

**DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA**  
**39 THOSE WHO SPREAD THE MYSTIC LAW RECEIVE THE GREAT**  
**BENEFIT OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE SIX SENSE ORGANS**

**The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra—**  
**A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century**

*This is the thirty-ninth installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and vice Chiefs Takatori Endo and Haruo Suda.*

*This time, participants discuss the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” (nineteenth) chapter. How does the state of life of someone who propagates the Mystic Law change? Participants investigate the specific nature of these changes in light of the principle of the “purification of the six sense organs.”*

**39 Those Who Spread the Mystic Law Receive the Great Benefit of the Purification of the Six Sense Organs**

At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattva and mahasattva Constant Exertion: “If good men or good women accept and uphold this Lotus Sutra, if they read it, recite it, explain and preach it, or transcribe it, such persons will obtain eight hundred eye benefits, twelve hundred ear benefits, eight hundred nose benefits, twelve hundred tongue benefits, eight hundred body benefits, and twelve hundred mind benefits. With these benefits they will be able to adorn their six sense organs, making all of them pure.” (LS19, 251)<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” says: The word *hosshi*, or teacher of the Law, means one who teaches the five practices [of embracing, reading, reciting, teaching and transcribing the Lotus Sutra]. The word *kudoku*, or benefit, means the results or rewards that come about through the purification of the six sense organs. In essence we may say that Nichiren and his followers who now chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are carrying out purification of the six sense organs. Hence they are acting as teachers of the Law of Myoho-renge-kyo and possess great virtue. The element *ku* in the word *kudoku* means good fortune. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762)

**KATSUJI SAITO:** During February, the traditional month of propagation,<sup>2</sup> members throughout the country made wonderful strides in spreading Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching. In this we can see a living example of the boundless spread of the Mystic Law to the “fiftieth person,” which we studied last time in our discussion of “Benefits of Responding with Joy,” the eighteenth chapter.

**DAISAKU IKEDA:** That’s wonderful! In this world of the Latter Day of the Law, no one is more noble than those who pray and take action out of the desire to help others

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become happy.

Often when we tell another about Buddhism, even if it's with all sincerity, we find ourselves ridiculed and sometimes treated with outright contempt. Members nevertheless continue to engage people in dialogue, with a patient spirit of compassion like that of a parent trying to teach something new to a child. They are bodhisattvas carrying out the sacred work of Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

It's important to remember that every time we are slighted or vilified on account of our efforts to tell others about Buddhism, our life becomes purer. That's why second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda used to say: "You should be filled with appreciation when you are treated badly as a result of your efforts to share Buddhism with others. That's because being subjected to such behavior enables us to rid our lives of negative karma and its effects and consequently move in the direction of absolute happiness."<sup>3</sup>

**ENDO:** This is the concept of the "purification of the six sense organs," which is the central theme of the "Benefits of the Teacher of the Law" chapter we are discussing this time.

**SUDA:** This chapter explains the benefits received by "teachers of the Law"—those who propagate the teaching in addition to practicing it themselves.

**IKEDA:** The term *teacher of the Law* does not refer to priests. As we noted in discussing "Teacher of the Law," the tenth chapter, a teacher of the Law is a person who takes the Law as his or her teacher, and who teaches others about it. Anyone, whether priest or lay person, who seeks out and propagates the Law is a "teacher of the Law,"

**SAITO:** The "Teacher of the Law" chapter describes these teachers as "lay persons or monks or nuns who read and recite the Lotus Sutra" (LS10, 162). Anyone who earnestly devotes him- or herself to Buddhist practice is a noble teacher of the Law. Someone who becomes idle or lazy, however, even if he or she wears the garments of a priest, is, as the Daishonin says, "no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 215). Dedication to Buddhism, not outward status, is the important distinction.

**IKEDA:** We can therefore state unequivocally that the members of the SGI who are single-mindedly working to apply and spread the Daishonin's teaching are the true teachers of the Law in this day and age. Where, outside of the SGI, are there people who can declare confidently: "I have found the correct path in life!" "I have discovered the way to genuine happiness!"?

Teachers of the Law are spiritual leaders who, in a society overshadowed by darkness and confusion, strive to guide others toward happiness. They are beacons illuminating the community and society. There are countless such people in the great grass-roots organization that is the SGI. I'm sure each of you knows many of them.

**SUDA:** Indeed. In Tokyo's Sumida Ward where I live, there is a district staff member named Chii Sekino who has to date personally converted 106 households to the Daishonin's Buddhism. She joined the Soka Gakkai in 1956. Last year (1997), she converted three households and this year (1998) she has already converted two more. As a result, a tremendous surge of propagation has swept through her chapter. Moreover, the people she has introduced to the practice have all realized steady growth, and not a few of them are currently active as chapter- and district-level leaders.

**IKEDA:** To help a hundred people fundamentally transform their lives for the better is a great achievement that few scholars or business leaders could claim to match. To perceive this truth, without being blinded by such considerations as social status, corresponds to

the “purification of the eye” as explained by the principle of the purification of the six sense organs.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino operates a wholesale business specializing in shoe-manufacturing materials in Sumida Ward. Even now, at more than 60 years of age, she continues to drive herself around town to conduct business.

Though she is very healthy today, when she joined the Soka Gakkai she suffered from a severe case of tuberculosis of the spine, or Pott’s disease. Her mother died when she was five and for many years she lived in poverty. When she heard the guidance that there is no way to transform your destiny other than by sharing Buddhism with others, she determined to dedicate herself to doing just that.

Her first attempts at Buddhist dialogue consisted of talking to the people who came to visit her at the hospital. Although she had been told she would likely have to spend years in the hospital convalescing, as a result of these efforts she was discharged after just six months. Her recovery was so remarkable that she began working again only four days after her release. Through this experience, she gained supreme confidence and conviction in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

**SAITO:** No one is stronger than a person of conviction.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino says, “I make efforts to spread Buddhism 365 days a year.” Each morning and evening she prays to meet people with whom she shares some connection. As a result, she runs into people who are interested in learning about Buddhism. The people she introduced to the practice this year were old friends she had not seen for many years until she happened to run into them on the street.

She also writes down the names of those whom she would like to introduce to the Daishonin’s Buddhism, and offers prayers each day, thinking about how happy they would become if only they would take faith.

**ENDO:** Nothing is more powerful than compassionate prayer. People cannot fail to listen to someone who has genuine concern for them. Doubtless Mrs. Sekino’s friends can sense her strong concern and her prayers for their happiness.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino’s method of propagation does not involve a lot of complex doctrine. She believes that even a few words will suffice. And most of the time, her friends readily decide to join. It’s not a matter of theory; it comes down to using words that move a person’s life.

## The Life Force to Win Over the Environment

**IKEDA:** Sharing Buddhism with others means praying wholeheartedly that they will truly feel your sincerity. Then, regardless of how they respond at the time, they will be left with a deep sense of trust knowing how much you care for their happiness. They will be profoundly moved. That’s what’s important.

Incidentally, why do well over a billion Chinese people to this day continue to cherish the memory of Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), born one hundred years ago this year (1998)? Many Chinese will tell you that just thinking of Premier Zhou brings tears to their eyes. The reason for this tremendous affection is that Zhou, more than anyone else, devoted himself heart and soul to working for the happiness of the Chinese people. This is the same kind of sincere dedication to the country as was exhibited by Chuko Kung-ming, whose life a poet memorializes with these words: “Though some may argue his success or failure / He was loyal to the very end.”<sup>4</sup> The happiness of the people was Zhou Enlai’s only con-

cern. That's why to this day, more than twenty years after his death (in January 1976), his memory still elicits such feelings of warmth.

**ENDO:** Commenting on the recent visit of the Chinese Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble, which you invited to come to Japan to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Zhou Enlai's birth, Masao Shimizu, director and president of the Matsuyama Ballet, wrote:

Premier Zhou Enlai had a special feeling for the arts. That's because he had a rich sensitivity and a great love for the people. Though a person will eventually disappear from the world, love endures forever in the human heart. This is the source of the fondness of China's 1.4 billion people for Zhou Enlai.

**SAITO:** In propagating Buddhism, too, it is important to pray until one's sincere desire for the happiness of the other person is conveyed.

**IKEDA:** When you have a strong spirit of compassion, you are able to understand the worries or difficulties that others are experiencing, just as an excellent physician can immediately diagnose the cause of someone's illness. This is the benefit of purifying the six sense organs.

**SUDA:** In the forty-some years since she took faith, Mrs. Sekino has completely overcome both illness and poverty. She is fond of saying, "The strongest will win." With that conviction, to fortify her life force, she makes a point of always chanting sincere daimoku before trying to tell someone about Buddhism.

In her business activities, too, she has reportedly experienced setbacks, such as people defaulting on payment, but she explains that she has developed the strength to continue advancing no matter what happens.

**SAITO:** Isn't such strength itself the benefit gained by a teacher of the Law?

**IKEDA:** I think you could say that. A strong person is happy. At the same time, strength is relative; it depends on the relationship between one's life force and the environment. If your life force is weak and frail, then even minor problems will cause you to fret and become overwhelmed, bringing you to a deadlock. This will only make you miserable.

When we strengthen our life force even a bit, we gain the vitality to resolve problems, such as those at home, for example. Then, we are not set back by such troubles. Once we step out into the community, however, we may find ourselves stymied by problems there. Going further, though we may have developed the life force to address the issues of the peace and prosperity of the country, we may still find ourselves bewildered when it comes to dealing with the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death.

The Lotus Sutra enables us to tap into the life force of the universe, so that no matter what happens, we are never bound by our difficulties. The Daishonin's Buddhism is the teaching that gives all people the power to experience incredible energy welling forth in their lives. A person who has solid faith in the Mystic Law, therefore, is the strongest and happiest of all.

Happiness is not reliant solely on the environment. There are people living in luxurious mansions who spend their days in tears. Neither, however, is our happiness entirely independent of our environment. Not a single person could honestly claim to be happy if unable to feed his or her children.

Happiness is determined by the connection between the environment, or outer world, and our life force. A person who is controlled by a negative environment is suffering. On

the other hand, a person faced with a difficult situation who can control and influence it is happy.

**ENDO:** So we can say that a person with a strong life force is happy.

**IKEDA:** That's called purifying the six sense organs, or, in modern terms, doing one's human revolution. The lives of teachers of the Law—that is to say, of those who exert themselves for kosen-rufu—are purified and strengthened and greatly expanded. This is the benefit accrued by teachers of the Law. At the outset of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, Shakyamuni addresses a bodhisattva called Constant Exertion.

**SAITO:** Yes. In fact, Shakyamuni addresses his teaching in this chapter to this bodhisattva.

**IKEDA:** Regarding this figure, Nichiren Daishonin says:

One should understand that in the Latter Day of the Law, it is the votaries of the Lotus Sutra who act as the bodhisattva Constant Exertion. The Lotus Sutra itself says of such persons who uphold the sutra, “This is what is meant by diligence.”<sup>5</sup> (GZ, 763)

Specifically, Bodhisattva Constant Exertion indicates Nichiren Daishonin. But in general, we, the Daishonin's true followers, are also the recipients of this teaching. That's because we are constantly working to propagate the Law.

**ENDO:** The chapter begins:

At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattva and mahasattva Constant Exertion: “If good men or good women accept and uphold this Lotus Sutra, if they read it, recite it, explain and preach it, or transcribe it, such persons will obtain eight hundred eye benefits, twelve hundred ear benefits, eight hundred nose benefits, twelve hundred tongue benefits, eight hundred body benefits, and twelve hundred mind benefits. With these benefits they will be able to adorn their six sense organs, making all of them pure.” (LS19, 251)

**SUDA:** It seems that “sense organs” here indicates powers or abilities, as well as the organs invested with these powers.

**SAITO:** For instance, the “eye sense” refers to the ability to see, as well as the physical eye and optic nerve.

**ENDO:** Incidentally, the six sense organs (of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) each have their respective objects (color and form, sound, odor, taste, texture and mental or spiritual phenomena).

Also, the six sense organs are said to be operated by “six consciousnesses” (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and consciousness). Collectively, these organs, objects and consciousnesses are termed the “eighteen worlds.”

**SAITO:** The above passage mentions five kinds of practice: accepting and upholding the Lotus Sutra, reading it, reciting it, explaining and preaching it, and transcribing it. These are called the “five practices.” Those who carry out these practices are called “teachers of the Law who carry out the five kinds of practice.” But as we confirmed in our discussion of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism the one practice of accepting and upholding the Gohonzon includes the five practices in their entirety.

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[In the “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” the Daishonin says, “Embracing the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo encompass all five practices” (MW-1, 214).]

**IKEDA:** “Accepting and upholding” means practicing faith with selfless dedication. It means wholeheartedly embracing the Gohonzon and thoroughly striving for kosen-rufu. This is “constant exertion.” It is to work for kosen-rufu each day and over the course of one’s life. Through such faith, the six sense organs are purified. Let’s start by considering the benefits of the eye.

## **Purifying the Eye Enables Us To Discern the Essence of All Things**

**ENDO:** OK. In the sutra, the Buddha says:

These good men and good women, with the pure physical eyes they received from their parents at birth, will view all that exists in the inner and outer parts of the thousand-millionfold world, its mountains, forests, rivers and seas, down as far as the Avichi hell and up to the Summit of Being. And in the midst they will see all the living beings, and will also see and understand all the causes and conditions created by their deeds and the births that await them as a result and recompense for those deeds. (LS19, 251–52)

**IKEDA:** This is basically referring to the “power of insight.” It is not talking about clairvoyance or some mystical superhuman power.

**SUDA:** The advance of science has made it possible for human beings to see with their own eyes all of the mountains and seas of the world. Since science is also concerned with investigating the laws of life and the universe, we may also view it as part of Buddhism. It is certainly true that, as a result of scientific advances, our eyes and ears have acquired truly tremendous power.

**SAITO:** The issue, however, is whether such power equals happiness. While the tendency of science has been to direct its investigative gaze ever outward, in the absence of a corresponding growth and maturation in the inner realm of life, it will only produce misfortune.

**IKEDA:** The capacity to discern this path to happiness is the benefit of the eye. This does not only apply to oneself. Like a skilled physician, we become able to see what others are seeking, and what we can do to help them break through their difficulties.

President Toda had extremely keen powers of insight. Just by observing a small detail—for example, how someone walked or opened a door—he could immediately fathom what was worrying the person or the nature of his or her situation.

**SAITO:** I understand, President Ikeda, that from the time that you were a young man, people would say that you had X-ray vision.

**IKEDA:** You cannot see someone’s heart. It is Buddhism that enables us to perceive the heart of another and thoroughly understand how it operates. It could be said that Buddhism is the science of the spirit, medicine for the heart.

It is not easy to do, but a Buddhist leader has to be able to deftly perceive the unseen principles or functions of the heart as though with radar.

**SUDA:** I would like to bring up the experience of a young man who was once helping to manage a Gakkai meeting you attended. At the back of the stage area hung a large banner. The young man’s duties required him to remain behind the banner with other staff throughout the entire meeting. He could not see you, President Ikeda and, of course, no

one knew that they were behind the banner. But at the end of the meeting, you suddenly remarked, “I would also like to thank those members behind the banner for their efforts.” He later told me that the surprise and emotion he felt at that moment has remained a cherished memory.

**IKEDA:** I’m not a psychic or anything of the sort. It’s just that I have the strong determination never to overlook those who are working behind the scenes and to show them my appreciation.

The Okinawa Training Center has a collection of tropical fish that are rarely seen in an aquarium. Thinking that catching the fish must have been a difficult task, I lost no time sending a message of appreciation.

People might look at a display or something and say, “Isn’t that beautiful,” but rarely do they consider the effort of the person or people who prepared it. And probably there are those who, their hearts inert and cold as stones, won’t be moved enough to say anything.

I always try to see the underlying essence, the invisible roots that lie buried and out of sight.

**ENDO:** I often hear about how when visiting a culture center, before even entering the building, you walk around back to encourage those working behind the scenes—giving people quite a start, I might add.

**IKEDA:** In doing so, I’m not trying to check up on people. When you observe things from an oblique angle, rather than from the front, you can usually clearly grasp the entirety of the situation.

In the case of a magazine, for instance, publishers naturally put effort into the cover and the initial sections. This is probably true for the staff of *The Daibyakurenge*, too, I would imagine. It is by reading the articles in the back, however, that you can accurately gauge just how much real effort is being put into the publication. It is the “power of vision” that enables us to discern this.

**SUDA:** Often, President Ikeda, you are the first to notice and encourage members who are helping out behind the scenes at some event, perhaps standing behind rows of cars or performing other support activities that often go unnoticed.

**IKEDA:** Let’s not talk only about me! We should each strive to be attentive to the efforts of those around us.

Since I myself have really worked behind the scenes, I understand people’s inconspicuous efforts. It is in the wings, rather than on center stage, that you often find people of real strength and ability. I am always thinking about such people, and each day from morning to evening I do everything I can to encourage them.

**SAITO:** I once heard someone describe you as “having many different sides,” noting your multifarious activities—as a religious leader, a social activist, an author, a photographer, an educator. The person asked me how I would sum up your work in a word. I answered simply that it is the work of encouraging people. I think we could also say that it is the work of fostering capable people.

**ENDO:** Perhaps it is only through such “constant exertion” day in and day out that we can polish our life and “purify the eye.”

### **Firm Resolve Brings Out the “Eye of Wisdom”**

**IKEDA:** With regard to “purifying the eye,” in a verse section Shakyamuni says:

If in the midst of the great assembly  
someone with a fearless mind  
preaches this Lotus Sutra,  
listen to the benefits he will receive! (LS19, 252)

When we go out among others and dauntlessly spread the teaching, we receive the benefit of “purifying the eye”; we can develop the “eye of wisdom” without fail. This is another meaning of the “opening of the eyes.” The Daishonin says, “When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated” (MW-1, 82).

In our daily lives, too, we need to plainly see the best direction in which to proceed. We mustn’t live foolishly. When we exercise our ingenuity and tenaciously exert ourselves based on faith, never becoming impatient, we can discern the “supreme path” for our life. We also develop insight into the future of our family, our community and society.

Nichiren Daishonin, as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, could see clearly over the three existences of past, present and future. While we are ordinary people, the “eye of wisdom” comes to shine acutely as a result of our practice.

**SUDA:** Just as the Daishonin decreed, you have been steadily working to promote peace and human happiness throughout Asia and the world, President Ikeda. While today your foresight is clear, I understand that initially you faced much resistance because no one could fathom what you were doing.

**SAITO:** I also heard there was a great deal of opposition to your plans to found Soka University, which is today making a great contribution to education and culture, as well as the Min-On Concert Association and the Fuji Art Museum.

**IKEDA:** The holding of culture festivals, the formation of the fife and drum corps, the building of training centers—each of these initiatives was met with widespread opposition!

To help more people understand the wonder of Buddhism, we need to create a universal forum of culture, education and peace. If we use colors to describe the Soka Gakkai organization, I think we could say that in the past it had a gray tint. I have tried to change the organization to give it a colorful hue.

**ENDO:** Your insight is tremendous.

**IKEDA:** Fierce determination is key. When you are firmly resolved, you can open the “eye of wisdom.” The Daishonin says:

If you exert a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means just such diligent practice. (GZ, 790)

Rather than feeling distressed over a lack of capable people in one’s area, for example, the first thing one should do is offer prayer. To secure peace based on the teachings of Buddhism is the Buddha’s will. It is the Buddha’s enterprise and the Buddha’s work. As Nichiren Daishonin promised, Bodhisattvas of the Earth could therefore not fail to be in any given area, no matter how remote.

The problem isn’t that there are no capable people; it’s simply that we cannot “see” them. The solution is to offer earnest prayer. We also need to be determined to take full responsibility without anyone’s help. Such resolve will without a doubt bring forth people able and willing to work in the same cause.

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The Soka Gakkai is an organization of utmost sincerity. That is the meaning of faith; it is the way of purifying the six sense organs.

In this society rife with corruption and confusion, faith is the one absolute that will never betray a person of genuine sincerity. Such a person will triumph in the realm of faith. We are infinitely fortunate to have encountered such a wonderful realm.

This is the principle of the “lotus flower in the water.” Though its roots are sunk in muddy water, the lotus itself remains pure. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the lotus. They exhibit the purification of the six sense organs.

The six sense organs are the interface between the small universe of our life and the cosmos. They are the portal connecting the microcosm and the macrocosm. Purifying the six sense organs means completely harmonizing one’s life with the universe, tuning in to its rhythm.

Through our practice, we harmonize our life with the rhythm, the wavelength, of the Mystic Law. We are then endowed with the power to advance confidently and without any hindrance, and the freedom to live our lives in sync with the universe. This is what it means to attain Buddhahood in one’s present form, to do one’s human revolution, and to purify the six sense organs.

**SAITO:** The sutra in one place speaks of “the eyes received at birth from his parents” (LS19, 252). The important point here is that we can actually change even such physical features.

**IKEDA:** Buddhism is concerned with reality. There’s no such thing as Buddhism divorced from reality.

Practicing faith does not mean that your life will be free of the mud of suffering. It means acquiring the life force not to be defeated by suffering. In fact, it’s necessary to have lots of struggles. Faith means developing the state of life to be able to enjoy even the challenge of facing and overcoming hardships.

Also, though we might speak of “purifying the eye,” there are people who cannot physically see. Through faith in the Mystic Law, they can absolutely open the “eye of the heart.” Having perfect vision does not mean a person can perceive the essence of things.

**ENDO:** Helen Keller (1880–1968) is renowned for her “miraculous” victory over the threefold disability of being unable to speak, hear or see. The American author Mark Twain (1835–1910) would often tell her: “Helen, the world is full of unseeing eyes, vacant, staring, soulless eyes.”<sup>6</sup>

**IKEDA:** They were friends. In her praise, Twain once remarked that the two most interesting characters of the nineteenth century were Napoleon and Helen Keller.<sup>7</sup> He also noted that while Napoleon had planned to conquer the world by means of force and failed, Helen Keller, while bearing the weight of a threefold disability, succeeded through her abundant spiritual strength in winning the world over.

Helen Keller inspired untold numbers of people with hope and courage. With enormous tenacity, by the sweat of her brow, she grappled her way up the mountain of learning, fell down, and climbed up again. Describing how she felt at the outset of her university studies, she proclaims: “In the wonderland of Mind I should be as free as another.”<sup>8</sup>

The realm of the heart and mind is free. She calls it a “wonderland”—a mystical domain. She opened up a world filled with wonderment in her heart. This is freedom, a state of true liberty.

**SUDA:** President Ikeda, I recall that you gave the group in the Soka Gakkai for people with sight loss the name Jizai-kai (Freedom Group).

**IKEDA:** Helen Keller did not know about the Mystic Law. The members of the Freedom Group who embrace the Mystic Law, cannot fail to open the supreme “eye of wisdom” and achieve boundless happiness. Indeed, this is my ardent hope; that’s why I gave the group this name. The same of course also goes for other physically challenged people.

## Purification of the Ears

**SAITO:** Next, we come to the sense of hearing. The sutra explains in no uncertain terms that people who have purified the ears can hear all voices in the world. It says:

They will...purify their ears so they can hear all the different varieties of words and sounds in the thousand-millionfold world, down as far as the Avichi hell, up to the Summit of Being, and in its inner and outer parts. Elephant sounds, horse sounds, ox sounds, carriage sounds, weeping sounds, lamenting sounds, conch sounds, drum sounds, bell sounds, chime sounds, sounds of laughter, sounds of speaking, men’s voices, women’s voices, boys’ voices, girls’ voices, the voice of the Law, the voice that is not the Law, bitter voices, merry voices, voices of common mortals, voices of sages, happy voices, unhappy voices, voices of heavenly beings, dragon voices, yaksha voices, gandharva voices, asura voices, garuda voices, kimnara voices, mahoraga voices, the sound of fire, the sound of water, the sound of wind, voices of hell dwellers, voices of beasts, voices of hungry spirits, monks’ voices, nuns’ voices, voices of voice-hearers, voices of pratyekabuddhas, voices of bodhisattvas and voices of Buddhas. In a word, although the person has not yet gained heavenly ears, with the pure and ordinary ears that he received at birth from his parents he will be able to hear and understand all the voices that exist in the inner and outer parts of the thousand-millionfold world. (LS19, 252–53)

**IKEDA:** This covers all of the Ten Worlds. The world is filled with all kinds of voices, from the groans of beings in the realm of Hell to the compassionate voices of Buddhas leading people to happiness. Those who have gained the “benefit of the ear” can hear all these voices, and clearly distinguish the essence of life that they express. To hear the lion’s roar of the Buddha, the powerful voice that defeats devilish forces, is the supreme happiness.

**ENDO:** In his *Maka Shikan* (Great Concentration and Insight), the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China says regarding the various grades of physicians, “The superior physician listens to the voice [of the patient], the common physician observes the color, the inferior physician examines the pulse.” He is saying that an outstanding physician can diagnose a person’s illness just by the sound of his voice, even without observing the person’s face or checking physical symptoms.

**IKEDA:** This is from a section of the *Maka Shikan* titled “Observe the Patient.” The Daishonin cites it in his well-known writing on the “six causes of illness” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 213). Throughout its history, Buddhism has helped people address the four universal sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death.

Certainly the voice clearly expresses the state or condition of a person’s life. There are warm voices, cold voices, weak voices, spirited voices, voices resonating with profundity, voices ringing with shallowness, voices full of good fortune and benefit, voices reverberating with sincerity and voices revealing duplicity.

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If we listen carefully, we will not be deceived. In a sense, the voice expresses even more about a person than what the person says.

**SAITO:** People who excel at giving individual guidance emphasize the importance of careful listening. I think this means, in addition to hearing what the person has to say, compassionately opening one's ears and one's heart to the other person's voice.

**IKEDA:** The "Benefits of the Teacher of the Law" chapter says, "Because the faculties of his ears are so keen / he can distinguish and understand all these sounds" (LS19, 255). A teacher of the Law can discern people's states of life from the sounds of their voices.

Keen means sagacious. The first element of the word sagacious (Jpn *somei*) incorporates the character for ear. To have an ear that is acute is to have wisdom. And the second element in the term *somei*, a character meaning "bright," expresses the idea of having eyes that can clearly perceive the reality of things.

As Nichiren Daishonin indicates in the Goshō when he says, "Listen with the ears of Shih K'uang and observe with the eyes of Li Lou" (MW-1, 9),<sup>9</sup> we need to possess sharp ears and clear eyes. We live in an age teeming with information. This letter, which he composed and addressed to a follower named Shiji Shiro just prior to the great persecution of the Izu Exile, can be interpreted as instruction to gather the most accurate information.

It is important to listen. The Chinese character for *holy* or *sacred* incorporates the element for "ear." According to one explanation, the character denotes listening intently to the voice of heaven and praying. The virtue of listening to the voice of heaven, the fundamental voice of the universe, is called sagacity, and one possessing this virtue is called a sage.

Shih K'uang was in fact unable to see. He was a blind musician and a cultural figure. During the Spring and Autumn period (770–403 B.C.E.), when the kingdoms of Chin and Ch'u were at war, Shih K'uang, who served the Chin, discerned the voice of death in the sound of the wind and divined the outcome of the battle, predicting the defeat of Ch'u.

**SAITO:** The ability to recognize the tendency of the times by listening to the voices around us is part of the power gained from purification of the ears.

**IKEDA:** The Daishonin condemned the melancholy drone of the Nembutsu as a death knell for the country and as beckoning people to take their own lives. [The Daishonin says, "If you chant the Nembutsu a lot, a spirit of self-destruction will arise in your heart" (GZ, 1509).]

It is said that songs follow the times, and the times follow the songs. President Toda used to point out that there was a surge in melancholy music around the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake (in 1923), such as the song that begins, "I am the withered eulalia grass of the dried riverbed..."<sup>10</sup>

**SUDA:** In contrast to this peal of death, daimoku is the peal of life. It is the rhythm of hope.

**IKEDA:** When this rhythm of hope enters our ears, the strife-ridden *saha* world becomes the place for us to attain Buddhahood. It becomes a land for attaining the Way through the sense of hearing.

**ENDO:** This suggests that there are other worlds that are not "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of hearing."

**IKEDA:** It seems to me that T'ien-t'ai addresses this in the *Hokke Gengi* (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra), when he says that there are, for example, "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of smell"—places where you can attain the way by means of fragrance.

**SAITO:** Yes, there are "lands of fragrance" where the Buddha's work is carried out by

means of scent and teachings consist of fragrances.

**ENDO:** In such a place, I suppose that smell does the Buddha's work, as opposed to the voice doing the Buddha's work!

**SAITO:** Sutras explain that there are also "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of sight," where the teaching consists of lights and colors; "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of touch," where people attain Buddhahood through contact with "heavenly garments"; and "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of taste," where people attain enlightenment through food.

**SUDA:** I imagine that people carrying out Buddhist practice in a "land for attaining the Way through the sense of taste" would all have difficulties in maintaining their weight!

### Letting Others Hear "Singing Voices of Hope"

**IKEDA:** Buddhism is all-encompassing. While recognizing the vast potential inherent to all life, it is also cognizant of the prevalent needs of the world in which we live.

For beings on the earth, the sense of hearing is very important. Of the five sense organs, the ears are the first to become active at the beginning of our lives and the last to remain active at the end. It is said that a fetus in the mother's womb at about six months has completed the development of its ears and attendant nerves, so that even before the time of birth it already knows the sound of its mother's voice.

Tsuneshaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, once said: "A child experiences the greatest tranquillity while in the mother's womb. If you practice faith at that time [when pregnant], it will bring great fortune to your child." Children in the womb clearly hear the sound of their mothers' voices chanting daimoku. Of course, the unborn child will also hear the sounds of its parents quarreling! It's important to let our children hear the sound of the Mystic Law even before they are born.

And, as I just mentioned, it is said that when we are approaching death, our sense of hearing is the last to go.

**ENDO:** It is certainly true that while we can close our eyes or our mouth voluntarily, our ears are always open.

**IKEDA:** The ears are the "window of life" opening from the small universe of the self onto the greater universe. They are also the "gateway to the spirit" through which direct access to the depths of a person's life may be gained. That is why music has the power to stir deep emotion in people.

**SAITO:** A member of the Soka Gakkai nurses group told me about the experience of a terminal cancer patient, whom I will call Mr. K., who was receiving treatment at the hospital where she worked. Though only in his forties, his condition was deteriorating daily. The nurse told me that she prayed that Mr. K., who was not a member, would lead the best possible existence to the very end of his life; and that he would form a connection with Buddhism in this lifetime.

Having heard that the sense of hearing remains active to the end, she got a tape of Soka Gakkai songs for him as a present. Several days later, Mr. K. died. But she related that his mother told her that just before her son had died he listened to the music with tears in his eyes.

**SUDA:** He must have been very close to unconscious by then.

**SAITO:** But even so, it seems that he could hear the tape. The following day, the nurse received a phone call from Mr. K.'s wife. She told her that she wanted to use the tape that

had so moved her husband at his funeral. When the nurse heard this, she recalled your guidance, “It is the heart that moves the heart,” She felt confident that Mr. K. and his family had understood her genuine concern.

**IKEDA:** Purifying the heart is the foundation for purifying the six sense organs. It is purification of one’s consciousness.

At any rate, since we attain the Way through the sense of hearing, it is vital that we speak, that we use our voices. We need to let people hear voices of *kosen-rufu*: voices of warm encouragement, voices of justice deftly refuting falsehood, voices of conviction, and joyful voices raised in song. As the Daishonin indicates in urging that we speak out vigorously and wholeheartedly (cf. MW-1, 105), *kosen-rufu* is a process whereby the single wave of one person’s voice expands to produce ten thousand waves.

At the same time, since purifying the sense of hearing is vital, we need to listen attentively to the voices of the people, straining to hear if necessary. If communication is one-sided, then the “sense of hearing” is not at work. In this case, the ears are not purified, but remain clogged.

**ENDO:** There are politicians who cannot hear a thing even when the people are shouting right into their ears!

### **A Person Who Makes Steadfast Effort Has the “Fragrance of Tenacity”**

**SAITO:** With regard to the sense of smell, the Sutra says, for example, “the upholder of the Lotus / by detecting their scent can know all this” (LS19, 257). It explains that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra have the ability to distinguish keenly among all scents.

**SUDA:** It is said that, ordinarily, a human being can distinguish several thousand smells. I understand that a perfume expert can identify as many as ten thousand!

**IKEDA:** The art of fragrance has long played an important role in Japanese culture. People would burn fragrant materials or wood and savor their scents. They would even hold contests in which people would compete to make the best perfume or try to determine from the scent what combination of ingredients had gone into a perfume. In Japanese, the phrase “to smell incense” is also written with characters that literally mean “listening to fragrance.”

**SAITO:** The Lotus Sutra, too, uses the Chinese character for “listen” to indicate the verb to smell.

**IKEDA:** Since the Lotus Sutra is an important cornerstone of Japanese culture, a cultured person in ancient times would naturally have read the sutra repeatedly.

In any event, I think the point here is that each person has a unique fragrance. I’m not talking about perfume or body odor, but a unique fragrance of the heart or fragrance of life. A person who studies, makes effort and strives to grow with single-minded diligence possesses the fragrance of tenacity. Such a person exudes a robust fragrance—like that of a fresh sapling.

On the other hand, people who spend their lives in decadent idleness seem to emit from their entire beings an unpleasant aroma, like that of something rotting. The difference is really striking.

**SUDA:** It is the purification of the sense of smell that enables us to detect this.

### **Voices That Invigorate People**

**SAITO:** Next we come to the purification of the tongue. This is an area where women

doubtless have an edge!

**ENDO:** This is the so-called art of loquaciousness.

**SAITO:** The benefits of the tongue are of two kinds. The first is that whatever a person eats tastes good. The second is the ability to explain Buddhism in such a way as to bring joy to the listener.

**IKEDA:** The first pertains to the mystery of state of life. A person who is healthy and full of vitality will find even simple fare delicious. To a person who is afflicted with grief, however, even the most sumptuous feast will taste like dirt. That's not to say, mind you, that we should forget about trying to cook nice meals! This merely shows that state of life is a mysterious phenomenon.

Likewise, a person who has purified the sense of sight will find a miracle in even the most mundane scene. And a person who has purified the sense of hearing will hear Mozart in the cacophony of a baby's cries.

**ENDO:** In viewing your photographs, President Ikeda, I have often found myself astounded that such ordinary scenes could reveal such beauty.

**SUDA:** Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear symphonic beauty in even the angry accusations of one's spouse!

**SAITO:** President Toda used to emphasize that having a state of life of absolute happiness means experiencing joy under any circumstances. He would say: "When you achieve absolute happiness, you don't have any money troubles, and you enjoy good health. Your home is peaceful, your business goes well, your heart is filled with a sense of abundance, and everything you see or hear makes you think, 'How delightful!' When the world appears to you in this way, then this world, this strife-ridden saha world, becomes a Buddha land. That is attaining Buddhahood."<sup>11</sup> He would say that even a quarrel with your spouse, for example, is joyful. And that when you get angry, it is with a feeling of contentment.

**IKEDA:** That description gives me a sense of leisurely looking down on the world from tufts of cotton-like clouds in a brilliant blue sky! To attain such a lofty state of life, we need to wholeheartedly and resolutely exert ourselves in faith with a singleness of purpose like that of a jetliner flying through the sky. That is the teaching of the "Benefits of the Teacher of the Law" chapter.

The "teacher of the Law" is a leader of kosen-rufu, a person who dedicates his or her life to working for peace and human happiness. When we become such a teacher of the Law, we receive the great benefit of absolute happiness.

**ENDO:** Kyoko Terasawa, a group leader in Tokyo's Taito Ward, is renowned as a champion at promoting subscriptions to the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper. The year before last, she earned 1,058 points.<sup>12</sup> And last year she earned 1,612 points. This year, with the target of earning more than a thousand points for the third year running, she is promoting subscriptions even more vigorously than before. Mrs. Terasawa doesn't have an environment that is particularly conducive to doing so; she is a regular wage-earner who works in a shop in the busy Akihabara area of Tokyo.

**IKEDA:** It is such individuals who sustain the Soka Gakkai. I am profoundly moved by their selfless dedication. They are heroes. They are kings and queens. They deserve everyone's heartfelt applause and praise. People with strong backgrounds in Buddhist study may be quick to throw out high-sounding words, but they are no match for such members when it comes to practice.

**ENDO:** The eight-story building where Mrs. Terasawa works houses some forty shops and offices. She brightly greets anyone she sees entering or leaving the building, develop-

ing friendly relationships with them.

In the process, of course, if there is anything she can do to assist people, for example by helping tidy up, she readily lends a hand. She has tenaciously continued making such efforts to build trust over the years. Many of the people she asks to subscribe to the newspaper do so solely on the basis of her recommendation.

**SUDA:** She must have rock-solid determination to make such steadfast efforts.

**ENDO:** Mrs. Terasawa was raised by her grandfather and has no recollection of her parents. When she was four, she learned that her parents had already died. When she was in the fourth grade, her grandfather died and she was taken in by a nearby family. Unable to receive even the most basic education, her early life was quite difficult, like that of a real-life Oshin.<sup>13</sup>

She went on to work in a variety of jobs—as a maid, in retail, as a waitress. Ten years ago, at the age of fifty-three, she got married. It was then that, at her husband’s introduction, she joined the Soka Gakkai. Meeting her husband and encountering the Mystic Law changed Mrs. Terasawa’s life completely. Up to that time, she had lived a solitary, uneasy existence. But after she started practicing, her worries disappeared, and she began to experience genuine fulfillment—both spiritually and in her day-to-day life.

Her sense of appreciation in developing a “state of life that I could never have imagined” has become the driving force in her practice. And she stood up, determining that she could best contribute to kosen-rufu by promoting subscriptions and expanding the circle of those who understand the Soka Gakkai.

**SAITO:** She certainly could not achieve what she has if she thought of her endeavors as merely means to an end. I wonder if she does something unique to realize such outstanding results.

**ENDO:** She says that once she made this determination, whether sleeping or waking, her thoughts are constantly filled with the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Her sincerity is deeply moving. Mrs. Terasawa carefully cuts out members’ experiences or other sections, like the “Daily Words,” and presents them to people. In the course of reading the paper, she finds herself thinking: “This experience is perfect for that person. I’d really like him to read it.”

She says that she can tell the state of people’s lives just from hearing their voices. For instance, she might think, “This person sounds quite happy, but there is something missing behind that veil of energy.” She is then able to say things that make a difference in the person’s life.

**IKEDA:** This is truly an example of the purification of the sense of hearing. It is the state described by the line of the sutra: “Because the faculties of his ears are so keen / he can distinguish and understand all these sounds” (LS19, 255). This is describing an expert on humanity, a master at dialogue. Also, these are the characteristics of someone who has purified the tongue. The sutra says:

If with these faculties of the tongue he undertakes to expound and preach in the midst of the great assembly, he will produce a deep and wonderful voice capable of penetrating the mind and causing all who hear it to rejoice and delight. (LS19, 260)

Mrs. Terasawa is doubtless reaping the wonderful effects of all her efforts.

## A Leader Should be Like the Sun

Title: Dialogue On The Lotus Sutra (39)

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**SAITO:** The sutra describes the “benefit of the body” as follows: “They will acquire pure bodies, like pure lapis lazuli, such as living beings delight to see” (LS19, 261). In other words, a teacher of the Law acquires a dignified appearance that people are naturally attracted to.

**SUDA:** Pure lapis lazuli is transparent when it has been thoroughly polished. Lapis lazuli, one of the seven kinds of gems,<sup>14</sup> is thought to be beryl or a type of glass.

**IKEDA:** This passage is saying that the person’s life comes to shine like a crystal-clear mirror. Everyone around them feels joyful and refreshed. Such a person, in other words, becomes a sunlike presence.

A leader has to have a bright face and vitality like the rising sun.

**SAITO:** A final “benefit of the body, which is purified” is to discern the true nature of all life in the Ten Worlds as if reflected in a clear mirror.

**IKEDA:** This means the ability to tell someone’s life tendency the moment you meet them. When we live out our life based on the Mystic Law, we can clearly see the state of others’ lives.

Being able to do so is a result of having compassion. We must never be high-handed or arrogant claiming to have the power to see through people. We are all ordinary people. We are all members of the family of the original Buddha, and the family of the SGI. While we have to see through people with evil intentions, we must also make constant efforts to encourage and protect our fellow members.

## **A Relentless Fighting Spirit**

**SAITO:** Last, we come to purification of mind. The sutra says that if a person hears just a single verse or phrase, he will understand “infinite and boundless teachings.” Moreover, it says that the person can freely expound the meaning of that one verse or phrase over the course of a month, four months or a year. And that the teaching he expounds “will never be contrary to true reality” (LS19, 263).

**IKEDA:** The content of that person’s speech entirely and perfectly accords with the truth of the universe.

**SAITO:** Yes. The sutra further says: “If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or those relating to wealth and livelihood, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law” (LS19, 263). This is the benefit of purifying the mind.

**SUDA:** It seems to me that this aptly describes your extensive efforts to speak with people and write, President Ikeda.

**IKEDA:** Through purifying the mind, practitioners become wiser. In lifetime after lifetime, they may become great scholars or people of unsurpassed insight.

In short, purifying the six sense organs means transforming one’s entire being into a vehicle of kosen-rufu. It’s not a matter of shrewdness or calculation; when we work selflessly and wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu without begrudging our lives, then our entire being overflows with boundless life force. Wisdom, vitality and compassion all well forth.

Even after people grow old and their eyesight fades, they can still move their hands. So they can write letters. Since they can move their mouths, they can call people on the phone. This is not a matter of pushing oneself unreasonably. The important thing is

that our hearts burn with a fighting spirit. Manifesting such faith purifies the six sense organs.

No matter what worries or sufferings we might have, we can change them all into value and benefit. Such great life force is the benefit gained by a teacher of the Law.

In conclusion, those who live out their lives together with the SGI, an organization that is dedicated to actualizing the Buddha's will and decree, and who single-mindedly work for peace and the happiness of humankind, are on the ultimate path in life.

A person who steadfastly moves forward is certain to win. A person who chants daimoku through everything will absolutely win in the end.

*To be continued*

1. Editor's note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number and then the page number.
2. February is a traditional month of propagation in the Soka Gakkai. This originated with the February 1952 campaign in Tokyo's Kamata Chapter, led by President Ikeda, that resulted in an unprecedented number of families joining the Soka Gakkai in a single month. See *The Human Revolution*, vol. 5, "Dashing Forward."
3. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1981), vol. 1, p. 133.
4. A line from the Japanese poet Bansui Doi's (1871–1952) poem, "A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on the Wu-chang Plain," dedicated to the legendary Chinese minister Chuko Kung-ming (181–234), hero of the epic saga, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.
5. LS11, 181.
6. Helen Keller, *Midstream: My Later Life* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929), p. 49.
7. Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 225.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
9. Shih K'uang and Li Lou: Legendary figures in ancient China famed, respectively, for their extraordinary hearing and vision.
10. Lyrics from "Sendo Kouta" (The Ditty of a Boatman), which became popular around the early 1920s.
11. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, p. 259.
12. One point equals one subscription to the *Seikyo Shimbun* for one month.
13. Oshin: A Japanese fictional character in a serialized TV drama who experiences an unending series of hardships.
14. Seven kinds of gems: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, giant clam shell, coral, pearl and carnelia

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