

# SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE 108TH CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION EMBRACE THE ENTIRETY OF HUMANKIND

**'The purpose of this symposium,' writes SGI President Ikeda, 'is in profound concordance with the approach of Buddhism.'**

I would like to offer my greetings and salutations on the opening of the 108th conference of the American Psychological Association.

I am also very pleased to see that the symposiums on Buddhism and Psychology, being held for the third year, are steadily deepening the process of examining and probing the issues confronting humankind. I believe this is powerfully and succinctly expressed by the theme of the symposium, "Healing for the Millennium."

Buddhism teaches that the mind and body of each human being, human society and the natural ecology are all interdependent. On their respective planes, they exist in a mutually supportive relationship; each is grounded in universal life and participates in the process of creative evolution in a profound harmony with the entirety of being.

As we enter the 21st century, however, humanity has become estranged from nature and universal life, and the multidimensional thread of our mutually dependent relationships has again and again been severed. As a result, a series of problems has emerged to confront all humanity, brought about by this severance and breakdown.

In modern society, the unity and harmony of mind and body has been broken. This has caused both spiritual problems—including various types of mental breakdowns, loss of ethical values and increasing violence—as well as physical problems—such as stress related illnesses, AIDS, psychosomatic disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, etc.

The severance of relationships within human society, meanwhile, coupled with the processes of economic, communications and political globalization, has generated fissures between cultures, races, religions and civilizations, giving rise to conflicts of various kinds at the interstices. These in turn provoke fears of terrorism and the development of biological and nuclear weapons for use in regional conflicts, as well as the pervasive threat posed by extreme poverty.

The severance of the relatedness between humanity and the natural ecology gives rise to global issues such as the depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, pollution of the oceans and continuing desertification. These pose the threat of the destruction of Mother Earth—Gaia—herself.

The Lotus Sutra expounds the principle of the five defilements of the present world: 1) the defilement of the age, such as war or other disruptions of the social or natural environment; 2) defilement of desires, the tendency to be ruled by emotions such as greed or anger; 3) defilement of living beings, the physical and spiritual decline of human beings; 4) defilement of thoughts, deriving from mistaken views or values; and 5) defilement of life span, the distortion of life itself, which leads to a disordered and shortened life span.

The Chinese Buddhist teacher T'ien-t'ai (538–597) explained this theory as follows: First, the human spirit is polluted with the "defilement of desires"—specifically greed, violence and ignorance of the true nature of life—together with misplaced values that are described as the "defilement of thought." As these overflow into human society, it

becomes polluted with violence, greed and egoism, as well as extreme ideas such as fundamentalism. This impact is collectively known as the “defilement of living beings.” If each level of human society—the family, local society, the nation and state—comes under the sway of these negative influences, this will be passed on over generations and continue into the future, becoming the “defilement of life span.” At this stage, historical grudges and violence become embedded in the depths of the consciousness of a people or country. If this negative cycle continues, humanity as a whole will fall prey to the “defilement of the age.”

When we look at the increasing severity of the global crises facing humankind, it is hard to avoid the sense that the “five defilements” are taking ever-deeper root. From the perspective outlined above, Buddhism takes as its essential starting point the need to deploy the inherent human capacities for compassion, trust and wisdom in order to heal the severances stemming from the inner disruptions of human life, the defilement of desires and of thought—and transform these toward harmony. The positive impact of this inner transformation to healing and harmony can transform the dynamics of families, of societies and even of humanity itself. It can further fundamentally transform for the better our relationship with the natural environment.

In this sense, the purpose of this symposium which, departing from the questions of self-control and empowerment in individuals, expands its focus to encompass the social and ecological planes, is in profound concordance with the approach of Buddhism.

Nichiren, the 13th-century Japanese Buddhist whose teachings inspire the activities of the Soka Gakkai International, devoted his life to realizing the ideal which he expressed as the Buddha land or treasure realm. For him, this meant a society of harmonious coexistence where the mind and body of each human being, human society and the natural ecology interact in a dynamic relationship of mutual support, growth and development.

I sincerely hope this symposium on “Healing for the Millennium” will serve as a beacon of hope guiding us in the work of healing first the hearts and minds of individuals, and then of expanding this healing to embrace whole societies and the entirety of humankind. I believe that in this way we can recover an awareness of our oneness with the living universe, and foster a global human society of harmonious and creative coexistence.

*Daisaku Ikeda*  
*President*  
*Soka Gakkai International*