

WHAT A CONCEPT: 'Myoho' (Mystic)

The Inscrutable Truth

By LISA JONES, Staff Writer

How *myoho!*” some SGI-USA members say when something inexplicable happens. “I hadn’t seen him in years...I was just thinking about him...then, all of a sudden, he shows up at my door. Isn’t that *myoho?*”

Yes, in a way, it is. On one level, *myoho* connotes mystic — in the sense of being mysterious, beyond human comprehension, or filling one with wonder or awe.

More specifically, *myoho* denotes the Mystic Law, the Middle Way or Myoho-renguekyo. Mystic of Mystic Law means wonderful — it’s wonderful because the Law enables all beings to attain enlightenment.

Nichiren Daishonin explains: “What then does *myo* signify? It is simply the mysterious nature of our lives from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend nor words express.... Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic entity of the Middle Way that is the reality of all things. *Myo* is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and *ho* to its manifestations” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 5).

It has also been said that *myo* means death and *ho* means life. Also, *myo* signifies enlightenment or the world of Buddhahood, while *ho* indicates fundamental darkness and the other nine worlds from Hell to Bodhisattva.

Although these two syllables mean seemingly opposite things, the significance of *myoho* is that these opposites are united in a single concept. *Myoho* implies that life and death exist in a dynamic relationship, as do darkness and enlightenment. They go together. The components are ultimately inseparable and essentially one.

It can be said that human beings are a microcosm within the macrocosm of the universe; we are component parts of a larger whole. But in light of the Lotus Sutra, each of us contains the entire universe — so the “part” *is* the whole. This idea is central to the concept of the mutual possession of the ten worlds, which holds that all living beings, whichever one of the ten worlds they inhabit or manifest, are themselves the entire universe. This is the true aspect of life, i.e., *myoho*, that a Buddha perceives. SGI President Ikeda explains that “the concept of the true aspect of life, from the standpoint of which the part is itself the whole, certainly transcends our ordinary way of thinking. That’s why it’s called inscrutable or mystic.”

This inscrutable truth is also referred to in Buddhism as the region of the unfathomable. “But this ‘region of the unfathomable’ does not exist somewhere apart from the reality of people’s lives,” President Ikeda says. “Rather, the lives of ordinary people are themselves mystic. The Lotus Sutra proclaims that the human being is sublime. We must never forget this. There isn’t some ‘mystic place’ or wondrous ‘mystic being’ existing apart from the reality of our lives.”

This is the logic that underpins the Daishonin’s statement in his letter “The Gift of Rice”: “The provisional sutras say that a tranquil mind is like the moon and a pure heart is like a flower, but the Lotus Sutra states that the flower and moon are themselves heart and mind. Therefore, it is obvious that rice is not merely rice but life itself” (MW-1, 269).

In the Daishonin’s Buddhism, the Gohonzon — whose power is found only within the realm of faith — is an inscrutable, mystic object of devotion. It’s an expression of the essence of our lives, which is difficult to perceive and to understand. Therefore, our lives based on faith in the Gohonzon are the most wonderful treasures and are themselves *myoho*.

Sixteen in a series

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