

**LIVING THE TEACHINGS (2)**  
**THE GOOD MEDICINE FOR ALL ILLS**  
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“It is not certain that, because one is ill, one will die.... Could not this illness...be the Buddha’s design, because the Vimalakirti and Nirvana sutras both teach that sick people will surely attain Buddhahood? Illness gives rise to the resolve to attain the way.”

*(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 937)*

Background: This letter by Nichiren Daishonin was probably written in 1278 to the lay nun Myoshin. The Daishonin explains that illness can be considered a manifestation of the Buddha’s compassion since it arouses the determination to seek enlightenment—a determination that one could have been lacking previously.

Illness played a crucial role in my seeking the practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Shakyamuni was inspired to seek the truth because of his encounter with the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. In my case, I was only receptive to the Daishonin’s teachings because I was suffering so much. Although my spirits improved because of my practice, my pain lasted for another four to five months.

When I joined the Soka Gakkai, one of my seniors in faith gave me several books to read on Nichiren Daishonin’s philosophy. As I was on spring vacation, I read them all and was impressed and inspired by the teachings of Buddhism. The concept of the ‘oneness of body and mind’ especially resonated with my own life experience. Before I practiced Buddhism, I was very depressed because of my back pain. I was without hope, and I even entertained thoughts of death. My physical condition was dominating my spiritual life—really bringing me down.

When I began chanting to the Gohonzon and attending Soka Gakkai activities, my spirits rose. There was a new infusion of positive energy into my spiritual and mental states. I developed hope I could overcome my back problem. Even though I still had the same pain, my spirits were so high, I experienced the pain differently. I felt so good, in fact, that I introduced college friends to the practice.

During spring vacation, I went to my hometown of Atsuhara in Fuji City. As I mentioned before, my family practiced in the Minobu sect of Nichiren Buddhism and my father was very much against my becoming a Soka Gakkai member. However, my newfound happiness was so evident that my mother couldn’t help commenting. She said the change was even reflected in my complexion! It was proof enough for her to begin practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

There was an experience early in my practice that revealed to me the amazing spirit of the Soka Gakkai. A young men’s leader invited me to attend a monthly leaders meeting just outside Tokyo. It involved a one-hour train ride that was a strain on my already painful back. Once we arrived at the auditorium, we found all the seats were filled and we had to stand at the back. As it turned out, I was behind several people and could not see anything. However, my friend said that I should not come all this way to just stare at people’s backs and go home. He lifted me up and held me so I could see over everyone. He was concerned

that I get something from the meeting. I was very impressed that he cared that much. He is also the one who pointed out the above passage from the Daishonin's writings to me. Today, he is a vice president of the Soka Gakkai, and we are still good friends.

Gradually my back pain subsided and after four or five months disappeared altogether. Just a few months earlier, I had been in such pain that I tried to drink myself to sleep. But that only gave me stomach problems and I still didn't sleep. After practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism I overcame my problem completely.

**W**e are all mortal flesh and blood and suffer from illness in one form or another. Through the power of the Mystic Law we can bring forth the strength to overcome the suffering of sickness with courage and determination. The Daishonin writes: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (WND, 412)

Because I overcame this problem, I was asked to relate my experience at a district meeting with more than a hundred people in attendance! I had never before talked to that many people.

Some may say that I healed naturally, but I know what I experienced. It was the power of chanting to the Gohonzon. I had found a priceless treasure without earnestly seeking it. Because of my back pain, I began chanting. And because the pain lasted another few months, I continued to seek a deeper understanding of Buddhism and strengthen my faith — a priceless treasure.

**A**s the passage says, "Could not this illness...be the Buddha's design?" I came to appreciate the role my illness played in my early stages of faith. I was very stubborn in my youth and, coming from a family that belonged to another Buddhist sect that opposed the Soka Gakkai, I never would have found this treasure. Because of my physical problem, I changed my karma. I came to understand the meaning behind problems. Years later, I was faced with another serious illness when I contracted tuberculosis. But I remembered this passage from the Daishonin and the lesson I had learned. I overcame my tuberculosis in six months. It is just as President Ikeda says:

It is only natural that sometimes we fall sick. But we must see that sickness as a sickness that originally exists in life, based on the principle of the Mystic Law. In other words, there is no reason to allow yourself to be controlled by illness, for it to fill your life with suffering and distress. From the standpoint of eternal life through the three existences, your fundamentally happy self is incontrovertibly established.

That realization will remove any obstacles or blocks you experience in life and will serve as a springboard for a leap to a more expansive state of being. (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 46)