**Points to Keep in Mind Regarding Buddhist Study in the SGI**

1. Our understanding of Nichiren Buddhism has deepened significantly since the 1991 priesthood issue—culminating in doctrinal clarifications in 2014. What Nichiren Shoshu teaches is completely different from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, the foundation of SGI study.

2. SGI is a “living” religion with a “living” philosophy, meaning that the application of the core, unchanging principles of Buddhism is always adapting to changing times and circumstances.

3. Even for longtime members, it is important to continue studying current materials. Our mentor’s explanations of Nichiren’s writings in his monthly lectures represent this “living” Buddhism.

**Goals for Presenters**

1. Let’s learn together: This is the recommended approach for presenting President Ikeda’s lectures. Rather than lecturing on his lectures, the goal of the monthly presentations is to study the material together with fellow members. With this in mind, presenters should aim to read the material several times and share 2 or 3 key points that inspire them, rather than attempting to cover every point.

2. Let’s unite with the heart of our mentor: Sensei strives to encourage members through his lectures, just as Nichiren did through his writings. Let’s strive to convey this spirit as we study with fellow members and apply these teachings in our daily lives, efforts in society and advancement of kosen-rufu.

**Basic Points for Presenting “The Buddhism of the Sun” Lectures**

- Read the full lecture several times.
- Read the footnotes, as they often provide additional background information. (LB, p. 58)
- Chant abundant daimoku before your presentation to grasp and convey Sensei’s heart.
- During the presentation, have someone read aloud key Gosho excerpts and your selected passages from the lecture. Ensure the reader has the opportunity to prepare well ahead of time.
- Encourage participants to also read the lecture and find their own points of inspiration.

**Additional Resources**

- “The Wonderful Means for Putting an End to Physical and Spiritual Obstacles” (June 2021 Living Buddhism, p. 48)
  - The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace (2.2)

- “Faith for Health and Long Life” (June LB, 49)
  - January 2017 Living Buddhism, pp. 40–49

- Sept. 15, 1975, Doctors Division Speech (June LB, 49)

- Background on Ota Jomyo (June LB, 51)
  - November 2019 LB, pp. 34–37

- “The Lotus Sutra Is Good Medicine…” (June LB, 52–53)
  - “If a person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra…he will know neither old age nor death.”
  - The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings (see attached PDF, esp. p. 36)

- “Making ‘Faith’ the Foundation (June LB, 54)
  - The Four Powers,” April 10, 2020, World Tribune, p. 10

- “A Philosophy of the Dignity of Life and Respect for All People” (June LB, 57)
This is the final installment in a serialized discussion on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of the Buddhism practiced by the Soka Gakkai International. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Leader Katsuji Saito and Study Department Vice Leader Masaaki Morinaka have participated in these discussions.

President Ikeda states: “The Daishonin’s writings are a record of his intense struggles over the course of his lifetime. To fulfill his mission, he endured great persecution and left behind a monumental teaching. The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin crystallizes his spirit, action, and instruction. We should therefore read it as the scripture for the Latter Day of the Law.”

Katsuji Saito: In this final installment, we will turn our attention to the last days of Nichiren Daishonin’s life.

Masaaki Morinaka: In September 1282, the Daishonin left Minobu, his home for nine years, and made his way to the residence of the eldest of the Ikegami brothers, Ikegami Munenaka, in Musashi Province (part of present-day Tokyo). It was there that he died on October 13.

Daisaku Ikeda: The Daishonin’s time at Minobu can be seen as a period when he fulfilled his life’s pledge. It is certain that his final few years — especially the four years from 1279 until his death in 1282 — were a time of great and undeniable triumph marking the crowning period of his life.

Saito: In “On Persecutions Befalling the Sage,” dated 1279, the writing in which the Daishonin indicates that he will accomplish his life’s purpose (that is, inscribing the object of devotion for all humanity), he confidently states that even people possessed by powerful demons can no longer harm him because he is safeguarded by the Buddhist gods.

Ikeda: The Daishonin had attained a towering state of life that commanded the support and protection of the universal forces. It was a state of supreme fulfillment derived from
having advanced and struggled his entire life for the worldwide spread of the Mystic Law, the fundamental means for leading all people of the Latter Day to enlightenment.

In life, the closing chapter is most important. President Toda (who died in April 1958) said: “You cannot judge a life before it is finished. The final outcome is decided by whether you are happy in the last few years.”

Our second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s life, too, was one of relentless struggle. Having made kosen-rufu his personal mission, he challenged himself to the limit. In his final four years, he devoted himself fully and freely to his cherished goal. Witnessing how he lived his life, I felt he was a true victor.

MORINAKA: The last four years of President Toda’s life correspond to the time when you, President Ikeda, were active as chief of the general staff (beginning in March 1954). It was a period that saw a dramatic surge in the Soka Gakkai’s propagation activities and also the accomplishment of President Toda’s vow to achieve a 750,000-household membership.

IKEDA: Over the course of those four years, President Toda waged an unprecedented struggle to secure a firm foundation for kosen-rufu so that he could pass on this legacy and the leadership of our movement to his youthful successors. It was as if through his every action, he was trying to teach us: “This is how a lion king of kosen-rufu behaves!”

The final chapter of our lives is crucial. Everything comes down to whether we are happy in our last years, whether we have a sense of supreme fulfillment and tranquillity in the depths of our hearts.

MORINAKA: In other words, social status and economic circumstances are not the ultimate criteria for happiness.
The Key To Transcending the Sufferings of Birth and Death

IKEDA: That’s right. The purpose of Buddhism is to enable us to triumph over the illusions and sufferings of birth and death and construct a solid and indestructible inner state of life. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Law that makes it possible for us to break free of these illusions and sufferings. The Daishonin stressed this from the beginning of his lifelong quest to propagate the correct teaching. For instance, in the opening passage of “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime,” which we have all read many times, he clearly sets forth the illuminating power of the Mystic Law.

MORINAKA: That passage reads: “If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings. This truth is Myoho-renge-kyo. Chanting Myoho-renge-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 3).

IKEDA: He says that the means, or Law, for freeing ourselves from the illusions and sufferings of birth and death exists within our own lives. It is none other than Myoho-renge-kyo, the “mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings.”

The Daishonin established the means by which all people can live based on this mystic truth—in other words, he revealed the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the name of the mystic principle. It is also faith in that mystic principle. And it is the name given to the state of life that freely manifests this mystic principle—in other words, the state of Buddhahood. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the entity of the Law that simultaneously possesses both the cause and the effect for attaining Buddhahood.

The next important thing, in terms of practice, is correct faith. The Daishonin consistently emphasizes faith that embodies the spirit of not begrudging our lives, the willingness to dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to the Law.

SAITO: Because people regard their lives as precious, they tend to become preoccupied with furthering and protecting their own interests. They let themselves be ruled by fear and cowardice, growing terrified of losing their prestige or position or of becoming the target of criticism or censure.

In “Letter from Sado,” the Daishonin compares this human folly to the way that fish or birds, though seeking to guard their lives from peril, in the end are tricked by bait and caught. He says: “Human beings are equally vulnerable. They give their lives for shallow, worldly matters but rarely for the Buddha’s precious teachings. Small wonder they do not attain Buddhahood” (WND, 301).

MORINAKA: I don’t think there is anyone who doesn’t treasure his or her life. But if we become too self-absorbed, we’ll find ourselves living out our days focused on only “shallow, worldly matters.”

IKEDA: Although people naturally desire happiness, they become attached to shallow matters and drift far from...
“the Buddha’s precious teachings,” the path leading to true happiness. That is the fearful thing about fundamental ignorance or darkness, which we could also term basic human folly. No matter how intelligent, if people are defeated by ignorance or delusion, they cannot carry their Buddhist practice through to completion, and their lives will wind up in failure. Such people may even disparage and turn their backs on the Buddha’s important teachings and finally become enemies of the Law.

That’s why the Daishonin consistently calls on us to exert ourselves in faith with the spirit of not begrudging our lives and the attitude that “one’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme.” Selfless devotion to the Law is the hallmark of the Daishonin’s life. He also taught his followers that only by striving in faith with this spirit could they attain Buddhahood. There are many passages in his writings where he says this.

MORINAKA: That’s right. In “The Fourteen Slanders,” for example, the Daishonin writes: “This body of ours in the end will become nothing more than the soil of the hills and fields. Therefore, it is useless to begrudge your life, for though you may wish to, you cannot cling to it forever. Even people who live a long time rarely live beyond the age of one hundred. And all the events of a lifetime are like the dream one dreams in a brief nap. . . . “

“In the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra there is a passage that reads, ‘We care nothing for our bodies or lives but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way.’ Another passage from the essential teaching reads, ‘Not hesitating even if it costs them their lives.’ The Nirvana Sutra states, ‘One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.’ Thus both the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra, as well as the Nirvana Sutra, all indicate that one should give one’s life to spread the Law” (WND, 760).

IKEDA: From the standpoint of life’s eternity, our existence in this world is fleeting. That is why we should treasure our time here and make the very most of our lives. Accordingly, in the passage you just cited, the Daishonin urges us to make the Law our foundation.

When we wholeheartedly seek the correct teaching of Buddhism without begrudging our lives, we become one with the Mystic Law, enabling us to walk life’s supreme path — that of attaining Buddhahood.

MORINAKA: “Not begrudging our lives” does not mean recklessly throwing our lives away out of some misguided notion of gaining glory.

IKEDA: That’s right. To treasure the Law means to fight with the heart of a lion king against those who harass and torment its practitioners and who seek to destroy the Law itself. It also means tirelessly striving, as the Daishonin did, to defeat devilish forces, which go against the spirit of the Law. You could say that, by its very nature, a life devoted to the Law entails a ceaseless struggle to triumph over dark and iniquitous forces inherent in life.

SAITO: So faith that embodies the spirit of not begrudging our lives for the sake of the Law means having the strong, resolute faith to summon forth our courage and battle evil.

The Daishonin’s Fighting Spirit Blazed to the Very End

IKEDA: Life is a struggle. The practice of Buddhism is focused on winning. When we have the fighting spirit and determination to achieve a great victory for kosen-rufu, we can truly savor the boundless joy of the Law. Unless we undertake this challenge, we cannot infuse our lives, which are subject to the cycle of birth, aging, sickness, and death, with the noble four virtues — eternity, happiness, true self, and purity.

Nichiren Daishonin fought on to the very end. That is
clear when we trace his movements right up to his death.

SAITO: Yes. As we mentioned earlier, the Daishonin departed Minobu on September 8, 1282. Staying along the way at the homes of followers or at inns, he arrived at the residence of Ikegami Munenaka in Musashi, on the 18th. 

MORINAKA: In February of that year he wrote “The Proof of the Lotus Sutra,” addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu. By this time, his health was unsteady. The explanation he gave his disciples for leaving Minobu was to take a cure at “the hot springs at Hitachi.” There was more than one place named Hitachi, however. Exactly which one the Daishonin meant remains unconfirmed to this day, despite considerable research over the centuries.

IKEDA: A far more important point, I think, is whether the Daishonin had some other purpose in leaving Minobu, than simply taking a cure at a hot spring.

MORINAKA: So his real purpose lay somewhere else?

IKEDA: This is only speculation, of course, but either he actually meant to visit the hot springs because followers had been urging him to do so or it may have been a pretext to leave Mount Minobu without arousing the suspicion of the government authorities who thought he had retired there permanently.

MORINAKA: On his journey to Ikegami, the Daishonin did in fact steer clear of the Suruga area (part of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture on the Pacific coast), home of many important government officials’ estates, and instead took a circuitous route around the northern side of Mount Fuji. He may also have avoided Suruga Province in case the embers of the Atsuhara Persecution were still smoldering there.

IKEDA: He seems to have given the matter deep thought.

SAITO: A year earlier, in 1281, the Daishonin apparently had a premonition about the time of his death. Also, in a letter addressed to the lay nun Kubo, he discusses the importance of the end of one’s life. No doubt he seriously pondered how he wished to die.

IKEDA: President Toda also had an intuition of his approaching death, predicting it would come in the spring when the cherry blossoms were in bloom. And he, too, right until the last moments of his life, took the lead for kosen-rufu without retreating a single step. Moreover, the final month of his life was highlighted by the landmark ceremony of March 16, during which he passed on the baton of kosen-rufu to the youth.

The courageous form of President Toda, his indomitable fighting spirit and determination, were indelibly etched into our hearts. Until the very last, he taught us, his disciples, what it means to be a fighter. He was a truly great leader.

IKEDA: While grateful for the concern of his disciples, who pressed him to convalesce at a hot spring, we can surmise that such a trip was not the Daishonin’s true intent in leaving Minobu.

MORINAKA: So his real purpose lay somewhere else?

IKEDA: This is only speculation, of course, but either he actually meant to visit the hot springs because followers had been urging him to do so or it may have been a pretext to leave Mount Minobu without arousing the suspicion of the government authorities who thought he had retired there permanently.

SAITO: According to one early biography of the Daishonin, upon deciding to depart, he announced, “I intend to go to Ikegami in Musashi.” It cannot be confirmed, however, whether he actually made this statement.

IKEDA: It seems to me that, before leaving Minobu, the Daishonin anticipated that he would bring his life to a close at Ikegami.

When Shakyamuni Buddha set out from Rajagriha [the capital of the kingdom of Magadha in ancient India] on his final journey, he told his disciples: “Behold now, brethren, I exhort you, saying: ‘ Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence!’” Through his own actions, Shakyamuni taught that Buddhism exists in constantly advancing and struggling for the Law and for people’s happiness.

In the same way, the Daishonin took the lead for kosen-rufu right to the very end, even on his sickbed in Ikegami.

MORINAKA: For instance, when the Dharma Seal Ise, a learned priest of the Tendai school, challenged him to a debate at Ikegami, the Daishonin appointed Nichimoku to represent him, and the young priest thoroughly defeated the Tendai scholar.
Also, on September 25, the Daishonin lectured on his treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” at the Ikegami residence. And, around the same time, he summoned his disciples, both priest and lay, from Kamakura and the neighboring areas of Awa, Kazusa, and Shimosa (in present-day Chiba Prefecture, part of Ibaraki and Saitama prefectures) to let them know that his death was at hand.

SAITO: Striving to actualize the principle of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land” is the very core of Nichiren Buddhism. The Daishonin’s final lecture on this treatise must have been an extremely solemn occasion during which he entrusted his disciples with carrying on this supreme struggle to which he had dedicated his life.

MORINAKA: Several other important events took place during the Daishonin’s final days. These include his appointment of the six senior priests, and his designation of Nikko Shonin as his successor, transferring to him the heritage of the Law.

IKEDA: The Daishonin fought to the end. He instructed his followers to carry on the spirit of remonstration and urged them to work in harmonious unity to realize kosen-rufu. He was passionately intent on securing the foundations so that widespread propagation of the correct teaching could continue eternally through the Latter Day.

Finally, on October 13, the Daishonin’s last hour arrived. According to the modern calendar, this would correspond to a date around November 21, a time known in Japan as “small spring” (similar to a North American “Indian summer”) because it is often a time of relatively warm weather just before the full-fledged start of winter.

He died around 8:00 AM, the hour of the dragon. Legend has it that the cherry trees were in bloom out of season at that time. This story no doubt arose because the Daishonin died on a sunny, spring-like day.

Nichiren Buddhism is the Buddhism of the sun. The sun shone when he first proclaimed his teaching and again when he left this world. How appropriate for the Buddha who illuminates the darkness of the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law.

The Daishonin was also a great mentor who, until his final breath, showed his disciples what it means to dedicate oneself to kosen-rufu with an unflagging fighting
spirit. His loyal disciples Nikko and Nichimoku carried on his example of lifelong struggle.

Saito: Just as we all have different life spans, the final moments of our lives are also infinitely diverse. Everyone desires a long and healthy life, but far more important than that is how we live and how we die.

Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin died at sixty-one, Nikko at eighty-eight, and Nichimoku at seventy-four.17 Nikko’s successor, Nichimoku, died en route to Kyoto, where he planned to remonstrate with the emperor and urge him to embrace the Daishonin’s teaching.

There is nothing greater than the life and death of one who fights with an inextinguishable spirit for the sake of the Law and the people’s happiness throughout the three existences of past, present, and future. This spirit itself is a manifestation of the eternity of Myoho-renge-kyo.

Saito: Bringing his life to a close in Ikegami could perhaps be viewed as the Daishonin’s ceremony of “entering nirvana as an expedient means,”18 aimed at teaching this fighting spirit to his disciples. That is, he used his death as an opportunity to impress upon them that people can only bring their lives to full completion if they fight to the very end.

Morinaka: The ultimate teaching of Shakyamuni’s Buddhism is found in the “Life Span” (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, particularly in its verse section, which concludes by revealing the eternal thought of the eternal Buddha—that is, the Buddha’s constant wish and desire to lead all people to enlightenment.19

Saito: I think that, before he died, the Daishonin wished to communicate to his disciples his great desire and vow for the enlightenment of all humanity—not only to convey the ultimate conclusion of his own life but also the spirit he hoped each of them would inherit. He may have chosen to spend his final days at the Ikegami residence, since it was the ideal gathering place for his principal disciples.

The Nature of Birth and Death Is Revealed When We Struggle for Kosen-rufu

Ikeda: There is a passage in “Medicine King,” the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra, that states: “His illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age nor death” (The Lotus Sutra 23, p. 288).20 Discussing this passage in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin says that “‘neither old age’ [meaning ‘unaging’] refers to Shakyamuni Buddha, while ‘nor death’ [meaning ‘undying’ or ‘eternal’] refers to persons such as the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth” (GZ, 774). The fact that he associates the quality of “undying” with the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is extremely important.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are an infinite number of bodhisattvas who possess within them the eternal Mystic Law and who tirelessly strive to propagate it. The Daishonin describes these bodhisattvas as “undying.” When we dedicate ourselves to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, our lives, which are subject to the four sufferings—birth, aging, sickness, and death—become imbued with the noble virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. We can also free ourselves from the painful chains of the sufferings of birth and death.

Living and dying with eternal devotion to the Mystic Law represent the intrinsic truth of life itself—what Nichiren called the “originally inherent nature of birth and death.”

Discussing the meaning of Myoho, or Mystic Law, the Daishonin writes: “Myo represents death, and ho, life” (WND, 216). He also says in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings”: “The Lotus Sutra represents the continuing cycle of birth and death, birth and death”
How noble and sublime are the lives of Soka Gakkai members who can meet death with an immense sense of fulfillment, free of all regret! How infinitely respectable it is that ordinary people are experts on the oneness of life and death.

The eternal Mystic Law encompasses both life and death. The birth and death of all forms of life, the emergence and extinction of all phenomena, are birth and death in the realm of the Mystic Law.

Although in essence our lives are eternal, no one can escape the cycle of birth and death. The important question is: will we view birth and death as an endless, suffering-filled cycle of rebirth in the six paths, or will we view birth and death as an aspect of the Mystic Law, seeing its true intrinsic nature, fragrant with the four noble virtues of Buddhahood? It was Nichiren who opened the way for all people to turn the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death into the profound tranquility and the joy of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity.

SAITO: Other schools of Buddhism focus on escaping the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Teaching that these fundamental human sufferings are to be abhorred, they stress the importance of disassociating oneself from them. This is expressed in the concept of “freeing oneself from the sufferings of birth and death.”

IKEDA: Nichiren Daishonin teaches that our lives, which embody the four sufferings are in themselves treasure towers that are one with the eternal great Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

In the treasure tower that constitutes the life of each person who upholds the Mystic Law, the four sufferings are transformed into the four virtues, whose refined fragrance issues forth from our lives. These are the virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. In other words, we can manifest in our own lives—which are subject to birth, aging, sickness, and death—the timelessness (eternity), indestructible tranquillity and joy (happiness), firm autonomy (true self), and perfect integrity (purity) that characterize the enlightened state of Buddhahood.

MORINAKA: This is the state in which we can experience joy in both life and death.

SAITO: The key point here is that we never depart from the reality of the human condition. Other religions, in seeking the eternal, conceptualized a paradise apart from this world. Nichiren Buddhism, in contrast, reveals a way to transform everything into deep and lasting joy without departing from the reality of birth, aging, sickness, and death.

IKEDA: In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin instructs: “To look on birth and death with abhorrence and try to escape them is termed delusion, or initial enlightenment. Perceiving the originally inherent nature of birth and death is termed awakening, or original enlightenment.”

“When Nichiren and his followers chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, they realize the originally inherent nature of birth and death and the originally inherent nature of ebb and flow” (GZ, 754).

This describes a life-state of absolute freedom throughout past, present, and future. Both life and death become states abounding in joy, allowing us to soar freely through the vast skies of the tranquil light of the world of Buddhahood.

When Buddhahood pervades both life and death, we can be born in the place, at the time, and in the form we desire. In death, too, we are completely free. The Daishonin says that when we die, we return to the world of reality within a very short time and begin struggling anew to bring benefit to living beings.

SAITO: Those who live out their lives together with the Soka Gakkai can definitely feel the truth of this inherent reality and experience it in their lives.

IKEDA: President Toda often said that practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism enables us to apprehend the eternity of life over the three existences. I have always believed that this remark deserved deep contemplation.

The key to enlightenment in the Latter Day of the Law is to carry through steadfastly with faith that embodies the spirit of not begrudging our lives. Through such faith, we can gain a profound, unshakable conviction in the originally inherent nature of birth and death in the depths of our lives. The reason Soka Gakkai members
can face their last moments with such equanimity and poise is that they perceive the eternity of life as a reality in their own beings.

How noble and sublime are the lives of Soka Gakkai members who can meet death with an immense sense of fulfillment, free of all regret! How infinitely respectable it is that ordinary people are experts on the oneness of life and death.

Mentor and Disciple Share the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu

SAITO: In other words, when we dedicate our lives to the great vow for kosen-rufu and to the struggle to lead all people to enlightenment, we can acquire a profound inner conviction in the originally inherent nature of birth and death.

IKEDA: When both mentor and disciple share this same vow and fighting spirit, they become one. This is the essence of the oneness of mentor and disciple in Nichiren Buddhism.

When the mentor shows disciples the life he has forged through unwavering commitment to this great vow and fighting spirit, it becomes a model and foundation for their own lives. We can see that this is precisely what Shakyamuni did through his conduct described in the Lotus Sutra, and what the Daishonin carried out throughout his actions in life.

The oneness of mentor and disciple is actualized when the disciples steadfastly uphold the same great vow and fighting spirit as their mentor. Those who follow this life path can establish the same state of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity as the Buddha. This is a life enlightened to birth and death in the world of Buddhahood, awakened to their originally inherent nature.

SAITO: In other words, by dedicating ourselves to the struggle for kosen-rufu, we, too, can establish the way of life of the Buddha, which is based on the eternal Mystic Law. Isn’t this what we gain through pursuing the Soka Gakkai path of mentor and disciple for the sake of kosen-rufu?

IKEDA: As President Toda carried out his activities, his thoughts were always on his mentor, President Makiguchi, who launched the kosen-rufu movement of the modern age through his selfless efforts to propagate the Law. In his later years, President Toda poignantly remarked: “Without President Makiguchi, I feel lonely. I would like to return to his side.”

April 2 of this year marked the forty-sixth anniversary of President Toda’s passing. While he was alive and after his death—to this very day—I have always striven to advance along the great path of the oneness of mentor and disciple. That is my supreme pride in life.

Persevering in the way of mentor and disciple is the path to attaining a state of life eternally indestructible over past, present, and future. The great path of mentor and disciple is the ultimate essence of humanistic religion.

Among all the Buddhist scriptures, the Lotus Sutra is the only scripture of the oneness of mentor and disciple. Likewise, among world religions, Nichiren Buddhism is the only religion of the oneness of mentor and disciple, dedicated to enabling all people to attain enlightenment. And the great path of oneness of mentor and disciple is found in the Soka Gakkai’s activities, its practical efforts to realize kosen-rufu.

Through these efforts based on the oneness of mentor and disciple, the Soka Gakkai, which seeks to elevate the state of life of all people on our planet and enable each to become a lion king, will undoubtedly come to shine with lasting brilliance as a pioneering humanistic religion of the twenty-first century.

This concludes the series “The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings.”

1. Ikegami Munenaka: One of Nichiren Daishonin’s most influential followers at the time, who lived in Musashi Province’s Ikegami area (present-day Ota Ward, Tokyo). Together with his younger brother, Munenaga, he persevered in faith despite the opposition of his father Yasumitsu. After more than twenty years, the brothers finally guided their father to take faith in the Daishonin’s teaching.

2. The Daishonin wrote this letter at the height of the Atsuhara Persecution on October 1, 1279, just eleven days before inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon. Addressing all of his followers, the Daishonin, then fifty-eight, indicates that he will accomplish the purpose of his advent, describes how he has spread the Law while enduring persecution, and encourages his followers in Atsuhara and elsewhere to fearlessly persevere in faith.

3. The Daishonin writes: “You may rest assured that nothing, not even a person possessed by a powerful demon, can harm Nichiren, because Brahma, Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, the four heavenly kings, the Sun Goddess, and Hachiman are safeguarding him” (WND, 997).

4. In this letter, composed in Kamakura in 1255, the Daishonin indicates that the direct path to attaining Buddhahood lies in chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the confidence that the Mystic Law is inherent in our life.

5. “One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme”: This is a passage from The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra by the Great Teacher Chang-an of China. In explaining the spirit to protect and spread the Law in Japan, he states that one should cherish the teaching more highly than one’s own life.


8. The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra.

9. Four virtues: Four noble qualities of the Buddha’s life, also known as the
four virtue paramitas—eternity, happiness, true self, and purity. “Eternity” means unchanging and eternal. “Happiness” means tranquility that transcends all suffering. “True self” means true and intrinsic nature. And “purity” means free of illusion or mistaken conduct.

10. According to an early biography of Nichiren (written in 1478), the Daishonin set out from Minobu at noon on September 8. He first made his way through Kai Province (part of present-day Yamanashi Prefecture), staying at followers’ homes or at inns along the way. He spent the night of the 8th at the residence of Shimoyama Hyoe Shiro, the 9th at the residence of the lay priest Ooi Shoji, the 10th at the residence of Sone no Jiro, the 11th in Kurokoma, the 12th in Kawaguchi, and the 13th in Kurechi. On the 14th, he made his way into Suruga Province (part of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture), spending the night in Takenoshita. On the 15th, he entered Sagami Province (present-day Kanagawa) through the Ashigara Pass and stayed at Sekimoto. And on the 16th, he spent the night at Hiratsuka. On the 17th, he entered Musashi Province (encompassing present-day Tokyo, Saitama, and part of Kanagawa) and stayed the night at Seya. At noon on the 18th, he finally arrived at Isejima.

11. In “Arrival at Isejima,” addressed to Hakiri Sanenaga, the Daishonin indicates his intention to visit the hot springs at Hitachi, saying: “Much as I’d like to take [a horse] all the way to the hot springs at Hitachi with us, it is possible that someone might steal it. Also, I feel there may be other difficulties, and so, until we return from taking the waters at Hitachi, I will leave your horse in the care of Mohara in Kazusa.” (GZ, 1576).

The Hitachi mentioned in this passage is thought to be either Hitachi in present-day Ibaraki Prefecture or Hitachi in Fukushima Prefecture. The following explanations for his reference to hot springs at Hitachi are the most credible: (1) Hakiri Sanenaga’s third son Yasaburo Saneuji’s fief was in Hitachi (the present area of Kakurai in Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture). Since there is a hot spring there, it may be that the Hakiri clan had urged the Daishonin to go there to recuperate: (2) The Hitachi Yumoto hot springs in the present-day city of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, has been well known since ancient times. It is possible that there were already believers there during the Daishonin’s lifetime. There are letters by Nichimin Shonin addressed to believers in the area. Based on this, it may be that the Daishonin’s followers had urged him to visit the hot springs there.

12. In “On the Building of Hachiman Shrine,” the Daishonin writes: “I have the feeling that my life is drawing to a close…. Even if I were to manage to live past this year, is it likely that I could live for one or two more years?” (GZ, 1105).

13. The Daishonin writes: “Should I attain Buddhahood when I die, even though I am said to be evil, that would surely demonstrate the power of the Lotus Sutra. On the other hand, should I end my life wretchedly, that would bring disgrace on the Lotus Sutra. (That, however, will definitely not happen.) Therefore, if others want to call me evil, that’s fine by me, fine by me” (GZ, 1476).

14. The ceremony of March 16: An event in which President Ikeda (then the chief of the general staff) and the members of the youth division gathered together with President Toda on March 16, 1958—two weeks before the latter passed away on April 2—and pledged to carry on the movement for kosen-rufu.

15. According to the research of the eminent Japanese Buddhologist Hajime Nakamura (1912–99), Shakayamuni realized that the time of his own death was near and wanted to return to the place where he was born. It was a journey to announce his impending death to disciples residing in various places and to give them final instruction. In the course of this journey, Shakayamuni passed away in a grove of sal trees in Kushinagara. (See Nakamura Hajime Senshu [Selected Writings of Hajime Nakamura], vol. 12).


17. The ages cited in this discussion are all based on the traditional way of Japanese counting, in which a person is counted as one year old on the day of their birth.