

FROM 'FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE' FOSTERING PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE

'We must not allow ourselves to fall captive to perceived differences,' writes SGI President Ikeda. 'We must be the masters of language and ensure that it always serves the interests of humanity.'

The following excerpts are taken from SGI President Ikeda's book, For the Sake of Peace: Seven Paths to Global Harmony, A Buddhist Perspective, available from your favorite neighborhood or online bookseller, or at www.middlewaypress.org.

Our efforts for the sake of dialogue, in order to be worthy of the term dialogue, must be carried through to the end. To refuse peaceful exchange and choose force is to compromise and give in to human weakness; it is to admit the defeat of the human spirit. Socrates encourages his youthful disciples to train and strengthen themselves spiritually, to maintain hope and self-control, to advance courageously, choosing virtue over material wealth, truth over fame (p. 42).



Nichiren's faith in the power of language was absolute. If more people were to pursue dialogue in an equally unrelenting manner, the inevitable conflicts of human life would surely find easier resolution. Prejudice would yield to empathy, and war would give way to peace. Genuine dialogue results in the transformation of opposing viewpoints, changing them from wedges that drive people apart into bridges that link them together.

The human qualities necessary to put this principle into practice go beyond mere diplomacy; the task requires an elevated state of life. What the Lotus Sutra describes as a Bodhisattva of the Earth is a person committed to the work of restoring a sense of cosmology to contemporary society. In concrete terms, this means being a master of the art of dialogue and a standard-bearer of soft power (pp. 57–58).



We must not allow ourselves to fall captive to perceived differences. We must be the masters of language and ensure that it always serves the interests of humanity. If we force ourselves to review the nightmares of the twentieth century—the purges, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing—we will find that all of them have sprung from an environment in which language is manipulated to focus people's minds solely on their differences. By convincing people that these differences are absolute and immutable, the humanity of others is obscured and violence against them legitimized (p. 116).