

November 2021 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 59–70

“THE BUDDHISM OF THE SUN: ILLUMINATING THE WORLD” [70]

EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH PRAYER INFUSED WITH THE SHARED VOW OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

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 Ikeda Sensei’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. (November 2021 LB, pp. 69–70)
- ⇒ Chant abundant daimoku before your presentation to grasp and convey Sensei’s heart.
- ⇒ During the presentation, have someone read aloud key Goshō 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



February Campaign of 1952 (November 2021 *Living Buddhism*, p. 60)

- Ikeda Sensei’s essay on the February Campaign, [February 2016 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 10–19](#)



Osaka Campaign of 1956 (Nov. LB, 60)

- Sensei’s essay on using the “strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” Oct. 16, 2009, *World Tribune*, pp. 4–5 (see attached PDF)



Starting from “**The Prayers of Practitioners ...**” (Nov. LB, 61)

- Sensei’s guidance related to “On Prayer,” [The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace, part 1, pp. 58–62](#)



Concept: “Three Thousand Realms in a Single Moment of Life” (Nov. LB, 62)

- Study article, [Oct. 1, 2021, *World Tribune*, pp. 6–7](#)



Starting from “**The Essence of Nichiren Buddhism**” (Nov. LB, 66)

- Sensei’s study lecture on “The Eight Winds,” *The Teachings for Victory*, vol. 6, pp. 17–29



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The following is the conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's study essay from the "Writings of Nichiren Daishonin and the Oneness of Mentor and Disciple" series published in the March 20 edition of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper. Part one appears in the Sept. 4 *World Tribune*.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's Study Essay—Part 2 of 2

Employ the Strategy of the Lotus Sutra

“Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other. ‘All others who bear you enmity or malice will ... be wiped out.’ These golden words [of the Lotus Sutra] will never prove false” (From “The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1001).

Under the tutelage of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, I engraved in my young life the importance of employing the strategy of the Lotus Sutra. And it is with this unsurpassed strategy that I have taken on every difficult challenge I have encountered during the course of my life.

For instance, when we launched the 1956 Osaka Campaign in Kansai, no one thought that we could possibly succeed. But I was absolutely determined that we would, because Mr. Toda had entrusted me with that mission. At the start of that year, as I chanted earnestly about the road that lay ahead, it suddenly occurred to me with great clarity that the Lotus Sutra embodies the highest philosophy of leadership. I thought to myself: “Everything comes down to the Gohonzon and faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple. In all ages and situations, the hallmark of leaders in the realm of the Mystic Law is whether they make the strategy of the Lotus Sutra their leadership philosophy.”

[In May 1956, Kansai members, rallying around a young Daisaku Ikeda, introduced 11,111 households to the practice of Nichiren Buddhism. In elections held two months later, the Soka Gakkai-backed candidate in Kansai won a seat in the House of Councillors, an accomplishment that was thought all but impossible at the time.]

I told my fellow members in Kansai that the key to victory was first of all earnestly chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon, followed by excellent plan-

ning and effective action. Citing the passage “Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other” (WND-1, 1001), I said: “This simply means employing plans and implementing actions based on faith, based on our Buddhist practice. No other kind of plans or actions can surpass these. Therefore, we have no need to fret or worry.”

I led our campaign in Kansai alone while Mr. Toda remained in Tokyo. Looking for inspiration that would power our movement forward under the difficult circumstances we faced, I decided to start holding study sessions on *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* every morning at the old Soka Gakkai Kansai Headquarters with top Kansai leaders. These study sessions were a source of fresh energy that invigorated the local organization, and powerful waves of joy began to spread throughout Kansai, ultimately leading to the tremendous victory that astounded all of Japan.

The Lotus Sutra is an epic of human revolution.

The Lotus Sutra is the Buddha's highest teaching, a teaching of universal enlightenment. It reveals that all of us, irrespective of our present state of life, inherently possess the same noble life-state as the Buddha and explains how we can manifest this Buddha nature.

Among the assembly on Eagle Peak where the Lotus Sutra was preached were many women, who had been denied any possibility of attaining enlightenment in

earlier sutras. In fact, living beings of every imaginable state of life—that is, living beings of the Ten Worlds, from hell through Buddhahood—had joyously gathered to hear Shakyamuni speak. And when he explained that all living beings have the potential for Buddhahood—a teaching that none had ever heard before—it was greeted with unrestrained rejoicing. The prevailing notions of enlightenment were completely turned on their head at this assembly.

The Lotus Sutra is an inspiring epic of human revolution, in which people from all walks of life come into contact with the exemplary character of the Buddha, hear his profound teaching and go on to tap the unlimited power and potential in the depths of their lives.

Adopting the strategy of the Lotus Sutra as our leadership philosophy simply means making efforts in the midst of our daily realities to deeply awaken the minds of those around us and to bring forth the Buddha nature—the ultimate, infinite energy source for victory and happiness—in both our own lives and those of others.

To do everything we can to give courage and strength to the suffering, the discriminated against, the oppressed and the honest and hardworking, and help them attain the supreme state of Buddhahood—this is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Buddhism.

Dr. Lokesh Chandra, a leading Indian scholar of Buddhism, observed that Shakyamuni was a spiritual pioneer who placed the utmost importance on human beings.

The leadership philosophy of Buddhism is to enable all people to shine their brightest and gain inner strength and wisdom. To employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra means reaching out to others and wholeheartedly encouraging them and guiding them to the path of happiness and victory in life. It means breaking through the walls of prejudice and discriminatory traditions and paving the way for the triumph of the people.

Josei Toda was a rare and extraordinary mentor.

I first met Mr. Toda 62 years ago [in August 1947]. My eldest brother had been killed during World War II, our family home had been destroyed in a wartime air raid, and I myself was suffering from poor health. After Japan's defeat, the values that people had believed in up to then had all crumbled, and the entire country had fallen into a state of profound spiritual malaise.

At that first encounter, Mr. Toda turned his gaze on me, a 19-year-old youth, and instantly dispelled the clouds from my heart by saying: “When I think of our family, our country and our turbulent world, I want to eliminate all misery and suffering from the face of the earth. This is what the movement for *kosen-rufu* is all about. Will you join me?” His words electrified me. This was the first time I had heard someone speak so plainly and clearly about a correct path for life and society. I instinctively felt that I could trust this man—indeed, I was deeply

inspired by him.

Mr. Toda was a rare and extraordinary mentor. He was also a great authority on human nature, having keen intuition. No matter who someone was, Mr. Toda could quickly see through to the very essence of their life. Almost like a high-precision sensor, he could accurately identify their basic life-tendency. He once told me that he could see the kind of person someone was by the way they walked, the way they held their shoulders or the tone of their voice. He could even perceive what was bothering a person by the way they opened the door to enter the room. He was especially strict with those who were guilty of lies and deception. He could sense when people were being insincere or dishonest, or when they were spinning a story that was too good to be true.

It was from this great mentor that I learned the leadership philosophy of rebutting error and falsehood, and speaking out for truth and justice. He thoroughly taught me his policy of always employing the strategy of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin's writings are teachings that enable us to break through.

In an interview last year, Dr. Vincent Harding—a close friend of American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and the first director of the King Center in Atlanta—commented:

“Hope is really the expression of a deep sense of confidence in the possibilities that human beings possess for the creation of a better world. But we can't achieve that goal simply as isolated individuals. We have to join our creativity. King used to say, we have to organize goodness.”

To organize goodness or forces for good—this is a very important point. Our movement for *kosen-rufu* is about tapping into the greatest force for good there is—the boundless life force of Buddhahood inherent in each person's life—and uniting and organizing that power. This is the strategy of the Lotus Sutra. We of the Soka Gakkai, who do our utmost to warmly support and encourage others, are great practitioners of this strategy.

During the Osaka Campaign, I faithfully put the leadership philosophy of the Lotus Sutra into action in order to expand the forces for good working in tune with the Mystic Law. We poured our whole lives into chanting and taking action as if exerting millions of *kalpas* of effort at every moment. As a result, we were able to profoundly touch and change people's hearts. We were even able to turn many who were initially hostile and negative toward our movement into allies.

Courage and hope filled the hearts of men and women throughout Kansai as they gained growing conviction that they could transform society for the better and open the way to happiness. This led to our brilliant victory that stunned all of Japan.

Many of those who participated in the Osaka Campaign were relatively new members. These sincere members solidly

joined forces with me, a young leader on whose success in this struggle Mr. Toda was counting. Basing ourselves on Nichiren Daishonin's writings naturally gave rise to unsurpassed courage and unity, and created the momentum we needed for making the impossible possible.

Referring to ancient Chinese generals such as Chang Liang, Nichiren echoes the words of *Records of the Historian*, saying, “Within the tents of command they were able to devise strategies that assured victory a thousand miles away” (WND-2, 391). This ability was deemed the key to success in battle from countless ages past.

When we make our mentor's profound resolve our own and give our all, there is no struggle we cannot win.

For us, our strategy in the realm of *kosen-rufu* is faith—in other words, prayer, planning, action, unity and courage based on chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to the Gohonzon. The strategy of the Lotus Sutra, making positive use of everything, is the driving force that dynamically propels us toward victory.

During Mr. Toda's final years, I worked closely with him to formulate plans for the numerous struggles we faced and in which we ultimately achieved resounding victories. These included the Otaru Debate, the Yamaguchi Campaign and the Yubari Coal Miners Union Incident. Great advances leading to victory a thousand miles away always began from the discussions the two of us had together.

From the standpoint of our Buddhist activities, “devising strategies within the tents of command” (see WND-2, 391) can be taken as members communicating and coordinating closely together and solidly uniting their efforts, based on the foundation of earnest prayer.

During the Osaka Campaign, long past midnight every day at the old Kansai Headquarters, I did a solitary *ushitora gongyo* in front of a Gohonzon, which bore the inscription “Prosperity of the Great Law and the Fulfillment of All Prayers” and had been conferred at Mr. Toda's request. [*Ushitora gongyo* is an early morning recitation of the sutra and chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo traditionally conducted between around 2 and 4 a.m.—or between the hour of the ox (*ushi*) and tiger (*tora*)—to pray for the actualization of *kosen-rufu* and world peace.]

Even if no one else is aware of our efforts, the important thing is that we chant wholeheartedly to support our

mentor and for the realization of *kosen-rufu*. Even if no one else sees our struggles, we will surely be praised by Nichiren. Our own life, our Buddha nature, also knows the profound meaning of what we are doing. The heavenly deities—the positive forces of the universe—will move into action without fail to lend us assistance and protection. To be people who can “assure victory a thousand miles away” (see WND-2, 391) requires courageous and united efforts. There is no more powerful or certain course of action than this.

The writings of Nichiren constitute an instruction manual left to us by him on how to employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra toward realizing happiness for all humanity. They are teachings for victory that enable us to break through every obstacle we encounter in the journey of life and in our efforts for *kosen-rufu*. If we take the Daishonin's words deeply to heart and unerringly put them into practice, we are guaranteed to lead victorious lives free of the slightest regret, enacting our own triumphant dramas of making the impossible possible.

Shijo Kingo, the recipient of the letter titled “The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra,” succeeded in overcoming his difficulties and showing actual proof of the power of faith by following Nichiren's guidance to “regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens” (WND-1, 681). He also took the Daishonin's advice in exercising prudence and self-restraint, and forged ahead undaunted by adversity.

When we make our mentor's profound resolve our own and give our all, there is no struggle we cannot win. Mr. Toda confidently assured us: “Just dedicate your life to the Soka path of the oneness of mentor and disciple. You will never regret it, and your life will be adorned with the joy of victory.”

‘Win with the heart of a lion king!’

In every struggle, I have employed the strategy of the Lotus Sutra just as Mr. Toda taught. It is infinitely superior to any other strategy.

We cannot become heirs to the strategy of the Lotus Sutra unless we fight our hardest. It is the heritage of *kosen-rufu* that can only be gained by striving with the

same commitment as our teachers in faith.

From the days of my youth, I've won every struggle by leading the way forward with the spirit that seizing the initiative ensures victory and that speed is of the essence. “If you take the initiative, you'll gain the upper hand,” as a well-known Japanese saying goes. It sounds simple, but it's an extremely important point that can mean the difference between victory or defeat.

Rejoicing at our victory in the Otaru Debate in 1955, Mr. Toda said: “The opposite side came at us, but we won, because, instead of adopting a defensive posture, we went on the offense and launched one counterattack after another. It is vital to boldly take the offensive.”

Being slow to take action can mean having to work twice as hard and being less effective. Swiftly taking action, on the other hand, can have a positive effect on everyone and be twice as effective. That slight difference can lead to dramatically different results. Speed can be decisive.

The Lotus Sutra is a teaching for winning courageously in all endeavors and challenges. When we burn with a fighting spirit based on the oneness of mentor and disciple, and move forward with our fellow members in a spirit of unity, then no matter what kind of obstacles or negative functions may assail us, we will be able to prevail over them. This is the assurance conveyed in the passage: “All others who bear [us] enmity or malice will ... be wiped out” (WND-1, 1001).

We are revolutionaries of the Mystic Law. The Soka Gakkai must forever remain true to its original spirit and continue advancing with strong, resilient vitality. Let us win with the heart of a lion king!

I call out with boundless hope and aspiration to the youth, who will determine the success of this second act of *kosen-rufu*: “My young friends, now is the time to stand up and employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra! Strive with the spirit of not begrudging your lives! May all of you follow in my footsteps as youthful leaders of the entire Soka Gakkai and brilliantly win one victory after another!”

Assured that there is no greater strategy than the Lotus Sutra, may you triumph in every challenge.

Discussions

The leadership philosophy of Buddhism is to enable all people to shine their brightest and gain inner strength and wisdom. To employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra means reaching out to others and wholeheartedly encouraging them and guiding them to the path of happiness and victory in life.

- What does it mean to employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra?
- From a Buddhist perspective, why is it most effective to take action based on faith?