearly Myoho-enge-kyo. Even the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, are the functions of Myoho-enge-kyo who appeared to bestow its blessings upon mankind. They manifested themselves as the two Buddhas and, seated together in the Treasure Tower, nodded in mutual agreement.

Nichiren Daishonin says that the phrase, "the true entity of all phenomena," reveals that all life in the universe is Myoho-enge-kyo. In the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni preached the truth using principles, parables, or by explaining the relationship between himself and his disciples in past existences. In these three ways he enabled his disciples of shomon to attain enlightenment. The subsequent appearance of the Treasure Tower was for the benefit of those to come after Shakyamuni Buddha's passing. With it, the magnificent ceremony in the air (note)[The ceremony in which the entire assembly floats in space, and one of the three assemblies described in the Lotus Sutra, extending from the Hoto (11th) to the Zokurui (22nd) chapter. In this ceremony, Shakyamuni clarifies his original enlightenment in the remote past and transfers the essence of the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth led by Bodhisattva Jogyo, entrusting them with the mission to propagate it in the Latter Day of the Law.] began, centering on the Treasure Tower with Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas seated side by side. The sentence, "Even the two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, . . . ," means that the ceremony ultimately revealed Myoho-enge-kyo. This sentence also has another meaning. It signifies that the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo started working to bless the people through the actions of Shakyamuni and Taho. The two Buddhas are the functions of the Mystic Law, as is mentioned later: "The function is a provisional Buddha." All the magnificent Buddhas mentioned in various sutras are, in the final analysis, functions of Myoho-enge-kyo or the Buddhahood which pervades the universe. Myoho-enge-kyo functions in all life of the Ten Worlds including Buddhahood.

"They . . . in the Treasure Tower, nodded in mutual agreement" means that the Law which Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas unveiled at the ceremony in the air is Myoho-enge-kyo. "Nodded in mutual agreement" symbolizes that Shakyamuni gave the teaching and that Taho agreed to it and testified to the validity of the Law. President Toda once lectured about the significance of the ceremony of the Treasure Tower:

With the ceremony of the Treasure Tower Shakyamuni revealed the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and ichinen sanzen inherent in his life. In the same way, Nichiren Daishonin made use of the ceremony when he embodied on the scroll of the Gohonzon the ultimate teaching of enlightenment hidden within the Juryo chapter. The Gohonzon, therefore, depicts Shakyamuni's ceremony of the Treasure Tower only to reveal the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and ichinen sanzen in the Daishonin's own life --- the life of the original Buddha. Since the Gohonzon is the expression of the eternal life of the original Buddha, it is the only

object of worship that has the power to enable the people of the Latter Day to attain Buddhahood.

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The True Envoys

No one but Nichiren has ever revealed these teachings. T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo knew in their hearts but did not declare them aloud. There was reason for their silence: The Buddha had not entrusted them with this mission, the time had not yet come, and they had not been the Buddha's disciples from ages past. No one but Jogyo, Muhengyo and the other leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can appear during the first five hundred years of the Latter Day to spread the Law of Myoho-rence-kyo. Only they are qualified to inscribe the object of worship which physically manifests the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated together in the Treasure Tower. This is because both the Law and the object of worship are the reality of ichinen sanzen revealed in the Juryo chapter of the essential teaching.

Nichiren Daishonin was the first person ever to reveal that "the true entity of all phenomena" taught in the Hoben chapter and the ceremony in the air that takes place in the essential teaching both express Myoho-rence-kyo. However, since the true aim of the Lotus Sutra is to reveal Myoho-rence-kyo, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo, who so thoroughly mastered the Lotus Sutra, must have known this truth in their hearts. This is why the Daishonin was able to say, "T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo knew in their hearts but did not declare them aloud."

"Declare them aloud" of course means to teach what they knew to others, but why didn't T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo teach anyone else what they had realized within their own hearts? The Daishonin gives us three reasons: One is that the Buddha did not direct them to carry out the mission. During the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni Buddha singled out his original disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, for the mission of propagating the sutra's most important teaching. In comparison, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo were bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, whom the Buddha had excluded from this mission.

The second reason is that the time was not yet right. For in the Yakuo (23rd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra it is stated, "In the fifth five hundred years after my death, accomplish worldwide kosen-rufu." The time to commence propagation of the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra, he said, would be the fifth half-millennium after Shakyamuni's death --- the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law. "The time" is the most important condition for the spreading of the Law. Only a Buddha who thoroughly understands the three existences of life can know when the time is right for propagation. That is why the Buddha himself clearly set the time for the teaching of the Mystic Law. The age when T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo made their advent in this world fell in the fourth half-millennium, and that is why they did not "declare aloud" the Mystic Law to the people of their day.

The third reason is that they were not among the original disciples of the Buddha. The original disciples of the Buddha are those totally in one mind with the Buddha and sharing his enlightenment. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the disciples of the original Buddha himself. They temporarily appeared in the ceremony of the sutra to receive the mission of propagating the Mystic Law. Only those who have attained the same level of enlightenment as the Buddha and are in every way equal to the Buddha can teach and propagate the Mystic Law. To propagate the Mystic Law is, as the sutra states, "to carry out the Buddha's work as the envoy of the Buddha."

At this point, let me say a few words about the relationship between the original Buddha's disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. As to where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth live, the Lotus Sutra says it is "the space below the earth," and T'ien-t'ai, "the ultimate depth of life, that being the absolute reality." Nichiren Daishonin defined it simply as "Nam-myoho-rence-kyo." It is Bodhisattvas of the Earth who

realize Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as their very life and take on the propagation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as their mission and life's work.

In contrast, the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching work to benefit the people through their various capacities --- Kannon with the ability to recognize the trends of society, Myo'on by soothing people with beautiful music, Miroku with a merciful heart, and Yakuo by relieving people of their illness with medicine. Using their special skills, these bodhisattvas contribute to the welfare of the people. Those today who serve others and contribute to society with all the talents at their command and a truly benevolent heart are considered to correspond to these bodhisattvas. However, we are the only ones in the world who devote their lives to the people by propagating the supreme law, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Only we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

According to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni did not allow the transient bodhisattvas to propagate the teaching after his death. He said, "Desist, men of good faith!" and then pointedly summoned clouds of bodhisattvas from under the ground. He entrusted these Bodhisattvas of the Earth with the task of spreading the ultimate teaching. Only the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, disciples of the original Buddha, can devote their lives to benefiting the people and society of our day by propagating the supreme teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And that is the fundamental practice in the Latter Day of the Law.

We know our religious activities befit bodhisattvas who fulfill the Buddha's mission, but what about our secular activities? Although our social activities are just like those of transient bodhisattvas, who use their skills for the people, when we understand that it is our life's work to live only by Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and propagate it to society, we are truly Bodhisattvas of the Earth. To put it another way, we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth who contribute to society in two ways: religious or essential, and secular or phenomenal. But if we forget that our mission is to propagate and live by the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we will be unable to carry out the benevolent acts of transient bodhisattvas. We would become too involved in the pursuit of fame or power, lose control of ourselves in daily life, and finally fall into the four evil paths (Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger). Those who devote themselves to kosen-rufu, be they students, housewives, scholars or working men, are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth, which is what we must all strive to become. If a housewife or a student thinks of faith only as something to help in overcoming personal troubles, that person will be lost in a very shallow view of his or her mission. We must get to the core of our true identity as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and root our entire being in the Gohonzon, the Soka Gakkai, and work for kosen-rufu.

Because T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo lacked the three requirements that were specified for propagation, they were unable to spread the ultimate teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Only the Bodhisattvas of the Earth --- the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and his disciples --- can propagate this teaching. "No one but Jogyo, Muhengyo and the other leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can . . . spread the Law of Myoho-renge-kyo" corresponds to the words: "the Buddha had not entrusted them [T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo] with this mission." Further, the Buddha's statement in the Yujutsu (15th) chapter, "I have taught these people [the Bodhisattvas of the Earth] since the remotest past" verifies the passage in the Goshu, "[T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo] had not been the Buddha's disciples from ages past." Certainly, "No one but Jogyo . . . can appear during the first five hundred years of the Latter Day" states very clearly the meaning of "the time had not yet come." Nichiren Daishonin is the very person who fulfills all of the above mentioned three conditions.

"No one but Jogyo . . . can appear . . . to spread the Law of Myoho-renge-kyo" is saying that the Daishonin first propagated the daimoku of true Buddhism. "No one but Jogyo . . . are qualified to inscribe the object of worship which physically manifests the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated together in the Treasure Tower" signifies that the Daishonin established the object of worship of true Buddhism. If the only purpose of the Daishonin's advent was to propagate the daimoku, he would not have stated that he would also embody the ceremony of the Treasure Tower. Therefore, there can be no question that the purpose of Nichiren Daishonin's advent was to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon.

Why is it that no one but the leaders of Bodhisattvas of the Earth can spread the daimoku and inscribe the Gohonzon? The Goshu says, "This is because both the Law and the object of worship are the reality of ichinen sanzen revealed in the Juryo chapter of the essential

teaching." As you know, ichinen sanzen was explained by T'ien-t'ai in his perfect analysis of life. But a theory is not enough to help all people make the truth of life their-own. This is why Nichiren Daishonin embodied his own life of ichinen sanzen in the form of Gohonzon to enable everyone to attain enlightenment by chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon. The four leaders of those bodhisattvas --- Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo and Anryugyo --- represent the four virtues of the original Buddha, the integrity, freedom, purity and happiness of Nichiren Daishonin's life. Then, "Jogyo and the other leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth" indicates a single person, Nichiren Daishonin, who possesses all their virtues in his own life. The original Buddha is the object of worship as the Person, and ichinen sanzen the object of worship as the Law. Because the original Buddha's life is ichinen sanzen itself, they are not two different things but one. That is the oneness of the Person and the Law. Whereas the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can propagate the teaching, the other bodhisattvas cannot; they spread only the theoretical teaching in the former half of the Lotus Sutra.

I think you can see that ichinen sanzen as used in the passage quoted does not indicate the theory T'ien-t'ai expounded. Rather, seen in the light of the Daishonin's enlightenment, it refers to the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the core of the Juryo chapter in the latter half (essential teaching) of Lotus Sutra.

Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo all attained Buddhahood by realizing the Mystic Law. They appeared among people to prepare the way for Nichiren Daishonin. The Law which they sought for their entire lives is embodied in the Gohonzon. We embrace the Daishonin's philosophy --- the supreme philosophy of life. Let us renew our determination to carry out our great mission in this world.

Entity and Function

The two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, are merely functions of the true Buddha, while Myoho-enge-kyo actually is the true Buddha. The sutra explains this as "the Tathagata's secret and his mystic power." The "secret" refers to the entity of the Buddha's three properties and the "mystic power" to their functions. The entity is the true Buddha and the function, a provisional Buddha.

The Daishonin says here that Myoho-enge-kyo or Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the eternal and indestructible basis of the Buddha's life, and that Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas are functions of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The relationship between entity and function appears clearly in the Gohonzon. Written in the center of the Gohonzon is "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nichiren," while Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas are inscribed on the left and right sides. In other words, the two Buddhas are situated in positions to express the intrinsic functions of the Mystic Law. Not only Shakyamuni and Taho but all other Buddhas in the universe as well are functions of the Mystic Law. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is Nichiren Daishonin's life itself; therefore, the Daishonin can move all other Buddhas in the universe. By embracing the Gohonzon we too can stir these Buddhas and bodhisattvas at our command. What a great ocean of life we can discover! When we really develop our powers of faith and practice, the life of the Daishonin wells up from our depths, just as stated in Nichikan Shonin's annotation of the Totaigi Sho (The Entity of the Mystic Law), "As the result of embracing and believing in the Mystic Law we can manifest ourselves as Nichiren Daishonin."

The difference between "true" and "provisional" is that the former means the actual self of our life, while the latter is the temporal reflection or image of that self. To explain in easier language, T'ien-t'ai compares the relationship between "true" and provisional to that between the moon in the sky and its reflection on the surface of a pond. The moon shining in the nocturnal sky is "true" and its reflection on the surface of a pond, "provisional."

The moon is of course reflected in many surfaces --- the sea, a pond or even a glass of water. Reflections appear in any smooth reflective surface. A movie screen is also a good surface for reflecting light. In the latter half, or essential teaching, of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni revealed that he had attained enlightenment in the distant past. When the Buddha taught he had attained enlightenment long ago in gohyaku-jintengo, he revealed his true identity, but in all the earlier teachings when he taught that his enlightenment came for the first time in India, he was only revealing the image projected on the screen of ancient Indian society. The same can be said of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Their true identity is the original Buddha. Therefore, it follows that they are images which the original Buddha projected on the screen of the

ceremony of the Lotus Sutra. In addition, Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas are also images which Nam-myoho-rence-kyo or the entity of the original Buddha projected on the screen of the ceremony in the air.

Let us apply this to our life. We project our various images on the screens of society: the image of father on the screen of the family; a director on the screen of the company; a block chief on the screen of the Soka Gakkai organization; a Japanese on the screen of international society; and a human being on the screen of the biological world. When these screens shake, their images also shake. Some images disappear, even though the screens themselves do not change. The image as a student disappears with graduation. Students sometimes seem to want to erase their images on the screen of school as soon as possible and project a new image on the screen of society, but find themselves in a bind because they cannot graduate.

What then is the "true" and unchangeable thing that produces and transcends these ever-changing images? It is the eternal source, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. People tend to regard their fleeting images projected on various screens of endeavor as being "true" and constant, and herein lies the main source of human misery. Each of us is a human being, which is an image relatively close to this "true" and eternal thing. As long as we live and breathe, this should not be forgotten, but even life as a human being is a "provisional" existence which is eventually subject to death. That is why Buddhism always stresses the continual flux of human existence --- birth, old age, sickness and death --- piercing into the eternal unchanging entity that goes beyond life and death. Buddhism arrived at the truth that Nam-myoho-rence-kyo itself is eternal and indestructible, the true entity of our life and all things in the universe. Thus the Daishonin declares that Myoho-rence-kyo is the true Buddha and that Shakyamuni and Taho are its function, or provisional Buddhas.

The Daishonin next cites a passage in the Juryo chapter, "the Tathagata's secret and his mystic power." He defines the Tathagata's secret as the entity of the three properties of life, or the true Buddha. Furthermore, he defines "the Tathagata's mystic power" as the function, or a provisional Buddha. T'ien-t'ai defines the "secret" as the truth that the Buddha's life manifests the three enlightened properties, and that these are always inherent in the Buddha's life. The Daishonin used the term "the Buddha's three properties" in that sense. On the deepest level, "the Tathagata" in the sutra is the Buddha of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, and the word "secret" is not just something that the Buddha keeps to himself. Here, as in On the Three Great Secret Laws, it indicates the Dai-Gohonzon which is hidden in the depths of the Juryo chapter. The "mystic power" is the function of the Gohonzon --- the Buddha of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. T'ien-t'ai defines the "mystic power" as the function of the entity of the three properties of life. He says in the Hokke Mongu (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), "Jinzu shi riki (the mystic power) indicates the function of the three properties of life. Jin indicates the unchangeable law in the universe and corresponds to hoshin or the body of the Law. Zu indicates the boundless mystic wisdom or hoshin, the body of wisdom. Riki means unlimited power or ojin, the physical body." Jinzu shi riki then indicates the function of all three properties of life.

Man Is the True Buddha

The common mortal is the entity of the three properties, or the true Buddha. The Buddha is the function of the three properties, or a provisional Buddha. Shakyamuni is thought to have possessed the three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent for the sake of us common mortals, but on the contrary, it is the common mortal who endowed him with the three virtues.

The entity of life and its environment in the Ten Worlds is Myoho-rence-kyo, which in turn is "the true Buddha." The common mortal in the Ten Worlds of life is therefore "the true Buddha." In contrast, all the Buddhas mentioned in the sutras, including Shakyamuni, are "provisional Buddhas." This conclusion is derived from the principle of "the true entity of all phenomena" and the other teachings of the Lotus Sutra. No one but Nichiren Daishonin, however, so clearly declared that it is the common mortal who is the true Buddha. Because of this his teaching possesses the never-fading power to benefit mankind in the Latter Day, for ten thousand years and on into eternity.

"The common mortal" specifically refers to Nichiren Daishonin as the original Buddha. This is endorsed by the Ongi Kuden, which states, "The Buddha in the Latter Day is the common

mortal, the common priest.... He is called a Buddha, and he is called a common priest." In more general terms, "the common mortal" refers to each one of us. Nichiren Daishonin taught us that the common mortal is the greatest and most valuable existence by his own appearance and behavior as a common mortal.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, from beginning to end, focuses on man. In explaining the true purpose of the Buddha's advent as described in the Hoben chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Ongi Kuden quotes the following passage from T'ien-t'ai's Hokke Mongu: "People develop the seeking spirit to aspire to the Buddha's advent; that is the inherent cause [for the Buddha's advent]. The Buddha perceives that spirit and responds to it; that is the external cause." Thus it is clear that because there were suffering people the Daishonin came into the world. The power and blessings of the Gohonzon are all intended for the benefit of common mortals. The Daishonin's Buddhism, furthermore, is propagated through the efforts of courageous people fighting through storms of life.

All religions in the past regarded God or Buddha as a sacred, superhuman being. Man's dignity was recognized only as long as he was enveloped in God's grace or the Buddha's mercy. Therefore, most of these religions considered those who directly served God or Buddha to be a privileged class, and regarded laymen --- the general public --- as contemptible. People in power, however, were considered to have God's special grace, which justified, for example, the so-called divine right of kings. Under this theory different classes of people were accorded different degrees of religious authority, and this eventually became a fixed system.

In every society, therefore, democratization could only be accomplished by denying the secular authority of religious institutions and rendering them politically powerless. However, the weakening of religious bodies and loss of faith in some established sects only upset the balance of the human spirit and rotted the bonds of human trust. As it is voices are rising, calling for the people to regain spiritual richness in life. However, it is clear that a revival of past religions will not answer current needs. I believe Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism --- the religion which teaches that man himself is the entity of the Mystic Law and as such is innately endowed with ultimate sanctity --- can provide a clear-cut answer to the questions man asks himself.

The Bible states that God created man. But how many heretical souls have cried that man created God? Nichiren Daishonin declared, "Shakyamuni is thought to have possessed the three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent for the sake of us common mortals, but on the contrary, it is the common mortal who endowed him with the three virtues." Isn't this declaration much more to the point than the remark, "man created God" ? Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a humanistic religion that clearly stands out from such theistic religions. Whereas many religions lapsed to hierarchies, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism binds all people together in equality. It is therefore the very religion that man has been seeking for his spiritual renaissance.

T'ien-t'ai explains the Tathagata as follows: "Nyorai is the title of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three existences, of the two Buddhas and the three Buddhas, and of all the Buddhas, true and provisional."

Here the "true Buddha" is the common mortal, whereas "provisional Buddhas" means the Buddha. Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction between a Buddha and a common mortal, in that a common mortal is deluded while a Buddha is enlightened. The common mortal fails to realize that he himself possesses both the entity and the function of the Buddha's three properties.

Here the Daishonin quotes a passage from T'ien-t'ai's Hokke Mongu which interprets nyorai (tathagata) of Nyorai-juryo-hon, the title of the sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. "The two Buddhas" indicate a Buddha in his true and original state and a Buddha in a form he assumes when he comes into the world to save the people. "The three Buddhas" are the Buddha of hosshin (the essential property of his life), the Buddha of hoshin (the spiritual property of his life), and the Buddha of ojin (the physical property of his life).

Nyorai indicates Buddha. Philosophically, nyorai means to "appear from the truth moment by moment." The state of life at each passing moment is called either nyorai, tathagata, or Buddha. Tathagata is neither a statue nor a picture of the Buddha. Life that is fully active, the

rhythm of cosmic life condensed into a single entity-this is tathagata. The Tathagata of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the Buddha who, at each and every moment, brings forth the life of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the life that has existed since time without beginning.

Tathagata is the common title of all Buddhas; it is not limited to Shakyamuni alone. The sutras mention a number of Buddhas, such as Kasho Buddha and Ashuku Buddha. But specifically it indicates jiyuyushin nyorai of kuon ganjo, the tathagata who embodies the fundamental law by which all Buddhas attain enlightenment.

The Daishonin quoted T'ien-t'ai's interpretation principally in order to explain the difference between the true Buddha and a provisional Buddha. As the passage says, the common mortal is the true Buddha, whereas the Buddhas mentioned in the scriptures are nothing but provisional Buddhas. The meaning of this line is self-explanatory when we consider the true Buddha and a provisional Buddha in the light of the Juryo chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

The Juryo chapter dispels the belief that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India, and reveals that in reality he had become a Buddha much earlier --- in the remote past called gohyaku-jintengo. As you know, this Buddha of gohyaku-jintengo is considered "the true Buddha" in the Juryo chapter. This means that Shakyamuni had been a Buddha since long before he was born in India and attained enlightenment at the age of thirty. He was a Buddha even while he lived as a common mortal. It follows, therefore, that the Buddhahood he attained when he was thirty was tentative or "provisional" Buddhahood. Furthermore, according to the deepest meaning of the Juryo chapter, even a Buddha who attained enlightenment in gohyaku-jintengo is a provisional Buddha.

In the section "On Chapter Sixteen, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nyorai-juryo-hon," the Ongi Kuden states: "All in all, the deepest significance of the Juryo chapter does not lie in subjugating delusions one by one and attaining enlightenment. You should realize that this significance is to gain enlightenment as you are, remaining as the entity of a common mortal. What is the behavior of the Buddha enlightened in the three properties of life? It is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo." As this teaching says, the true Buddha is the one who, without changing his entity as a common mortal, manifests himself as the Tathagata of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. That is why the Daishonin says, "The 'true Buddha' is the common mortal, whereas 'provisional Buddhas' means the Buddha."

Both the Buddha and man are common mortals, but there is a distinct difference. It lies in whether one is enlightened or deluded. As the Goshu states, "One who is enlightened is a Buddha; one who is deluded is a common mortal." A common mortal who is enlightened is a Buddha; a common mortal who is deluded is a human. Nichiren Daishonin is enlightened to the truth that he himself is the entity of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. We are common mortals still bound by delusion. What is it that can transform delusion into enlightenment? It is faith, and faith alone.

The sentence, "the common mortal fails to realize that he himself possesses both the entity and the function of the Buddha's three properties," relates to the earlier statement, "The entity is the true Buddha and the function, a provisional Buddha. The common mortal is the entity of the three properties, or the true Buddha. The Buddha is the function of the three properties, or a provisional Buddha." A deluded common mortal does not realize that he himself is a true Buddha; he believes only that the Buddhas mentioned in the scriptures are true Buddhas. Therefore, he understands neither that it is the common mortal who is the entity and the true Buddha, nor that a Buddha is the function, a provisional Buddha. He cannot understand, therefore, that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the entity and that Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas are the function.

Let me briefly explain the relation between entity and function. The entity is always accompanied by its function, and the function manifests itself wherever and whenever there is an entity.

"Entity," as the term is used in Buddhism, does not exist by itself. It is always accompanied by its "function." The two are impossible to separate. For instance, we can perceive the "entity" of General Director Hiroshi Hojo only in his behavior; all of his behavior is the function of his "entity."

The "entity" of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is accompanied by the "function" of all phenomena. Therefore, when we manifest the life of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in ourselves, we will be able to make everything in the universe function for our benefit. In the phrase, "the true entity of all phenomena," "the true entity" indicates the entity and "all phenomena" the function.

All Are Manifestations of Myoho-renge-kyo

"All phenomena" in the sutra refers to the Ten Worlds, and the "true entity" is what permeates the Ten Worlds. Reality is another expression for Myoho-renge-kyo; hence Myoho-renge-kyo is manifest in all phenomena.

The entity of a common mortal is Myoho-renge-kyo. Miao-lo uses the words "all phenomena" to indicate the Ten Worlds and explains that all phenomena --- all life and its environment in the Ten Worlds --- are themselves the true entity. The true entity is another expression for Myoho-renge-kyo. It follows, therefore, that all life and its environment in any of the Ten Worlds is without exception the manifestation of Myoho-renge-kyo.

Hell appears hellish; that is the reality of Hell. When Hunger emerges, the reality of Hell is no longer present. A Buddha exhibits the reality of a Buddha, and a common mortal, that of a common mortal. All phenomena are themselves manifestations of Myoho-renge-kyo. This is the meaning of "all phenomena reveal the true entity."

The entity of Myoho-renge-kyo is found in all phenomena, whether of Hell, Hunger, a common mortal or a Buddha. This is what "the true entity of all phenomena" signifies. This teaching refutes all the views previously held in Buddhism. According to conventional Buddhist thought, only Buddhas, bodhisattvas and those in the two vehicles (Learning and Realization) were considered respectable. All other people, especially those in Hell, Hunger and Animality, were regarded as despicable and detestable. This is exactly why the Japanese words meaning Hunger and Animality have been used to insult and abuse others. The conventional Buddhist concepts exerted an even more harmful influence upon society: they gave rise to the cruel tendency to despise and shun people who are forced to live in poverty and suffering.

The principle of "the true entity of all phenomena" completely demolished such concepts. It declared that all people, whether in the world of Hell, Hunger or Animality, are just as much entities of the Mystic Law as are Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and that all are equally worthy of respect. Furthermore, in Buddhist teaching life in the nine worlds can transform itself into the highest of life-states, Buddhahood. In the Gohonzon all beings in the nine worlds are bathed in the brilliant light of the Mystic Law and manifest their intrinsic enlightened nature. When our lives become one and in perfect harmony with the Gohonzon, even Hell and Hunger will come to reveal their inherent Buddhahood. We will therefore be able to direct our lives in the nine worlds toward any goal we wish. Of course we will have sorrows, agonies and desires, but all these will be as but the waves rising and falling on the surface of the great sea of Buddhahood; they will work to give spice to the highest state of life man can live. The principle of "the true entity of all phenomena" can only be put into action through the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha who established the Gohonzon.

The Ultimate Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

T'ien-t'ai states, "The profound principle of 'true entity' is the original law of Myoho-renge-kyo," thus identifying the phrase "true entity" with the theoretical teaching and "the original law of Myoho-renge-kyo" with the essential teaching. You should ponder this passage deep in your heart.

What is the substance of the "true entity" as expounded in the Hoben chapter, one of the theoretical teachings? The Daishonin teaches us that it is Myoho-renge-kyo itself, and corroborates this with T'ien-t'ai's interpretation of the Lotus Sutra. He says, "You should ponder this passage deep in your heart," because it is a profound teaching that concerns the fundamental principle of the Lotus Sutra. T'ien-t'ai does not make his statement explicit enough, but from the Daishonin's perspective, the true entity ultimately means Nam-myoho-renge-kyo concealed in the depths of the Jury chapter.

Now let us look over the whole system of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra aims at clarifying the Law to which all Buddhas are enlightened and which is the key to all people attaining Buddhahood. It is the Law suggested by the phrase, "The wisdom of all Buddhas is infinitely

profound and immeasurable," in the beginning of the Hohen chapter. The description of the Law is revealed in the same chapter as the true entity of all phenomena and the Ten Factors of Life. Shariputra, one of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples who was reputed to have the highest wisdom, was immediately able to attain enlightenment when he heard this teaching about the true entity of all phenomena. The other major disciples, who understood only some or little of what they were taught, also attained enlightenment one after another when, as stated in the chapters that followed, they heard the parables or learned of their past relationship with Shakyamuni.

When Shakyamuni finished preaching for his disciples, he began to expound the Hosshi (tenth), Hoto (eleventh) and other chapters. In these chapters, he first asks if there are any who are willing to propagate Myoho-enge-kyo after his death. The bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching respond to his call and volunteer for the task. But Shakyamuni turns them down, summons the Bodhisattvas of the Earth from underground and entrusts them with the propagation of the Law. It is evident from the sentences in the Hosshi chapter and those which follow that Shakyamuni was selecting those who would propagate the Law after his death. But that is not all; within those sentences is revealed the Law itself --- the Law to be propagated after Shakyamuni's passing. This is the original law of Myoho-enge-kyo.

Shakyamuni's disciples received the seed of Buddhahood and formed a relationship with him in the past. They were therefore able to understand that the seed actually existed in them when, in the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra, they heard Shakyamuni's preaching of the true entity of all phenomena, the parable of the three carts and the burning mansion, or of the relationship they had formed with him in the distant past called sanzen-jintengo.

Each of them could be likened to a man who has gotten lost on a road he has walked before because his memory has grown dim. He remembers most of the way except the corner where he should turn. If someone tells him where to turn, he can get to his destination without any trouble. Thus Shariputra immediately attained enlightenment when he heard the teaching of the true entity of all phenomena.

On the other hand, the people in the ages after Shakyamuni's demise, especially those in the Latter Day, have neither received the seed of Buddhahood nor formed a relationship with him in the past. They are like travelers who find themselves on a road they have never traveled before. Even if someone tells them where to turn, they will be lost because they don't know what their destination is. They need to be directed to the destination itself. This destination is the original law of Myoho-enge-kyo.

The Hoto chapter and the chapters that follow describe the ceremony in the air. First, the Treasure Tower appears. Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas seat themselves side by side in the tower. All the Buddhas in the universe then come and assemble around the two. Next, the bodhisattvas who were taught by the original Buddha emerge from underground. The ceremony in the air, given its finishing touches in the Juryo chapter, depicts the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo. However, all twenty-eight chapters of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra, even the essential teaching in the latter half, are only a map showing the road to the original law of Myoho-enge-kyo. It is Nichiren Daishonin who gave concrete form to the original Mystic Law that the benighted common mortals in the Latter Day would need to embrace.

So "the true entity of all phenomena" takes on different meaning according to how it is seen: in light of the theoretical teaching, the essential teaching, or Nichiren Daishonin's standpoint. From the Daishonin's standpoint, the true entity of all phenomena is the Gohonzon itself. Therefore, when we dedicate ourselves heart and soul to the Gohonzon, the life of the Mystic Law will well up within us. The principle of the true entity of all phenomena will manifest itself as our happiness and human revolution in a process that continually strengthens our lives.

Inscribe the Gohonzon

Although not worthy of the honor, Nichiren was nevertheless the first to spread the Mystic Law entrusted to Bodhisattva Jogyo for propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. Nichiren was also the first to inscribe the Gohonzon, which is the embodiment of the Buddha from the remote past as revealed in the Juryo chapter of the essential teaching, of Taho Buddha who appeared when the Hoto chapter of the theoretical teaching was preached, and the Bodhisattvas of the

Earth who emerged with the Yujutsu chapter. No matter how people may hate Nichiren, they cannot possibly alter the fact of his enlightenment.

The core of this passage is that Nichiren Daishonin spread faith in the daimoku and the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which are to be propagated in the Latter Day. According to the Lotus Sutra, this task was entrusted to BodhisattvaJogyo, leader of the Buddha's original disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. However, since the Daishonin was a common priest, he dared not state that he was the incarnation of Jogyo. Instead, he used the phrases "Nichiren was . . . the first to spread. . ." and "[he] was also the first to inscribe . . ." The meaning of this passage becomes clear when we compare it with the previous statement that T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo could neither spread the daimoku nor establish the Gohonzon because they were not Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Although the Daishonin qualified his statement with the phrase, "Nichiren was the first. . .," he could have neither spread the daimoku nor inscribed the Gohonzon if he had not been eligible. With respect to the Lotus Sutra, therefore, the Daishonin is the incarnation of Jogyo, leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who appeared in the Latter Day and established the supreme Buddhism. But this still is not the true identity of Nichiren Daishonin. To know his true identity, we must delve into the Daishonin's inscription of the Gohonzon, which the above passage says "is the embodiment of the Buddha from the remote past." If he embodies the Buddhahood attained by Shakyamuni and Taho as well as Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the life of the original Buddha from time without beginning, he must possess that Buddhahood within himself. In fact, he himself states in the Goshō, "I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart." Since the Law he taught was embodied in his own existence, Nichiren Daishonin was able to inscribe the Gohonzon, the crystallization of the Person and the Law in a single entity. This is, as the passage says, "his enlightenment." "No matter how people may hate Nichiren, they cannot possibly alter the fact of his enlightenment." This means that no matter how people hated and persecuted the Daishonin, they could in no way affect his enlightenment as the Buddha in the Latter Day of the Law.

To have exiled Nichiren to this remote island is therefore a sin that can never be expiated, even with the passing of countless aeons. A passage from the Hiyu chapter reads, "Not even an aeon would be time enough to explain the full gravity of this sin." On the other hand, not even the wisdom of the Buddha can fathom the blessings one will obtain by giving alms to Nichiren and by becoming his disciple. The Yakuo chapter reads, "Not even with the Buddha's wisdom can one measure these benefits."

Here the Daishonin contrasts the terrible effects of hating or persecuting him with the blessings one obtains by giving him support and becoming his disciple. The passage brings out his conviction that he is the original Buddha and the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. "A passage from the Hiyu chapter" refers to the sentence which reads, "If a person slanders this sutra, not even an aeon would be time enough to explain the full gravity of this sin." The passage in the Yakuo chapter describing the immeasurable benefits reads, "Suppose a person has had the opportunity to hear this sutra, and copies it himself or lets others copy it. The benefits he thus obtains cannot be measured even with the Buddha's wisdom."

The Envoy of the Buddha

Nichiren alone began to carry out the task of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. He may even be one of them. If Nichiren should be a Bodhisattva of the Earth, then so must his disciples. The Hosshi chapter states, "If there is someone, whether man or woman, who secretly teaches to one person even a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra, let it be known that he is the envoy of the Buddha, sent to carry out the Buddha's work." Who else but us can this possibly refer to?

Nichiren Daishonin says that if he is indeed to be included among the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, then, according to the principle of the oneness of master and disciple, his disciples must certainly be Bodhisattvas of the Earth. A Bodhisattva of the Earth does not act only when he is told to. He bases his life entirely on the Mystic Law which is immanent in cosmic life. Therefore, just as grass or a tree grows of itself from the earth, so does he, of his own accord, chant daimoku and contribute toward the well-being of his society and peace in the world.

The Daishonin cites a passage from the Hosshi chapter in order to assure his disciples that they are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Quoted in full, it reads, "Suppose there be a man or

woman of devout faith after my passing, who secretly teaches to one person even a single phrase of the Lotus Sutra. Let it be known that he or she is the envoy of the Buddha, sent to carry out the Buddha's work. All the more so are those who teach the sutra widely among the people."

As I have already said, Shakyamuni preached the Hosshi chapter to exhort the assembly to propagate the Lotus Sutra after his demise. The above passage is the very one which carries these words of encouragement. Bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching responded to Shakyamuni's call. But he declined their offer, and instead entrusted the Bodhisattvas of the Earth with the propagation of the Lotus Sutra because he knew that only they were able to shoulder the task. Therefore, according to the Hosshi chapter, those now in the Latter Day who teach the Mystic Law and fight for kosen-rufu are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The Daishonin says that this is exactly what his disciples are doing.

To go a step further, the phrase, "he is the envoy of the Buddha, sent to carry out the Buddha's work," implies that he is equal to the Buddha, that he himself is the Buddha from time without beginning. Let me explain why this is so. The word "envoy," as it is used in a general sense, means a person who speaks for and acts in the same capacity as his superior. Suppose two countries want to conclude a peace treaty between them. Each country sends an envoy. When the two parties have reached agreement and the treaty is drawn, the envoys sign it. Although the emissaries write their own personal signatures, they represent the collective will of the people in each nation.

The same is true with Buddhism. One who preaches and propagates the Mystic Law is the envoy of the Buddha; he acts in the capacity of the Buddha. For this reason, in the Lotus Sutra, only the original disciples of the Buddha were entrusted with the task of spreading the Mystic Law. Conversely, those who spread the Mystic Law in the Latter Day --- or those who do shakubuku today --- are the disciples of the original Buddha from time without beginning. The former president Josei Toda proclaimed himself "the teacher of shakubuku in the Latter Day" and defined the Soka Gakkai as being the group of people devoted to shakubuku. This is why the Head Temple bestowed upon the Soka Gakkai the Gohonzon on which is inscribed the prayer, "May the organization attain the supreme goal of kosen-rufu through the merciful practice of shakubuku," to be permanently enshrined in our headquarters. I entreat you to always maintain the proud tradition and lofty spirit of the Soka Gakkai and carry on your mission throughout your life as the original disciples of the Buddha.

The phrase, "secretly teaches to one person," does not in any way mean that we should teach in a surreptitious way. It is simply an illustration by way of one extreme case. Needless to say, the greatest and most desirable practice consists in teaching true Buddhism widely among the masses of people. This is evident from the passage in the Hosshi chapter which I quoted. There may be times when the age or circumstances do not permit us to openly propagate the Law. No matter what, however, we should always maintain the spirit of shakubuku and continue to spread the Law to the limits of our capacities. Only then can we truly be called Bodhisattvas of the Earth --- legitimate disciples of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. I sincerely hope you will understand and make this part of your lives.

The Highest Praise for the Votaries

When one is praised highly by others, he feels there is no hardship he cannot bear. Such is the courage which springs from words of praise. The votary born in the Latter Day of the Law who propagates the Lotus Sutra will encounter the three powerful enemies, (note) who will cause him to be exiled and even sentence him to death. Yet Shakyamuni Buddha will enfold in his robe of mercy those who nonetheless persevere in propagating. All gods will make them offerings, support them with their shoulders and carry them on their backs. They possess supreme good fortune and qualify as leaders of all mankind. Thus extolled by Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha and all of the other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the seven ranks of heavenly gods and five ranks of earthly gods, Kishimojin and her ten daughters, the Four Heavenly Kings, Bonten, Taishaku, King Enma, the gods of the waters and winds, the gods of the seas and mountains, Dainichi Buddha, Bodhisattvas Fugen and Monju and the gods of the sun and the moon, Nichiren has been able to endure countless harsh trials. When praised, one does not consider his personal risk, and when criticized, he can recklessly cause his own ruin. Such is the way of common mortals.

(note)[Three types of people described in the Kanji (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra who will persecute those who propagate the sutra in the evil age after the Buddha's death. They are: 1) lay people ignorant of Buddhism who denounce and persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra; 2) arrogant and cunning priests who slander them; and 3) influential figures who induce those in power to exile or execute them.]

As a common mortal, Nichiren Daishonin was exiled and even sentenced to death. Still, against all odds, he valiantly continued to spread the Law. Why? Here he explains the reason. It was because, in the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Taho, all the other Buddhas, and all bodhisattvas and heavenly gods give only the highest praise to those who propagate the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. In short, the Daishonin was entirely committed to the Lotus Sutra.

"Shakyamuni Buddha will enfold in his robe of mercy those who . . ." means that he will entitle the votaries of the Lotus Sutra to be his true disciples. He will recognize them as his own children and embrace them with his unbounded mercy. "All gods will make them offerings, support them with their shoulders and carry them on their backs" signifies favorable changes in the votaries' surroundings. To become 'the future leaders of mankind' means that they will increase in wisdom and become perceptive, reliable leaders of the people in all areas of society. These suggest the benefits which accrue from doing shakubuku.

Then comes the phrase, "Thus extolled by Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha . . ." From the Buddhist standpoint, this means that one who embraces the Mystic Law can set everything in motion --- be it the universe, natural surroundings, or people --- and that rhythm will work to protect him. To be praised "by Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha and all of the other Buddhas" denotes that all the Buddhas in the entire universe will protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra. How reassuring! Wherever he goes, a bright world of human revolution will always unfold before him, where everything is tuned to the rhythm of the mystic Law.

Specifically, "Shakyamuni Buddha" indicates the enlightened wisdom that wells up in the votary's life. "Taho Buddha" signifies the actual verification of faith by the blessings the votary receives in the objective world, that is, in his life and environment. "All of the other Buddhas" denotes the Buddhahood within all the people he finds around him. To be praised by bodhisattvas means that everything in nature and society will work in such a way as to protect him. Not only will he himself be able to fully manifest the Bodhisattva power inherent in him -- - he power to save and give happiness to other people --- but the leaders of society, who base their actions on mercy, will also support him and be willing to work for him. The seven ranks of heavenly gods and five ranks of earthly gods (the latter include the Sun Goddess, Tensho Daijin) are deities of Japan who are said to have existed since before the time of the first emperor. All of these deities in heaven and on earth will function as Buddhist gods, just as an old saying goes, Heaven knows, earth knows, man knows."

I will touch only briefly on Kishimojin and her ten daughters, since they are quite well known. They were vicious demons before meeting the Buddha, but in the Lotus Sutra they rank among those creatures who protect the votary. They used to feed on the lives of people; now they devour the evil in human lives and promote good. For those who embrace the Mystic Law, they appear as functions to remove causes for unhappiness. The Four Heavenly Kings, Bonten, Taishaku and King Enma symbolize the functions that maintain order in the universe, nature and society. With respect to society, for instance, they denote its leaders, and the power to act for social good.

The gods of the waters, winds, seas and mountains are blessings and functions of nature. Waters and winds have their respective uses and powers. Mountains and seas have lives of their own. All of them are manifestations of the life of the Mystic Law. Therefore, they always work to protect those who practice the Mystic Law. No matter how strong the winds of difficulty or how high the waves of hardship, believers in true Buddhism are invariably protected, as countless experiences testify.

Dainichi is one of the Buddhas present in the ceremony of the Lotus Sutra. He represents one aspect of life force. Fugen refers to learning and Monju, wisdom. The votary of the Lotus Sutra will be enveloped in the light of learning and wisdom. The god of the sun signifies the sun's energy, which nurtures all living things and thereby provides human beings with their glowing life force. The god of the moon symbolizes all that is serene. Casting its soft light, it brings

calmness and peace to the people's minds. Thus, all things in the universe, both animate and inanimate, help, protect, embrace and work for those who maintain faith in the Mystic Law.

Now to go on to the phrase, "Nichiren has been able to endure countless harsh trials." We live in the saha world, one in which people have to bear all sorts of suffering. It is such a harsh world that whenever we try to do anything at all, we face severe obstacles. Since we must endure anyway, let us do so for the propagation of the Mystic Law. There may be times when we will have to carry out that task even at the cost of our lives. However, when we endure for the sake of the Mystic Law, the Buddhas and Buddhist gods will never fail to come and protect us. This is the Daishonin's conviction that accrued from his enlightenment.

The phrase, "When praised.... Such is the way of common mortals," is an insightful thrust into human psychology. They tend to sacrifice themselves when they are praised as well as when they are slandered. In the former, they gladly take on pain. But if they are condemned or criticized or scorned, they often do something foolish and reckless, not knowing that it will thereby bring about their own ruin.

That phrase teaches us a good lesson we must not forget. In our struggle for kosen-rufu, it is important that we praise other members for their efforts and achievements. Encouragement will make them more courageous and build their confidence to continue their march forward.

As Disciples of Nichiren Daishonin

No matter what, maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple.

Beginning with this passage, the Gosho teaches the correct path of faith which the Daishonin's disciples should follow, and describes the practice --- exactly how to go about propagating the faith in the Gohonzon. First, the Daishonin tells us to make a firm resolution --- which is essential to our faith --- to "maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra" and "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple." This is as important a teaching as it is famous. It is not too much to say that this phrase, short as it is, contains the key to attaining Buddhahood as well as the fundamental spirit of the Soka Gakkai.

I can feel the Daishonin's outpouring mercy in the words "no matter what." From the infinite past we have lived and died countless times. We have gone through an endless cycle of life and death wrapped in fundamental ignorance, like persons groping their way through the darkness. Fortunately, in this lifetime we have been able to encounter the Mystic Law and meet the original Buddha from the remotest past. This is the rare opportunity to dispel the darkness that envelops the cycle of life and death and discover the true, eternally unchanging entity of life. It is the one chance in a lifetime to enable ourselves to live a happy and secure life, unfettered and undefiled by anything, strolling in a garden of blossoms in the brilliant sun of the Mystic Law and under the crystal-clear sky of eternal enlightenment. That is why the Daishonin emphasizes that "no matter what" situation we may face, in this lifetime we must always maintain our faith. The phrase "no matter what" is crucially important to all of you, and I want you never to forget it.

"Maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra" speaks of the practice of faith according to the Law, and "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple" speaks of faith in terms of the Person. Specifically, "a votary of the Lotus Sutra" denotes Nichiren Daishonin himself. Actually, the Lotus Sutra was preached exclusively for the Daishonin. He alone read with his entire being everything written in the Lotus Sutra. He is the only person who declared that Shakyamuni's Buddhism had become powerless in the Latter Day of the Law. He is the one who revealed his identity as the original Buddha, emitting a brilliant light and dispelling the darkness throughout the ten thousand years of the Latter Day and on into eternity. And the Gohonzon is the perfect embodiment of the life of the original Buddha. For us to embrace the Gohonzon throughout our life is to "maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra." Even understanding this much, we have still only scratched the surface. Our practice must always be underlined by the fundamental awareness that we are "Nichiren's disciples." Without that consciousness, we can never be "votaries of the Lotus Sutra" in the full sense.

Within our daily practice, to be conscious of being "Nichiren's disciples" is to live in the organization where people work together in itai doshin (perfect unity based on the same faith) to realize kosen-rufu. Indeed, the Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai is the organization directly

connected to the life of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and the group of people devoted to the attainment of kosen-rufu. The continually increasing opposition given us by the three powerful enemies and the three obstacles and the four devils (note) is proof that we are practicing exactly according to the Goshō. Therefore, to "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple" means to share the same destiny as the Soka Gakkai. Even if we embrace the Gohonzon, we won't be able to achieve anything without a fundamental awareness of being "Nichiren's disciples." The Daishonin clarifies this in the Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, one of the most important Goshō, as follows. "Without the lifeblood of faith, it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra." Practice derives from faith, as Nichū Shōnin, the ninth High Priest, says, "For one to practice is itself faith."

(note)[The three obstacles are: 1) bonno-shō: obstacles due to the three poisons --- greed, anger and stupidity; 2) go-shō: obstacles due to karma created by committing the five cardinal sins. Go-shō also means opposition from one's wife and children; 3) ho-shō: obstacles due to painful retribution caused by actions in the three evil paths --- Hell, Hunger and Animality. Ho-shō also refers to obstacles caused by one's superiors (sovereign, parents, etc.). The four devils are: 1) bonno-ma: obstructions arising from the three poisons; 2) on-ma: the obstacle of the five components --- form, perception, conception, volition and consciousness. These five components cause men many kinds of suffering; 3) shi-ma: the obstacle of death. The sufferings of death or the untimely death of other believers lead one to doubt Buddhism; and 4) tenji-ma: obstruction by the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, which occurs in the form of oppression by men of influence and power and is the most difficult of all to conquer.]

To "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple" is of utmost importance, for that alone is the direct way to attaining Buddhahood. People tend to think that attaining Buddhahood means to become some ideal personality set apart from ordinary people because they envision Buddhas as having the dignified appearance used to describe Shakyamuni. Nichiren Daishonin is a common mortal and at the same time the original Buddha. Herein lies the source of the supremacy of his teaching and the truth of Buddhism. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism sheds powerful light on human nature as it is manifested in ordinary people, so even we, common mortals, can relate to it. For us, attaining Buddhahood means to dedicate ourselves to the loftiest mission in the world. This itself is manifesting the Buddhahood inherent in our lives. Going one step further, when you have resolved to "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple" no matter what, you are already living in the state of Buddhahood.

There is a famous passage from the Goshō which states, "Winter never fails to turn into spring." Now we can see that it means that winter is spring. The phrase "never fails" has considerable significance. It is synonymous with "definite" or "certain." It also means "equal." The same is true of the passage from The Opening of the Eyes: "Even if the gods desert me and all kinds of difficulties befall me," and another in the same Goshō: "Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubt in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood."

In connection with the phrase, "forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple," let me explain why the faith on which the Soka Gakkai rests produces great benefits. Buddhism expounds the principle of four powers. These are the powers of faith, practice, the Buddha and the Law. In the Daishonin's Buddhism, the powers of the Buddha and the Law indicate those of the Gohonzon, since it embodies both the Person and the Law. Only the powers of faith and practice can bring forth the powers of the Buddha and the Law, the limitless powers of the Gohonzon. Our first president, Mr. Makiguchi, devoted himself to propagating the Law at the cost of his life. The second president, Mr. Toda, exerting magnificent powers of faith and practice, also dedicated his life to spreading true Buddhism. The blessings accumulated through their efforts are so great that now the powers of the Gohonzon brilliantly shine upon those who practice the faith of true Buddhism with the Soka Gakkai. Positive proof lies in the growth of the Soka Gakkai; it has developed into an organization global in scale that walks the Middle Way of Buddhism. It is a truly living religion, and for that, we cannot thank our first two presidents too much.

In the Same Mind

If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And since you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of the Buddha from the remotest past. The Yujutsu chapter states, "I have taught these people since the remotest past." There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku.

How are we to become of the same mind as Nichiren Daishonin? It is possible only when you "maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple," that is, when you practice his teaching with your thoughts, words and deeds. This phrase contains the principle of shitei funi, oneness of master and disciple. Funi is an abbreviation of nini funi, meaning "two and yet not two." Superficially, master and disciple are two; there is clearly a difference in standpoint. But, in the ultimate depths of life, they are one and the same.

The oneness of master and disciple constitutes the essence of the relationship between the two, as it is taught in Buddhism. Therefore, true disciples of Nichiren Daishonin are those who "are of the same mind as Nichiren," that is, those who make his mind their own and stake their life on accomplishing the noble mission he left unfinished. Those who give only lip service or pretend to be carrying out their responsibility will sooner or later be severely reprimanded by the Daishonin.

A passage from Reply to Lord Ueno reads, "Since Nichiren was born, he has not known a day or even a moment of ease. He has concentrated solely on spreading the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra." Those who concentrate on the mission for kosen-rufu and take responsibility for it just as did the Daishonin --- in other words, those who "are of the same mind as Nichiren" --- are undoubtedly Bodhisattvas of the Earth. And if we are definitely Bodhisattvas of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that we have been "disciples of the Buddha from the remotest past." Let me explain why. When Shakyamuni preached the Yujutsu chapter of the Lotus Sutra, innumerable Bodhisattvas of the Earth emerged from the ground. Bodhisattva Miroku, on behalf of the astonished assembly, asked the Buddha what and who they were. Thereupon the Buddha answered, "I have taught these people since the remotest past," meaning that Bodhisattvas of the Earth are disciples of the Buddha from the remotest past.

Superficially, "the Buddha" in the above passage indicates Shakyamuni, who expounded the essential teaching of the latter half of the Lotus Sutra. But actually the term denotes the Tathagata --- Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha in the Latter Day --- who embodies the fundamental law by which all Buddhas attain enlightenment. The passage therefore means that Nichiren Daishonin has taught us, Bodhisattvas of the Earth, ever since the remotest past.

We can interpret this to mean that those who are directly connected to the life of Nichiren Daishonin are Bodhisattvas of the Earth and, as such, his true disciples. It was the first president, Mr. Makiguchi, and our mentor, President Toda, who put that into practice in contemporary society. It was especially true for President Toda who, while in prison, attained the realization that he himself was a Bodhisattva of the Earth and a legitimate disciple of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. From that moment on the Soka Gakkai was destined to become an organization of Bodhisattvas of the Earth, a group of true disciples of Nichiren Daishonin. The Soka Gakkai has advanced and will continue to advance together with Mr. Toda, a leader of unparalleled humanity, as we make his spirit our own. How highly the original Buddha will extol those who belong to this great, vibrant organization! There is nothing that should worry you or cause you fear.

In the life philosophy, "the Buddha from the remotest past" signifies "the Buddha" inherent within our own lives- namely, the Tathagata of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. That the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are disciples of the Buddha from the remotest past indicates that our life, based on the Buddhahood of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo existing deep within us, manifests the functions of the Four Bodhisattvas-Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo and Anryugyo. I am convinced that if we

hold ourselves completely responsible for the great mission of kosen-rufu, rack our minds and drive our bodies to accomplish this mission, the life of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo will always give us the power to go on, to live our faith. The Daishonin states in the Totaigi Sho (The Entity of the Mystic Law), "In the final analysis, the entity of the Mystic Law of the Lotus is composed of the bodies, born of father and mother, of the disciples and followers of Nichiren who believe in the Lotus Sutra.... The Buddha of the Lotus, the entity of the Juryo chapter of the essential teaching, is the disciples and followers of Nichiren." He also explains to embrace the Gohonzon is to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, when we continue our mission exactly as the Daishonin directs, his life will surge forth from within us like a spring. I have always maintained this conviction --- even when I had no one to depend on and had to make decisions all by myself I am also firmly convinced that everything the Daishonin taught is perfectly true, as he stated it.

Now let us go on to the next line, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women." Those who spread Myoho-rence-kyo, or Nam-myoho-rence-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws, in this age in the Latter Day are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Those who spontaneously assume the responsibility of devoting themselves to propagating true Buddhism are all equal as they walk the greatest path of life, no matter what their lot or status. Those who "propagate" Buddhism are the most respectable of all, as the Fugen chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, "Most certainly you should arise and greet him from afar, and respect him in the same way as you do the Buddha." It is therefore one of the gravest sins to look down upon, censure or slander the Soka Gakkai, the religious organization devoted to spreading true Buddhism.

"There should be no discrimination . . . be they men or women." Men and women are completely equal in that they are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The social differences between male and female arise because of the different roles they play. Certainly there are occupations that are more suitable for men than for women, and vice versa, although it is not impossible to take on an occupation traditionally held by the other sex. Discrimination on the basis of sex cannot be justified, and salaries should be fixed according to the occupation and not the sex. However, there are inevitable differences between individuals. The real problem arises when such differences stem not from the type of work but simply on the basis of sex, which violates the human equality of both sexes. The attitudes fostered by religion are often influential in social attitudes toward the respective status of each sex.

Many religions, past and present, assume some kind of male dominance. For example, the Christian and Islamic gods are usually envisioned as male. In Buddhism only men were thought to be able to reach salvation by sects whose doctrines derived from the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. In contrast, Nichiren Daishonin declares that those who propagate the Mystic Law are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, be they men or women. Denying that any difference existed between men and women as far as their religious mission and capability were concerned, Nichiren Daishonin advocated genuine equality between the sexes. I want all of you to know that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism endorses the dignity of all human beings with this great democratic principle.

"Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku." Only Bodhisattvas of the Earth can chant daimoku. In the eternity of life, to be able to live as a human being is a rare and precious thing when we consider all the other innumerable forms of life. Buddhism defines human as the "correct vessel for the true teaching." Because we are human, we can follow the correct path to the higher states of life, and eventually enlightenment. The correct path is the religious faith which makes people truly human. But when we have no such source of humanity, we lack vitality, become rigid in our ideas and behavior, and become a weak and lifeless fossil. Truly religion is important, but it is very difficult to find a religion with the power to let us attain happiness. How fortunate we are to have faith in the true religion, and proud that we chant the daimoku!

"Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku," states the importance of continuous, wholehearted chanting, no matter what may happen. Only Nam-myoho-rence-kyo can save us from all trouble. The original mission of bodhisattvas is to fulfill their vows. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth vowed to propagate the Lotus Sutra to the world.

Therefore, we Bodhisattvas of the Earth should pray and chant daimoku mindful of our oath to work for kosen-rufu. Without this thought, we cannot chant daimoku as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

First Man to Stand Alone

Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn't this signify "emerging from the earth"? At the time of kosen-rufu, the entire Japanese nation will chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, as surely as an arrow aimed at the earth cannot miss the target.

In this well-known passage, Nichiren Daishonin teaches us the eternal formula for attaining kosen-rufu and reveals his conviction that kosen-rufu will be achieved. Nichiren Daishonin alone chanted daimoku first, and then he was followed by two, three and then a hundred. When he says, "Propagation will unfold this way in the future," he means that the process of achieving kosen-rufu will not change a bit in the future, either.

This passage has two important points. First, coupled with the preceding sentence, "Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku," it tells us that those who chant daimoku are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth. However, as the next sentence says, "Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo," there always has to be one who starts chanting and initiates the propagation of the Mystic Law with two, three and then a hundred coming to follow. The propagation of a religion is always started by one person awakened to his mission, followed by a great number of people who come in turn. The initiator is especially important, for his spirit will permeate those who appear later. In our case, the "one" was Nichiren Daishonin, our founder. But as the Daishonin stated, "Propagation will unfold this way in the future," the Soka Gakkai was established by one person, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president. He stood up alone and began propagation. Following Mr. Makiguchi, two, three and finally three thousand came to chant.

Immediately after World War II, Josei Toda, who succeeded him, came out of prison only to find the organization utterly defunct and lifeless in the ruins of war-torn Tokyo. He embarked on the propagation and was followed by two, three and a hundred people. Today, the Soka Gakkai has more than ten million members. We must never forget these founders, so that we may transmit their spirit correctly. That the propagation of daimoku starts from one person means that his spirit should be shared by all who come later.

The first person who stands alone is important, for he is the source of growth from then on. I want you to be firm in your conviction of this as an unchanging principle of kosen-rufu. Nichiren Daishonin tells us in his Letter to Niike: "The relation between cause and effect is like that between flower and fruit. When someone lights a fire in a great plain of dry grass, even a spark as faint as a firefly, the fire will burn one, two, ten, a hundred and thousand blades of grass, and finally reach all the trees and grass of the thousand-mile plain." A single match can cause a great conflagration. Each of us must be a match stick of faith.

The phrase, "chanting and teaching others," is also very important. "Chanting" is our own practice (jigyo), while "teaching others" is practice for others (keta). On the Three Great Secret Laws has the following statement: "Now in the Latter Day of the Law, the daimoku which Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages --- Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the practice both for oneself and for others." If we do not practice both for ourselves and for others, we are not truly following Nichiren Daishonin.

The Ongi Kuden also mentions the significance of jigyo and keta concerning "chanting and teaching others." It reads, "The whole Yujutsu chapter is devoted to the mission of bodhisattvas sent by the original Buddha. The practice of these bodhisattvas is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. That is what the sutra means by chanting. Teaching in the sutra means to lead all the people of Japan to the pure land of Eagle Peak." Only those who chant daimoku themselves and teach it to all the people around them are the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The Daishonin says, "Propagation will unfold this way in the future," meaning that the principle of chanting and teaching is basic to all ages.

Since you believe in the Gohonzon, the entity of Nichiren Daishonin's life, and live up to the spirit of Makiguchi and Toda, I hope you will stand alone courageously, chanting and

propagating daimoku wherever you are. To stand alone means to take total responsibility for kosen-rufu in the home, office or community. Buddhism and kosen-rufu lie in the places closest to you and in steady, continuous activities. We all have to be aware that we are here as envoys from the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

No matter what our circumstances, each of us has his own set of human relationships. He forms his own associations in his home, office and in his community with many types of people. In the light of the Mystic Law, these are the places to carry out his mission, and the people there are all fellow bodhisattvas. In that group of people you are the one and only person who can assume the responsibility and mission for kosen-rufu. To stand up alone to fight for kosen-rufu in your own place and circumstances is to "emerge from the earth."

In addition, the above passage declares that it is the common people who bear the burden of creating the worldwide tide of true Buddhism. Neither power nor authority will ever help to accelerate the movement for kosen-rufu. Never forget the Daishonin's words, "Propagation will unfold this way in the future." Kosen-rufu begins with a single person to reach all strata of people.

"At the time of kosen-rufu, the entire Japanese nation will chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, as surely as an arrow aimed at the earth cannot miss the target." Thus we see the Daishonin's conviction --- and prediction --- that all Japanese would come to chant the daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. "The entire Japanese nation" means everyone, housewives, students, educators, statesmen and all others. As all people study and practice Buddhism, create value in their lives and contribute to society, they will bring about a total revolution in society. This is what is meant by "the entire Japanese nation." However, although the Daishonin mentions only Japan, he does not imply that we should neglect propagation of the Mystic Law in other countries. It is clear from the words, "to achieve kosen-rufu throughout the world," which appear in many parts of the Lotus Sutra and the Goshu. It might be noted, however, that Nichiren Daishonin meant Japan as the land where the people's efforts are especially needed in the first stage of kosen-rufu. Japanese members should realize that kosen-rufu in Japan will be a great example to members throughout the world, and act accordingly.

Buddhism for One and All

But now you must build your reputation as a votary of the Lotus Sutra and devote yourself to it. Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha, seated in the Treasure Tower in the air, surrounded by all other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, nodded in agreement. What they decided upon was solely for the perpetuation of the True Law throughout the Latter Day. Taho Buddha had offered Shakyamuni Buddha a place beside him, and when they unfurled the banner of Myoho-renge-kyo, the two leaders of the entire multitude made their decision together. Could there have been anything false in their decision? Their ultimate purpose in meeting was to provide a way for all of us ordinary people to attain Buddhahood.

The most important goal of faith is to "build your reputation as a votary of the Lotus Sutra and devote yourself to it." We feel the infinite mercy of Nichiren Daishonin, who has experienced the truth of life, when he says, "But now you must build your reputation . . ." He was witness to terrible persecution, but with belief in the coming of kosen-rufu he urged his disciples to do what they should. One of the qualities that impresses me most, that is most compelling to me, is his compassion. I can really feel it when he admonishes us not to discard our faith because of shallow, distorted ideas about Buddhism, not to abandon it through ignorance.

I remember something similar that President Toda once said in an essay called "My Problem": "My problem is that too few people stand up strongly in faith. Some, just converted, do not really believe in the Dai-Gohonzon's power and they soon give up, abandoning their faith. How superficial and impatient people can be! They will go to their deathbeds without ever experiencing the clear, fresh outpouring of blessings from the Gohonzon in their lives. How pitiful they are ! Just to think of them is like putting a knife through myself."

A spaceship follows a fixed orbit when it goes to the moon. If it should veer from that orbit, it might never return to the earth. We, too, have an "orbit" of life in the universe. If we veer from our own orbit, we might end up wandering in utter darkness for aeons without end. It is a terrible feeling to sense defeat in the ups and downs of life. The Daishonin meant to say,

"You may have doubts and questions about the Mystic Law, but now trust what I say and devote yourself entirely to the Lotus Sutra."

To "build your reputation as a votary of the Lotus Sutra" is to live up to kosen-rufu with pride and honor. It is of course very important for each of us to be respected and trusted in whatever work we do. But when seen from the deeper level of eternal life, your efforts for and contribution to the goal of kosen-rufu are vastly more important. That is the only honor whose glory will never fade.

To "devote yourself to the Lotus Sutra" means to make the Gohonzon the sole foundation of your life --- the point to which you always return when you need courage and power. It means to keep up your daily practice of gongyo and activities for kosen-rufu to the best of your ability. No other life is stronger or more meaningful than a life devoted to the Lotus Sutra. If we devote ourselves to the Gohonzon, the Lotus Sutra for this day and age, we are rooting our lives in the law and power of the cosmos.

The following part, "Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha . . . ," explains why you have to "build your reputation as a votary of the Lotus Sutra and devote yourself to it." The ceremony and teaching of the Lotus Sutra was given for us, people of the Latter Day of the Law. The Buddhist philosophy exists entirely for our sake. If you do not realize that, Buddhism is just another powerless ideology.

In the first nine chapters of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni attempts to awaken his disciples' understanding to his enlightenment and he predicts that they will eventually attain Buddhahood. From the tenth (Hosshi) chapter the story is developed on the theme of who is to propagate the Lotus Sutra after Shakyamuni's passing. In the next (Hoto) chapter, the Treasure Tower appears, and the ceremony in the air unfolds. In the Hoto and Daiba (12th) chapters, Shakyamuni asks who is willing to propagate the Lotus Sutra after his passing. In the next two (Kanji and Anrakugyo) chapters the bodhisattvas taught by the Buddha respond to his call and pledge to propagate the sutra. However, in the Yujutsu (15th) chapter, Shakyamuni refuses them and at that moment the Bodhisattvas of the Earth appear. All the other bodhisattvas wondered who they are, and Bodhisattva Miroku, on their behalf, asks Shakyamuni about his relationship to them. In the Juryo (16th) chapter the Buddha reveals his aeons of life since gohyaku-jintengo to answer the question. In the Jinriki (21st) chapter Shakyamuni entrusts the mission of propagation to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and in the next (Zokurui) chapter, to all the other bodhisattvas present at the ceremony. Therefore, the ceremony in the air was held to pass to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth the mission of propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day. This is one interpretation of what is meant by "what they decided upon was solely for the perpetuation of the True Law throughout the Latter Day."

That is still only a literal interpretation of the sutra. For true Buddhism, the ceremony in the air reveals the true object of worship that is to be propagated in the Latter Day of the Law. The ceremony in the air presents a blueprint for the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws. "The banner of Myoho-rence-kyo" is the essential part of the Gohonzon.

This Gohonzon is the object of worship to be propagated in the Latter Day, for it can lead all people to enlightenment. That is the meaning of "the perpetuation of the True Law throughout the Latter Day" and "their ultimate purpose in meeting was to provide a way for all of us ordinary people to attain Buddhahood." This is saying that the Gohonzon we worship daily is the ultimate of the "eighty thousand doctrines," the Buddha's teachings. It is the entity that embodies the cosmic law of the Lotus Sutra. This passage reconfirms that we will attain Buddhahood if we carefully follow true Buddhism.

In the Gohonzon, "Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nichiren" written in the center is what is meant by "the banner of Myoho-rence-kyo," while Shakyamuni and Taho on both sides of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo are what represent "Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha, seated in the Treasure Tower in the air."

Ceremony in the Air

Although I was not at that ceremony, in looking at the sutra, this is crystal-clear. On the other hand, I may have been at the ceremony, but since I am a common mortal, it is beyond my power to know the past. There is no doubt, however, that in the present life I am the votary of

the Lotus Sutra, and that in the future I will therefore reach the seat of enlightenment. Judging the past from this point of view, I must have been at the ceremony in the air. There can be no discontinuity between past, present and future.

Here the Daishonin expresses his certain knowledge of attaining Buddhahood in the future because his behavior fulfills exactly the predictions of the Lotus Sutra. Since he is a common mortal, he has no personal memory of his past existences and cannot know from remembered experience whether he was among those who attended the ceremony in the air. But when he reads the sutra, he can clearly see everything that went on during the ceremony. No one can deny the fact that his actions in this lifetime are those of a Bodhisattva of the Earth, the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, he says, he "must have been at the ceremony in the air."

In the documents the Daishonin transmitted to Nikko Shonin, and a few other Goshos with equally profound meaning --- On the Three Great Secret Laws, for instance -- he definitely states that he was entrusted with the propagation of the Lotus Sutra during the ceremony in the air on Eagle Peak. Nowhere else is he so articulate; in all his other writings he refuses clearly to commit himself, and maintains a detached objectivity. What we were or what we did in a past existence is beyond our power to know, and any dogmatic assertion of what our past was or what it meant could lead nowhere except to misunderstanding on the part of our listeners. We must try to be objective, as the Daishonin does in this Goshu. First he compares the statements in the sutra with what he is actually doing, and based on that he then deduces what must have occurred in the past, just as historians and scientists do today.

"There can be no discontinuity between past, present and future." Past, present and future are closely interrelated. "If you want to know the cause you formed in the past, observe the effect in the present. If you want to know the effect in the future, observe the cause you are forming now." The Buddhist way is to judge the past as well as the future from what we see and experience around us right now. But to recognize the past and future significance in the facts of the present, we must train our minds to develop a clear grasp of the strict law of causality -- the law which determines the effect that a given cause will produce. Because of that ability, a Buddha is said to see through the three existences of life. It requires no mystic or supernatural powers, only the power of true reason. "Buddhism is reason." Remember that always and engrave it in your heart.

Here, let me say a few more words about the ceremony in the air. The ceremony begins in the Hoto (11th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and ends in the Zokurui (22nd) chapter. The Treasure Tower appears in the air above Eagle Peak, and Shakyamuni seats himself beside Taho Buddha before he begins to preach to the multitude of others also in the air during the ceremony. It is difficult to believe, however, that it actually took place and that it happened in India three thousand years ago. Imagine countless numbers of people airborne without the help of any mechanical device. It is too fantastic to be true. Furthermore, the Treasure Tower is described as having the dimensions 500X250X250 yujun. One yujun varies according to interpretation, but using a moderate estimate, 500 yujun would equal the radius of the earth!

Is everything in the Lotus Sutra no more than a figment of someone's imagination? No, and it would be a gross misunderstanding to think so. But how does one handle this kind of event as it appears in the sutra? First, we must understand that Shakyamuni could not preach the truth of his enlightenment other than by giving a graphic, almost surrealistic account of the ceremony in the air. Thus, when Mr. Josei Toda said that the solemn ceremony of the Lotus Sutra "took place in Shakyamuni's own life," he meant that Shakyamuni chose that way to portray his enlightenment.

The ceremony in the air conveys the substance of Shakyamuni's enlightenment. The ceremony is itself the entity of the Law to which the Buddha was enlightened. That entity was revealed by Shakyamuni as the ceremony in the air, by T'ien-t'ai as the doctrine of ichinen sanzen, and by Nichiren Daishonin as the Gohonzon through which he gave the suffering generations of the Latter Day a means to express their faith and attain enlightenment.

The Daishonin is speaking of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra in the above passage, so he says, "Judging the past from this point of view, I must have been at the ceremony in the air." But the real meaning of this paragraph is that by embracing the Gohonzon, doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, we actually participate in the ceremony in the air each day. Our life itself is the ceremony in the air --- the manifestation of kutai. Our physical and mental functions are

given the power to work by the ultimate entity of life in the state of ku. Ku is not nothingness, but it is the basis of life filled with infinite creativity and power. Again, eternal life is itself the ceremony in the air. The assembly at Eagle Peak took the form of the ceremony in the air only to reveal the eternity of life --- the life itself which continues to exist even after physical death.

Absolute Happiness in Adversity

Because I view things this way, I feel immeasurable delight even though I am now an exile. Joy as well as sorrow brings us to tears. Tears express our feeling for both blessings and misfortune.

Here is an expression of the absolute happiness experienced by Nichiren Daishonin after he had read the Lotus Sutra and absorbed it with his entire being. All of Nichiren Daishonin's writings are beautiful prose. Whenever we read them, our hearts are quickened by the voice of a merciful father, and fill with a stronger determination to move ahead for kosen-rufu. The sentences of the Gosho are fundamentally different from the flowery sentences of other writers that are based on mere theory. By reading the Gosho, we can come to see that the Gosho is a living testimony to the Daishonin's state of life --- it clearly depicts the inner being of the author. Confined to Sado Island and forced to endure conditions as bitter as one of the eight cold hells, Nichiren Daishonin reflected in his letters a state of life that encompassed the entire universe. No words are adequate to describe his great courage and mercy.

Countless people were exiled to Sado during the years between the Tempyo era (710-794) and the Edo era (1603-1867) . Their despair, indignation, pain and resignation seemed to have soaked into the very soil of the island. Who else but the Daishonin could have remained as serene as the clear autumn sky and as vast and mild as the sea under a warm spring sun, so that he was able to say that he felt "immeasurable delight" in such an oppressive, forbidding place? Philosophers and sages, forced to live in misery, invariably look to the heavens for solace against their frustration or give themselves up to unbearable grief. But Nichiren Daishonin lived through the deepest suffering with unmatched courage, leaving a singularly brilliant example of a personal revolution. Never forget this passage. Make it part of you so that your lives will reverberate with the sound of his voice.

"Because I view things this way" indicates that in the final analysis, the Lotus Sutra was expounded exclusively for Nichiren Daishonin. The magnificent ceremony in the air, Shakyamuni and Taho Buddhas seated side by side, Buddhas throughout the universe coming to attend the ceremony --- all was directed toward "perpetuating the True Law throughout the Latter Day" and "providing a way for all of us ordinary people to attain Buddhahood." The ceremony was held, and the Buddhas assembled, solely to entrust the True Law to Nichiren Daishonin --- in a superficial sense the incarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyo, but in a deeper sense the original Buddha since time without beginning. This, he says, is a thing wonderful beyond words. Tears are the expression of sublime, irrepressible feelings that surge forth against all efforts to contain them. They reveal a tremendous emotion that breaks through to the surface, regardless of circumstances.

"Even though I am now an exile" bespeaks the difficult and painful life of an exile on Sado Island. It is a relative state of unhappiness, which places the Daishonin in a situation with what would appear to be the least security and happiness. However, because of the absolute joy in his heart, his happiness is greater, more effluent and more solid than that of anyone else in the world. Absolute happiness lies on a completely different plane from relative happiness. It is not something that is attained through wealth, good health, and having people close by who care for you.

A person can establish absolute happiness, no matter how dogged he may be by conditions of relative unhappiness. It is also possible to have everything one needs for relative happiness, and still be nowhere near attaining absolute happiness. There are many around us who possess all the conditions for relative happiness and, although they do not believe in Buddhism, they look much happier than we. But they do not have absolute happiness. The happiness of Buddhahood was something completely different from theirs, contingent upon nothing in his objective surroundings and never to be eradicated.

Relative happiness, no matter how great, cannot become absolute. Even a man who is fabulously wealthy or famous throughout the world can tumble into utter poverty and ignominy overnight, and with the disappearance of his fortune, his happiness vanishes also. A man in the prime of life may be badly injured in an accident. Even if he does not meet with any such mishaps, he will suffer from disease and physical frailty as he gets older, as well as many other problems we must all encounter. For most people, happiness mistakenly depends on relative circumstances.

Relative happiness depends totally on the precarious relationship between a person and his environment. Suppose you are hungry, and someone takes you for a sumptuous meal. Your hunger is satisfied by something in your environment --- in this case, food --- and you feel a momentary sense of relative happiness in your life. In contrast, absolute happiness depends on the relationship between the mission or objective to which you have pledged yourself and the fact of whether or not you are actually carrying it out. This is a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that you can feel in the depths of your life. It is a state that is unaffected by constant change in your surroundings, a state that you firmly establish by your own will. It can, therefore, become absolute. But first, the mission or objective which you have taken on yourself must be in accord with a law that is as immutable and eternal as the universe itself. That is what makes absolute happiness possible.

A true state of absolute happiness can be established by linking yourself directly to the Mystic Law --- the Law that remains immutable since time without beginning --- and devoting yourself heart and soul to fulfilling the great wish for kosen-rufu. This is the objective which you have set for yourself. Please be firmly convinced of this, and take the greatest pride in your individual lives, as you follow the noblest course in life that any human being can travel.

"Thus I Heard"

The one thousand arhats shed tears in memory of the Buddha, and in tears Bodhisattva Monju chanted Myoho-renge-kyo. From among those one thousand arhats, the venerable Ananda replied in tears, "Thus I heard." Thereupon the tears of all the others fell, wetting their inkstones, and they wrote "Myoho-renge-kyo" followed by "Thus I heard." I, Nichiren, now feel exactly as they did. I am now in exile because I spread the teaching of Myoho-renge-kyo. I spread this teaching because I, too, "heard thus": Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha left Myoho-renge-kyo for the Japanese and all people in the future.

Here we see the meeting held to compile the Buddhist scriptures. Notice in particular the phrase, "Thus I heard." It appears at the beginning of all the sutras, following a title that encapsulates the essence of each sutra. Literally, it means that "I have personally heard Shakyamuni speak these words."

"Monju chanted Myoho-renge-kyo.... Ananda replied in tears, 'Thus I heard.' . . . all the others . . . wrote 'Myoho-renge-kyo' followed by 'Thus I heard.'" This means that all the participants had heard Myoho-renge-kyo and agreed it was the ultimate of Shakyamuni's teaching.

"Thus I heard" does not mean simply to listen to something. It is a much stronger declaration. In his Hokke Mongu, T'ien-t'ai states that "I heard" indicates a person who upholds [the True Law]. In other words, it implies the believer's affirmation that the sutra he "heard" is the essence of the Buddha's teaching and his resolution to practice Buddhism precisely as the sutra says, devoting himself to showing its validity through his behavior.

Nichiren Daishonin, too, "heard that Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha left Myoho-renge-kyo for the Japanese and all people in the future." That is why he fought so valiantly to propagate the Mystic Law, endured persecution to prove the validity of the Lotus Sutra, and at last left the Gohonzon for generations to come in the ten thousand years of the Latter Day and on into eternity.

Our first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and second president, Josei Toda, were the contemporary masters who "had heard" that the Buddhism Nichiren Daishonin left for us is the fundamental law of human revolution and world peace. Since they "had heard thus," one became a martyr for kosen-rufu, and the other gave his life, also, to the same lofty mission. The conduct of our two presidents exemplifies the Soka Gakkai spirit, and the way of life we, too, should strive for.

After Shakyamuni's passing, Monju, Ananda and the other disciples shed tears in his memory, called his teachings to mind, and in tears wrote them into the Buddhist scriptures. This was the expression of their infinite gratitude for the Buddha's mercy. In short, they could not contain their deep emotion toward Shakyamuni and left his teachings in sutra form, which paved the way for the spread of Buddhism into the future.

Nichiren Daishonin felt "exactly as they did." With gratitude for Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra, and with tears of boundless mercy for all mankind, he revealed the supreme law to be propagated throughout the Latter Day and on into eternity. This is what he means when he says in Requit for the Buddha's Favor, "If Nichiren's mercy is truly great, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity."

We, too, must thank the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, for the treasury he left for us, despite his hardships. With the great joy we have in our faith in true Buddhism, let us tell everyone we can about it and get them as involved and excited as we are, until it spreads to all mankind in future generations.

Persecution and Enlightenment

I cannot hold back my tears when I think of the great persecution confronting me now, or when I think of the joy of attaining Buddhahood in the future. Birds cry, but never shed tears. I, Nichiren, do not cry, but my tears flow ceaselessly. I shed my tears not for worldly affairs but solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra. So indeed, they must be tears of amrita. The Nirvana Sutra states that while the tears one sheds throughout his many existences on the death of his parents, brothers, sisters, wives, children and followers may surpass the quantity of water in all the seas, he weeps not a drop for Buddhism.

"The great persecution confronting me now," of course, is his exile to Sado. It was indeed a bitter experience, but he underwent this persecution as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Because he was the votary then, he knew for certain that he would "attain Buddhahood in the future." Whichever way he thought about it, he could not hold back his tears.

Important here is his teaching that "the great persecution" at the moment leads directly to "attaining Buddhahood in the future." To overcome great persecution is to attain enlightenment. A long succession of hardships lies ahead on our way to the human revolution. But only by facing and overcoming them can you attain Buddhahood.

The history of the Soka Gakkai is filled with huge and painful trials, but that is only further proof that it is an organization of "envoys of the Buddha, sent to carry out the Buddha's work." What other person or group in this age has ever suffered so much for the sake of the Lotus Sutra? Some religious bodies are hopelessly degraded, concerned only to deceive their believers and preserve themselves. The single teaching quoted above makes one realize that the Soka Gakkai is an organization that echoes the Daishonin's life, carrying out the Buddha's work exactly as he has willed.

The Gosho states, "Those who overcome hardships and embrace the Lotus Sutra from beginning to end are the envoys of the Buddha." This means that those who endure persecution and oppression and overcome them are equal to Buddhas. Whenever I read this passage I feel renewed enthusiasm for our mission. Ours is a true revolution, not some game played under the cover of religion. Watched by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space, we are waging a decisive battle with the devil that pervades the universe, showing whether or not we can prove Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to be true. We cannot allow ourselves to weaken or retreat even a bit. Continue to advance cheerfully and valiantly together with me, fighting as the original Buddha commands, deceived or swayed by no one. Make this noble campaign a record of your own achievement --- one that will be remembered forever.

Tears express the feelings deepest within our hearts. The brief passage above gives a sense of the profound mercy and emotion Nichiren Daishonin felt every moment of his life. "Birds cry, but never shed tears." Birds sing. Some of them are well known for their beautiful calls. But their cries come from instinct, not feeling. "I, Nichiren, do not cry, but my tears flow ceaselessly." This famous phrase seems to show forth the boundless compassion of Nichiren Daishonin.

"I shed my tears not for worldly affairs," he says, "but solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra." He does not shed tears just because he feels pain, hardship or sadness. His tears are shed as he tries to propagate the Lotus Sutra in order to save people from suffering for all time. "So indeed, they must be tears of amrita." Amrita (also known as ambrosia), according to ancient legends, is the sweet-tasting drink of immortality. The Chinese believed that the heavens let it rain down on paradise, to relieve human beings of all their sufferings and bring them perpetual youth and immortality. Nichiren Daishonin's tears were crystallized into the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws to enrich human life, remove suffering and give people unfading youth and eternal life. We can taste the amrita of the Dai-Gohonzon's blessings through our own experience.

The passage of the Nirvana Sutra talks of human life in the past, present and future. It says that we shed more than enough tears for mundane things during the countless lifetimes we live, but not a single tear for Buddhism. It is saying how difficult it is for people to encounter Buddhism and, even when they happen to do so, how rarely they truly have faith in it. Nichiren Daishonin shed tears throughout his life for the sake of Buddhism. In the same spirit let us dedicate our own lives to this noble mission, letting our tears flow for the sake of the True Law.

Mystic Bond

One becomes a votary of the Lotus Sutra by virtue of his practice in past existences. It is karmic relationships that determine which among so many of the same kind of trees are made into images of Buddha. It is also because of karma that some Buddhas are born as provisional ones.

Nichiren Daishonin became a votary of the Lotus Sutra, not because of his relation with the Lotus Sutra in this lifetime, but because of past karma --- because he practiced the sutra in his past existences. Trees are insentient, but some of them "are made into images of Buddha" --- for example, the Gohonzon. Others become bars in a prison. The Daishonin says that "it is karmic relationships that determine" their fate because plants cannot think or act on their own will. What they are made into depends on their inherent karma, and that decides who will use them.

For every effect, there is always a cause that produced it. The law of causality unites past, present and future. There are Buddhas and Buddhas. Some are the Buddhas of Hinayana teachings, others of provisional Mahayana teachings. Each has a different task and a different power, and all of this derives from their karma, from their acts in past existences.

We are engaged in the propagation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as true disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, but what about those who have no firm basis for their lives? What they consider to be happiness is as ephemeral as a thin blanket of snow in the noonday sun, as fleeting as a mirage, and as rootless as duckweed floating at the mercy of waves. How fragile, illusionary and empty their way of living is, engulfed in the constant changes of life ! Think of the misery a man feels when stripped of a reputation that once intoxicated him. Or of the petty, short-lived "haughtiness of ashura" --- those who were in some position of authority yesterday, but are removed from power today.

Such people are to be pitied for the weakness and shallowness of their foundation in life. For I know that in the depths of all that flux and phenomenal impermanence, unaffected by anything, lies the ultimate foundation --- the Mystic Law. You must be convinced that people who make that foundation their own have the most meaningful lives of all. My mentor, Josei Toda, was awakened to the fact that his true entity was that of a Bodhisattva of the Earth. When we are awakened to our mission and our true entity, we, too, will feel infinite power welling forth from within. Toda's words, filled with a thousand emotions, still ring in my heart, as in his poem written for me:

Now in bud is the mystic bond
Which we formed of old.
Let it come into full bloom
Stout-hearted and magnificent.

Our predecessors, who developed the Soka Gakkai into what it is today, were always aware of "the mystic bond which we formed of old" as they continued their struggle. You are now

fighting as members of the Soka Gakkai, the group of Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Believe that it is because of your past karma, and fight courageously on to accomplish your mission. Attain your ultimate purpose in this life, for only by so doing can you lead a life of complete fulfillment.

Faith, Practice and Study

In this letter, I have written my most important teachings. Grasp their meaning and make them part of your life. Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of worship in the world. Forge strong faith and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas. Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

*With my deep respect,
Nichiren*

The seventeenth day of the fifth month

I touched on the meaning of "my most important teachings" earlier. This Goshō contains the essence of all of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings: the supreme law and core of Buddhism that must be spread in the Latter Day; the revelation of the Buddha of the Latter Day; the way the Daishonin's disciples should practice their faith. Here he tells us again to understand them deeply and make them part of our lives.

"Make them part of your life" means for us to engrave his teachings in our hearts and practice exactly as this Goshō directs. Our Gohonzon is "the supreme object of worship in the world." I believe that the Daishonin's Buddhism is the very religion that can bring peace to humankind and that the Dai-Gohonzon is the crystallization of its essence. The rest depends entirely on our faith. He therefore urges us to "forge strong faith and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas."

Faith is not something that will someday deepen of itself. We must progress positively, with confidence, and no matter what obstacle may hinder us, we must resolve to turn it around and use it to advance another step, with the Gohonzon as our pillar. This requires courage, but if we continue in courageous faith, Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas will always protect us.

Shakyamuni's protection is the welling up of Buddha nature --- the most fundamental change that can occur in our lives. Taho's protection appears as a life filled with benefits. The protection of all the other Buddhas means that all those around us will be awakened to the True Law and will, together with us, build an ideal, harmonious human society where peace, equality and justice are at last attained.

"Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism." I hope you have memorized this and all the sentences that follow. I have talked about "practice and study" as stressed in this Goshō on many occasions, so here I will go into the teaching, "Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism." Buddhism exists in practice and study, in the efforts of living people who practice and study it. Buddhism is not contained in sutras, books, or the characters with which they are written. Nor is it found in the temples or other buildings. Buddhism exists and manifests itself only in the life of each person who studies the Goshō and practices his faith strictly according to the Daishonin's teachings. The Soka Gakkai is carrying out a global movement to propagate Buddhism. Its members remain in close contact with each other and concentrate upon developing the faith of others as well as their own. Remember that the true stream of Buddhism only lives and breathes in the association and mutual encouragement of us believers.

"You must not only persevere yourself; you must also teach others." This is the principle of jigyō and keta: to practice Buddhism for ourselves and also teach it to other people. We must become happy ourselves, and at the same time make others happy.

"Both practice and study arise from faith." Faith is the basis of both practice and study, and faith is always manifested as practice and study. These three --- faith, practice and study --- become the most important objective of the Soka Gakkai.

"Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase." This tells us to do shakubuku to the full extent of our capabilities and to the degree that our circumstances allow, even if we can only teach others a single sentence or phrase of Buddhism.

Eternally Master and Disciple

Postscript:

I have already passed on to you many of my important teachings. Those I have revealed to you in this letter are especially important. Is there not a mystic bond between us? Are you not the embodiment of one of the Four Bodhisattvas of the Earth headed by Jogyo who led bodhisattvas equal in number to the sands of the sixty thousand Ganges Rivers? There must be some profound reason for our relationship. I have given you some of the most important teachings relating to my own life and practice. Nichiren may be one of the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth, for I have been chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo out of my desire to guide all the men and women in Japan. Hence the phrase of the sutra: "Among the bodhisattvas are four who led the entire multitude: The first is called Jogyo; [the second, Muhengyo; the third, Jyogyo; and the fourth, Anryugyo.] They are the four highest leaders." Our deep relationship in the past has made you one of my disciples. By all means keep these matters to yourself. Nichiren has herein committed to writing the teachings of his own enlightenment. I will end here.

"Those I have revealed to you in this letter are especially important." I discussed this sentence at the beginning of this lecture. Nichiren Daishonin gave several very important Goshos to Sairenbo, including Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life, Enlightenment of Plants, and On Prayer. Here he says that this Goshu, The True Entity of Life, contains the most important of all the teachings he has ever conveyed to Sairenbo. He asks if there is not a mystic bond between the two of them, master and disciple. This Goshu carries "the main teachings" concerning Nichiren Daishonin himself --- those on the enlightenment and practice of the Buddha of the Latter Day. Sairenbo, the Daishonin declares, must be one of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, born with a vital mission for kosen-rufu in the Latter Day.

The Daishonin is using strong- understatement when he says, "Nichiren may be one of the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth," but it implies that in a transient sense he is Jogyo, the foremost of the four greatest leaders of those bodhisattvas, and that his true entity is the original Buddha from time without beginning. In a word, it expresses his conviction that he is the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

"For I have been chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo out of my desire to guide all the men and women in Japan." He says "all the men and women in Japan," but what he really means is "all the people in the world for all eternity." No one other than Nichiren Daishonin ever strove to save all mankind with the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day. He is therefore the supreme leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and the Buddha of the Latter Day.

"Our deep relationship in the past has made you one of my disciples." Here again he stresses the mystic bond and reminds Sairenbo of his mission. A passage from Reply to Sairenbo reads, "In your letter you say, 'From now on I will forsake all the heretical teachers I have hitherto followed, and regard you, and you alone, as the teacher of the True Law.' But I do not understand this." Why does he say he doesn't understand it? He gives the reason in a fairly long paragraph that follows, but the heart of it is this: "We have been master and disciple ever since the infinite past. This is not a relationship which we just happened to form for the first time in this life. It is not an accidental encounter."

From the Buddhist viewpoint, "I do not understand this" has profound meaning. Sairenbo's words are fitting from a superficial standard. But the Daishonin delved much deeper into the Buddhist master-disciple relationship because he knew of the three existences of life.

This applies to us as well. We did not "just happen" to encounter the Daishonin's Buddhism in this lifetime. Nichiren Daishonin and we have been master and disciples since the infinite past. The members of the Soka Gakkai have always been brothers, sisters and friends. And now we have again come together in this world, assuming new personalities and positions, and are marching onward to accomplish our mission for kosen-rufu.

The infinite past is here and now. Let us always remember that we, united by bonds we established in the infinite past, must advance hand in hand as brothers and sisters of Buddhism. As we learned earlier, "There can be no discontinuity between past, present and future." Our togetherness at this moment is a mirror of life reflecting both the remote past and the distant future. Believing this, let us continue to enlarge our circle of itai doshin (many in body, one in mind), studying together, respecting and encouraging one another.

To borrow the Daishonin's words, "our deep relationship in the past has made" us members of the Soka Gakkai. You have great capabilities accruing from that relationship, and your responsibilities are equally great. As a line in the "Song of Human Revolution" goes, "You have a mission to accomplish in this world."

"By all means keep these matters to yourself. Nichiren has herein committed to writing the teachings of his own enlightenment." The people in the Daishonin's day could not grasp the ultimate essence of his Buddhism. Out of consideration for the unthinking doubts they might harbor, he told Sairenbo to keep the letter to himself. But it also means that we must imprint his teachings indelibly on our lives. He concludes by saying that this, The True Entity of Life, is an important writing which consists of "the teachings of his own enlightenment."