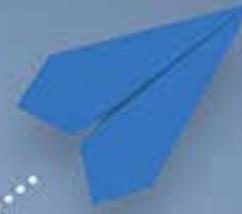


# Beyond General Cause and Effect

SGI-USA January 2021 Discussion Meeting



# “This Will Be the Year!”

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda, often used to say at New Year’s, “When we who embrace the Mystic Law align our lives with the fundamental rhythm of the universe and make a vow with a renewed determination that ‘This will be the year!’ we will definitely be able to show actual proof before the year is out.”

- Ikeda Sensei, Jan. 19, 2018, *World Tribune*, p. 2

LET

2021

BEGIN

# General Causality

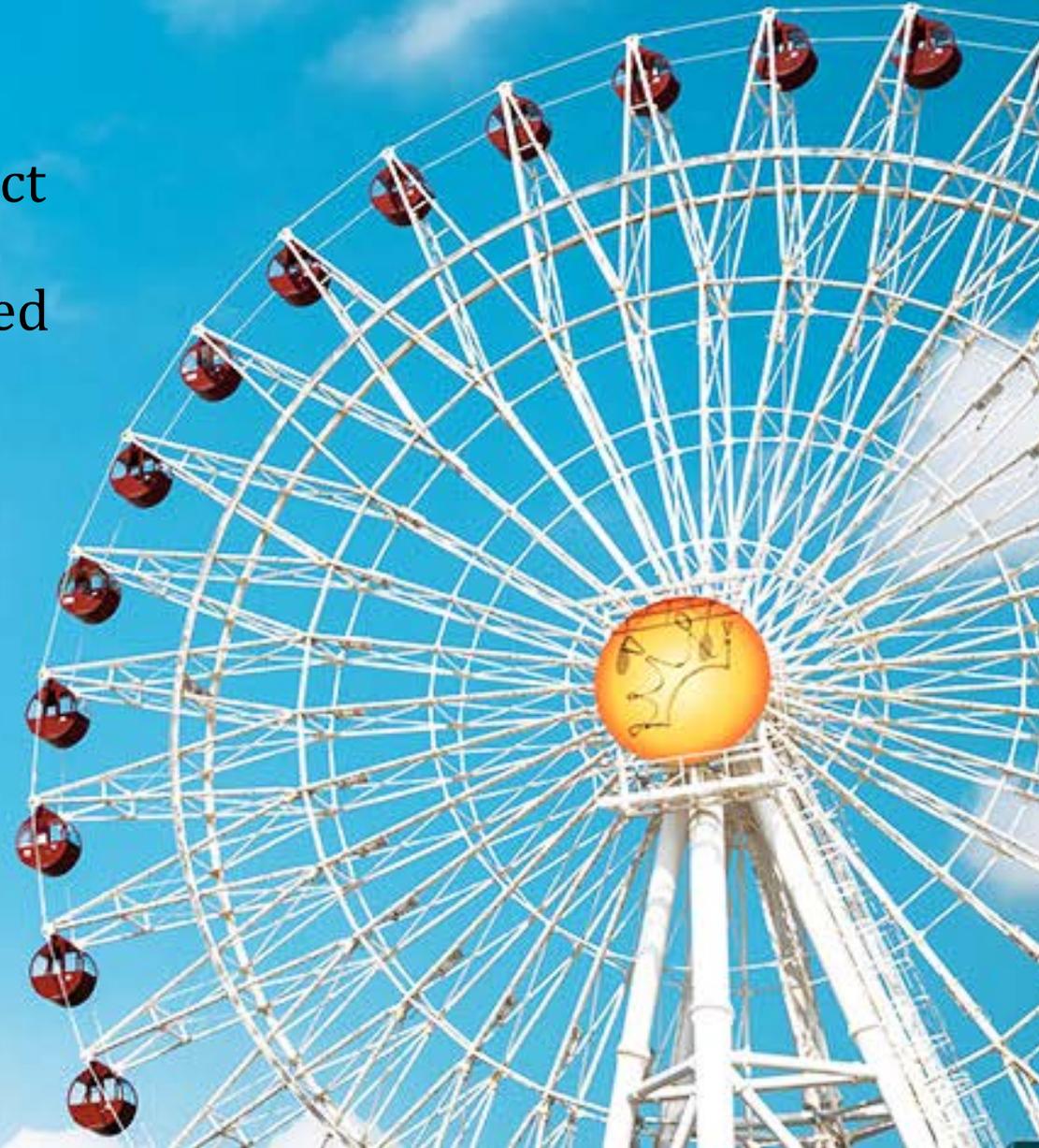
## *Pre-Lotus Sutra Teachings*

We must eradicate all earthly desires and counteract each negative cause one at a time in order to attain Buddhahood. For every bad cause we make, we need an equally good cause to cancel it out.

# Greater Causality

## *Lotus Sutra Teachings*

We can change our karma in this moment by directly awakening to our inherent Buddha nature.



# Believing in our Buddha Nature



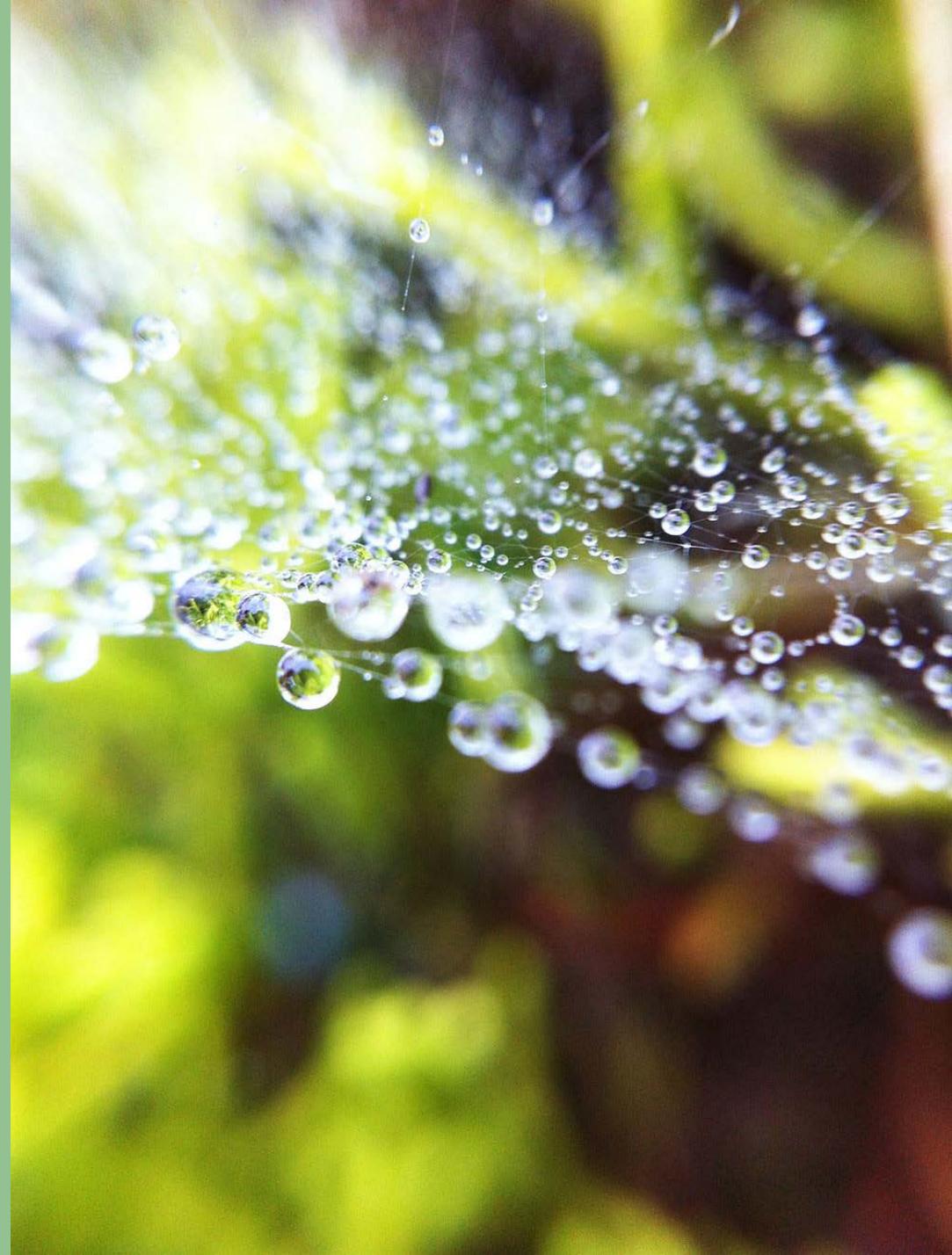
The substance of slandering the Law is disbelief; it is not believing in the existence of the Buddha nature in oneself and others. This disbelief is what fundamentally obstructs the emergence of the world of Buddhahood. ...

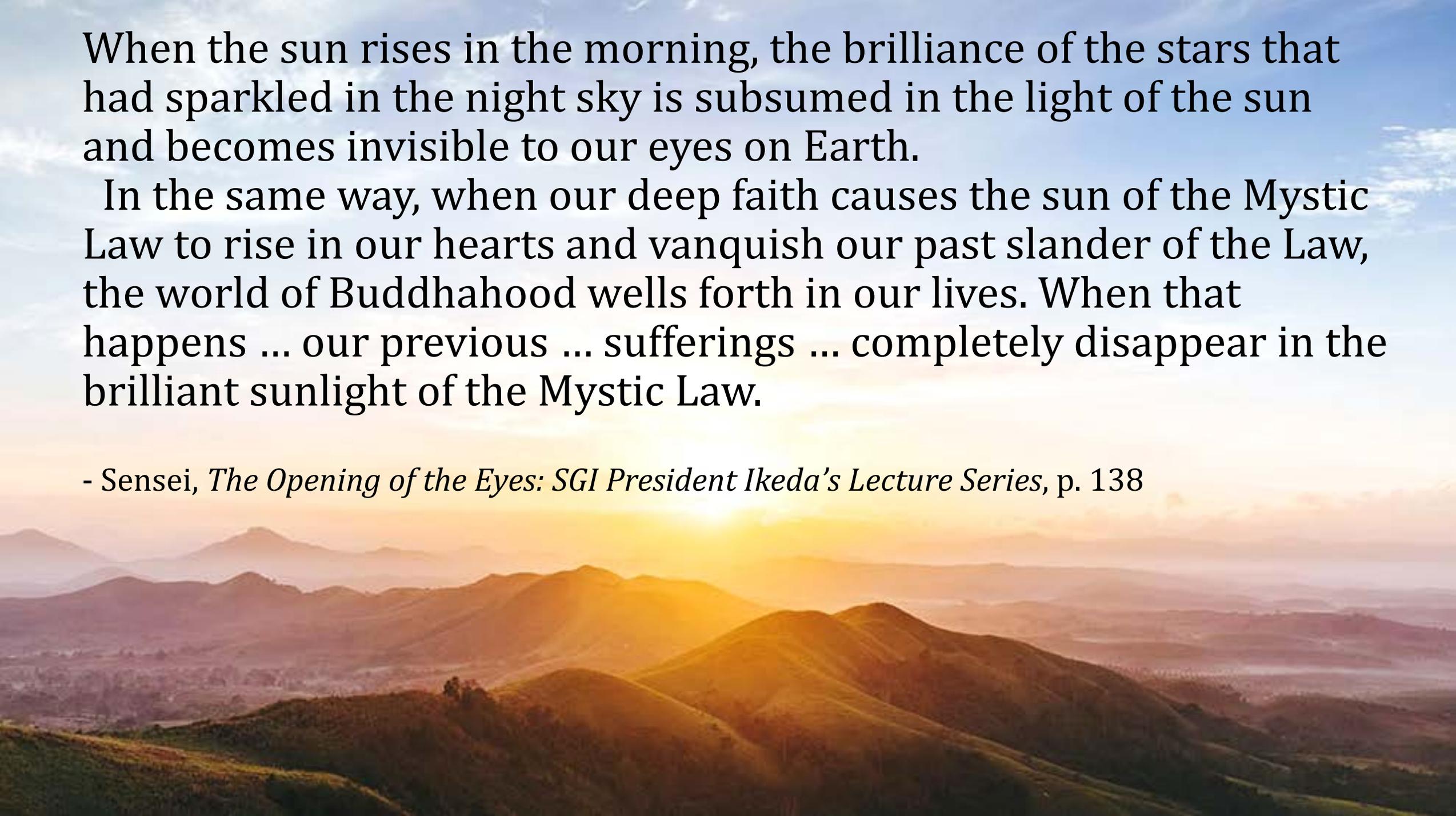
Eradicating this disbelief and bringing forth the world of Buddhahood represent a more fundamental causality that makes it possible for us to change our karma.

- Sensei, *The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 61-62

**Our worldly misdeeds and evil karma may have piled up as high as Mount Sumeru, but when we take faith in this sutra, they will vanish like frost or dew under the sun of the Lotus Sutra.**

- Nichiren Daishonin, "Letter to Niike," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1026





When the sun rises in the morning, the brilliance of the stars that had sparkled in the night sky is subsumed in the light of the sun and becomes invisible to our eyes on Earth.

In the same way, when our deep faith causes the sun of the Mystic Law to rise in our hearts and vanquish our past slander of the Law, the world of Buddhahood wells forth in our lives. When that happens ... our previous ... sufferings ... completely disappear in the brilliant sunlight of the Mystic Law.

- Sensei, *The Opening of the Eyes: SGI President Ikeda's Lecture Series*, p. 138

# **Brief Experience in Faith**

# Challenge Our Karma Head-On

We who practice the Daishonin's Buddhism know that we can reveal our Buddhahood by chanting daimoku and bringing our lives in contact with the Gohonzon. But there is a great difference between knowing this theoretically and experiencing the power of Buddhahood with our own lives. ...

In terms of our practice, it is by actually confronting our karma that we can acquire the strength to surmount it.

- Sensei, *The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol. 3, p.65

# Decide to Win, Then Pray Powerfully



Josei Toda taught me: “First, decide: ‘This is what I’m going to do.’ ‘I’m going to win without fail!’ Whether you are so resolved will determine victory or defeat. This is the philosophy of winning.”

Set a clear goal, vow to win no matter what, and then pray powerfully. ...

Whatever the situation, determined prayer will always set the protective forces into motion. Continue to pray, and continue to fight, and in the end you will definitely win!

- Sensei, May 3, 2019, *World Tribune*, p. 10

# Key Points

1. Let's decide "This will be the year!"
2. Belief in our own Buddha nature and that of others is at the core of the idea of greater causality. By bringing forth the life state of Buddhahood, all our sufferings can be immediately transformed.
3. By challenging our karma head-on, we can transform it.



# Discussion Questions

1. Is there something in your life you would like to change through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo?
2. What aspects of your life have you been able to transform based on your determined prayer and Buddhist practice?



## January 2021 Discussion Meeting Presentation Notes

Topic: "Beyond General Cause and Effect"

### Slide 1:

- Thank you everyone for allowing me to present today's topic of discussion!
- Today's topic is: "Beyond General Cause and Effect"
- Now let's get started!

### Slide 2:

- 2020 was not the year any of us imagined, but we got through it and are here now.
- To begin this presentation, let's look at what Ikeda Sensei and Toda Sensei shared about the new year.
- **READ SLIDE**

### Slide 3:

- Today we will talk about greater causality in comparison to the general concept of cause and effect.
- Based on the idea of general cause and effect, for every cause we make in the form of thoughts, words or deeds, there is an effect.
- "General causality" taught in pre-Lotus Sutra teachings says that in order to transform our negative karma, we must eradicate all earthly desires while counteracting each negative cause one at a time in order to attain Buddhahood. Based on this explanation, we are prisoners of our karma. For every bad cause we make, we need an equally good cause to cancel it out. Furthermore, we could never make any more bad causes.
- President Toda stated: "If we simply equated Buddhism with this less-developed teaching [of general causality] ... then our destiny would be deemed something that is fixed and we would fall into a passive way of life with our sole focus on not doing anything wrong. ... This teaching has no relevance to us of the Latter Day of the Law. In this age in which we live today, we need a teaching that will enable us, ordinary individuals, to break through the principle of causality of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and to reveal and tap our inherent Buddha nature."
- In contrast, the greater causality taught in Nichiren Buddhism explains that we can change our karma in this moment by directly awakening to our inherent Buddha nature and vanquish negative karma. We are able to awaken to our potential and that of others.
- Nichiren Daishonin established a teaching based on this understanding of causality that could help us break through and transform our karma.

**Slide 4:**

- Sensei says: **READ SLIDE**
- So believing in our own potential—that is, our own Buddha Nature—is the greater cause we can make to attain Buddhahood in this life.

**Slide 5:**

- Nichiren Daishonin writes: **“Our worldly misdeeds and evil karma may have piled up as high as Mount Sumeru, but when we take faith in this sutra, they will vanish like frost or dew under the sun of the Lotus Sutra.”** (“Letter to Niike,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1026)
- The greater cause of embracing and taking faith in the Lotus Sutra, aka chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, outshines all other negative and positive causes that general causality explains.
- Sensei explains further: **(GO TO NEXT SLIDE)**

**Slide 6:**

- **READ SLIDE**
- Wow, isn't this so encouraging?!
- With our strong determination and our deep faith, we can “vanquish” our past negative causes in an instant.

**Slide 7:**

**\*\*Optional Slide: please share a brief experience related to the topic\*\***

**Slide 8:**

- Continuing on, the only way we can overcome our karma is by challenging it head on.
- Sensei says: **READ SLIDE**
- This sounds wonderful to me, but sometimes we may be afraid to face our karma.
- What can we do then to gain the courage to challenge our karma?

**Slide 9:**

- Sensei and Toda Sensei tell us that we can decide to win and then pray POWERFULLY!
- **READ SLIDE**

**Slide 10:**

- Before we start our discussion, let's wrap up by going over the key takeaways from today's presentation.
  1. Let's decide "This will be the year!"
  2. Belief in the Buddha nature in ourselves and others is at the core of the idea of greater causality. By bringing forth the life state of Buddhahood, all of our sufferings can be immediately transformed.
  3. By challenging our karma head on, we can transform it.

**Slide 11:**

- Thank you so much for listening to my presentation.
- Now, let's discuss!!
- (Feel free to utilize Zoom breakout rooms, use these questions as a starting point.)