



# SGI AUSTRALIA STUDY COURSE

Sessions 1 & 2

## REVITALISING THE SPIRIT

**R***evitalising the Spirit of Buddhist Humanism* is a part of an on-going study programme in Australia of producing study courses to be used at group dialogue meetings. Study along with practice, as stated above, supports the deepening of our prayer and conviction so we can consistently improve and polish our life. These courses use a methodology of community-based adult-education where each participant is actively involved in their own learning. Rather than instruction or testing of knowledge, the emphasis is on engaging in the art of dialogue, creating a warm atmosphere for each person to express their thoughts and experiences without judgement, and encouraging each other to transform any sufferings we face into opportunities for growth. This practical approach to Buddhist learning is a unique and dynamic activity of SGI Australia.

This study course is an examination of the spread of Buddhist Humanism over 2500 years. Of course, the documentary history is impossible to cover within the constraints of a short course. Rather, this study

course aims to highlight the vision for humanity of the key figures of the Mahayana stream of Buddhism – Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin and the three presidents of Soka Gakkai. Their efforts for the sake of humanity have culminated in a community of believers actively engaged in creating peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is the SGI.

The emphasis is to capture the essence of each figure's transformative contribution, highlighting the evolution of Buddhist humanism. This begins from the awakening to the Law by Shakyamuni; the revealing of a practice by Nichiren Daishonin and the reviving of the oneness of mentor and disciple by the three presidents of Soka Gakkai so that the community of practitioners can continue to spread globally. The struggle to always return to the heart of the philosophy, revitalising its spirit, as a practical way of living for all people is also the focus. Each session of the course suggests additional reading for those participants who wish to explore the historical background and theoretical concepts in more depth.



# OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## **SESSION 1**

### SHAKYAMUNI – AWAKENING TO THE LAW THE TEACHING

Will examine the insight into the human condition and the essential teaching of Buddhism through Shakyamuni's contribution and the example of his behaviour as a human being.

## **SESSION 2**

### NICHIREN – REVEALING THE LAW THE PRACTICE

Will examine the actual proof of Nichiren Daishonin's life and his conviction in the potential for all humanity to reveal enlightenment through the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon.

## **SESSION 3**

### SOKA GAKKAI – REVITALISING THE ONENESS OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

Will examine the lives of the three presidents of Soka Gakkai and their individual contribution to the creation of a community of believers devoted to the realisation of the vow for *kosen-rufu*.

## **SESSION 4**

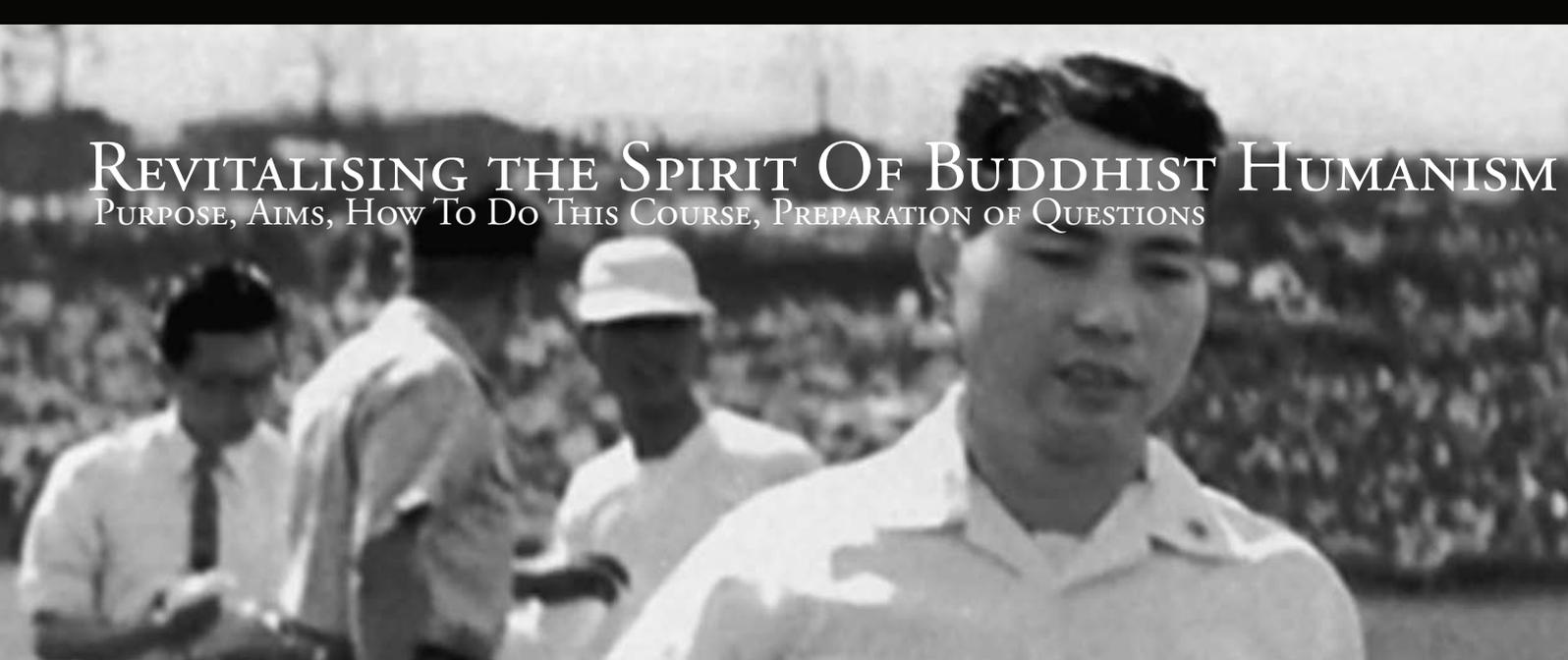
### SGI – CREATING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF DIALOGUE

Will examine the questions faced now about how we continue to spiritually evolve so that the creative expression of Buddhist humanism spreads, without reverting to formalism and authority. This lecture is a conclusion of the themes of this course, as well as an aspiration for future generations.

All Photos, except where otherwise stated, by Wayne Wong. They were taken at the SGI Oceania Peace Conference, Gold Coast, August 2008

# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

PURPOSE, AIMS, HOW TO DO THIS COURSE, PREPARATION OF QUESTIONS



## PURPOSE

In contemporary times, practising faith needs to be relevant, revitalising and applicable. Generally people are not attracted to sets of rules that attempt to regulate behaviour and constrain individual potential. The purpose of this course is, through dialogue, to inspire a deeper conviction in the purpose of religion by reflecting together on the significance of the response of key figures in the Mahayana stream of Buddhism to questions of the suffering and the nature of life. It is also to reflect on and appreciate their approach to relieving people's suffering while empowering all of humanity with the opportunity to embrace the right to happiness. We wish to explore how they have compassionately imparted their realisations through the proof of their own courageous behaviour and by engaging in dialogue. Consider these questions when reading and reflecting on the material together:

- ❁ What inspires you about each figure's attitude to their life?
- ❁ What is their response to human suffering and what is significant about this?
- ❁ Why is this significant to you?
- ❁ How does this speak to the possibility of your own life?
- ❁ What have these figure's behaviours and actions made possible for your life?

## AIM

THIS COURSE AIMS TO HIGHLIGHT AND ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE ON THE TOPICS OF:

- ❁ The purpose of religion
- ❁ How courageous individuals, through the proof of their own behaviour to engage in the reality of life, have awakened to, revealed and revitalised the essence of Buddhist humanism;
- ❁ How the heart of this teaching, the daily practice we do in our own home and the dialogues conducted in small groups, have their deep heritage in the oneness of mentor and disciple;
- ❁ How the evolution of Buddhist humanism has been a struggle to challenge formalism, and is a determination to always return to the dynamic interaction of the philosophy, practice and community of believers for the purpose of inner transformation.



PHOTO: SEIKYO SHIMBUN

## HOW TO DO THIS COURSE

THIS COURSE CONSISTS OF FOUR SESSIONS WITH AN ADDITIONAL INTRODUCTORY SESSION TO INTRODUCE:

- ❁ How the course works – including setting session dates and forming study partners.
- ❁ The overview of the course.
- ❁ The significance of:
  - Buddhist study
  - Study partners meeting between sessions for additional dialogue on the key points of the course, as well as preparing questions for discussion.
  - Dialogue as the means of deepening conviction in the practice of Buddhist Humanism and making study relevant for daily life.

AT THE INTRODUCTORY SESSION THE FACILITATORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- ❁ Outlining the purpose of Buddhist study and, the aims and purpose of this course.
- ❁ Forming and encouraging study partners to meet between sessions.
- ❁ Reminding the group at the conclusion of each session of the next session's topic.
- ❁ Reminding each pair of study partners to prepare some questions for discussion.

**Note:** Some time needs to be allocated for a discussion and summary of the overview of the course.

## PREPARATION OF QUESTIONS

At the end of each session please remind each pair of study partners to prepare questions relating to the key points and the study materials for the next session. This gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and lead the dialogue in the truly egalitarian spirit of the SGI group discussion meeting.



# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

Religious people who attempt to do away with a critic, not through discourse and debate, but by force of arms and violence can only be described as deranged. Nevertheless, that is the reality of many religious figures in the Latter Day of the Law. The misguided words and actions of such people produce a general mistrust of religion, which plays such a vital role for human beings. As a result, there arises a tendency among people to reject religion as harmful, irrespective of whether it is correct or erroneous. This offence is extremely grave. For precisely this reason, those who uphold correct religion have an enormous responsibility. We must strengthen our spirit all the more so that we can defeat evil and elevate the correct teaching. Otherwise the correct teaching will perish and be forgotten, and the people will sink into the darkness of suffering. (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol 2, p19)

**T**he aim of all religions at their root is to relieve suffering and give meaning to people's lives while responding to the spiritual questions of life and death. With these questions left unanswered and a life bereft of meaning, humanity's spiritual development and right to happiness is impeded. The most fundamental human right is the right to be happy and live a life of true freedom, without fear. This being the case, how is it that religions can veer from their original intent and foster emotions of guilt, disempowerment and subservience? Throughout

history, despite high moral codes, religious authorities have given tacit support to war and even engaged in the persecution of people of different faiths. Often, a hierarchy develops between those holding positions of religious authority and practitioners, keeping people in a reliant, childlike state preventing them from thinking for themselves. (*Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* Vol1 p54) The external worship of a deity creates the need for intermediaries as practitioners come to believe that they will never attain divinity nor live up to practices focussed on precepts, out-dated traditions and moral codes. The intent of the founder is lost; the essence is diluted and subtle deviations occur. Religious practice may fall into one of subservience by its followers. Those in religious authority may take advantage and collude with those in political power to maintain control over, rather than empower and protect, the people.

For the people of the Former and Middle Days of the Law in both India and China, Shakyamuni's Buddhism was a teaching that offered salvation by providing light from outside of the darkness. Certainly, for people who are living in darkness, a teaching of salvation by an all-powerful external entity may well be a source of light imparting hope and peace of mind. But relying on such external power alone is insufficient to vanquish the darkness arising from the fundamental ignorance inherent in people's lives. Such passive dependence on some superior external power makes it difficult for people to develop



an awareness and appreciation of the nobility of their lives, and for them to free themselves from the sense of deep powerlessness that results from such dependence. (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol4, p26)

The existence of religion is always to serve people, never the reverse. One way in which a reversal occurs is when opinion dominates over proof. Leadership is then based on authority, rather than the courageous and sincere examples of the behaviour of the founders. In Nichiren Buddhism, this behaviour is based on a vow and its expression is found in the mentor and disciple relationship. Deviation from the essence or heart of the teaching occurs the moment direct disciples lose sight of their mentor's vow. Out of this confusion, arrogant leaders emerge with their own opinions, and misleading interpretations proliferate. Splintering the community, hierarchies and structures become more important than relieving people's suffering and working for their happiness. The struggle to revive the spirit of Buddhist humanism is the very essence of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

The challenge of disciples, therefore, is to maintain the focus on the heart of the teaching and show proof of the compassionate behaviour of the founders through their own actions to unite as a community. This is the heritage of faith that enables future generations access to the beneficial practice of Buddhist humanism achieved by embracing the oneness of mentor and disciple. In this course, we wish to examine Buddhist humanism from the stance of those who have made a vow and

dedicated themselves to serving and protecting others based on the oneness of mentor and disciple. The vow of key figures of Buddhism – Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin, and the three presidents of Soka Gakkai – to make unprecedented efforts for other people's happiness and relieve suffering – is the cornerstone of proof. As members of SGI, the vow to create value in our own daily circumstances with the aim to inspire hope in those around us through our transformation based on the Law, is one and the same as the vow enacted by these key figures, which aims to bring to life the living relevance of Buddhist humanism.

From this perspective, the history of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the establishment of the *Lotus Sutra* as its guiding principle is one of a courageous and compassionate struggle to revive the human spirit and celebrate human potential for transformation. Proof of its effectiveness is contained in the lives of those who have spread awareness of the treasure of life and fostered the inherent creativity of ordinary people as the centre point of their life's work. Also, each of the courageous figures we are studying have stood up to authoritarian behaviour and spoken out when the heritage of faith in the Law of life has been lost. As a result each of them experienced forms of persecution. Celebrating their victory over authority provides the spiritual foundation of actual proof and integrity in the evolution of Buddhist humanism.

An overview of the 2500 years of Buddhism spreading throughout the globe, is a drama of courage, inner-reformation and dialogue. Its central characteristic is the ongoing spiritual evolution to embrace, reveal

# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

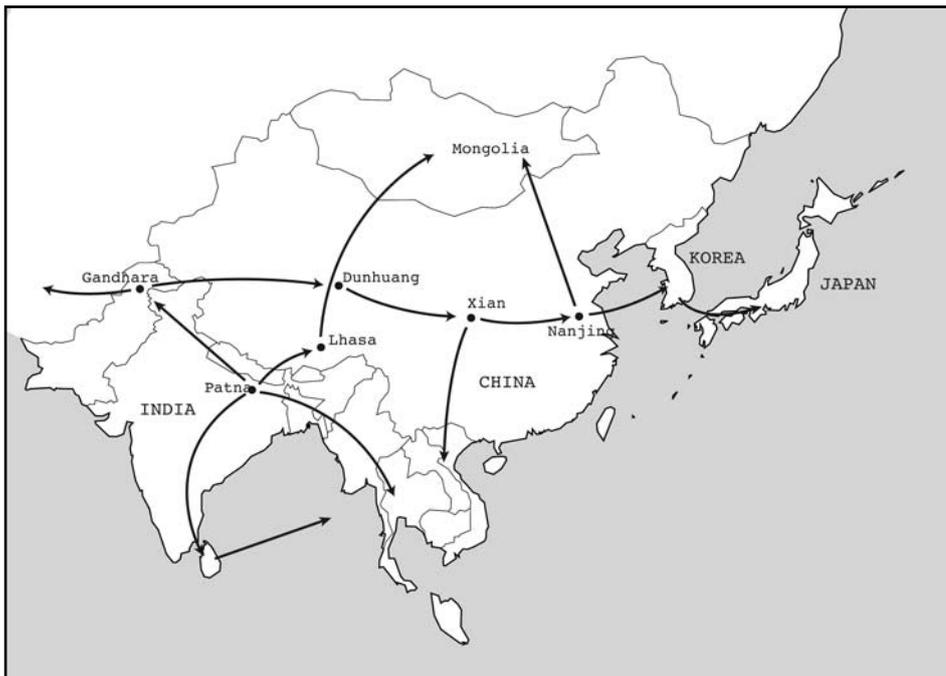
and continuously revitalise the heart of Buddhist humanism. Courageous individuals have reformed their own life and challenged prevailing ideologies of their time to ensure that the teaching and practice of Buddhism enhances the lives of ordinary people. This 2500-year struggle for Buddhism to extend beyond cultural traditions, privileged classes and the exclusivity of men or priests, has been fought with dialogue. It has culminated into the international community of believers (SGI) to realise *kosen-rufu*, that is, the creation of peace through inner-transformation. Established and consolidated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this 21<sup>st</sup> century community of believers exists in over 192 countries. Spread by compassionate and courageous dialogue, the SGI provides a forum for each individual to become happy through fostering self-reliance and individual character, while at the same time appreciating the interconnectedness of life with all others. In this way, each member of the community is encouraged to compassionately understand each other's struggles and differences. This training of the heart allows each individual to cultivate their inner life. It has transformed countless people and their environments, creating the real possibility of peace.

Without dialogue aimed at transcending differences, the spread of Buddhist humanism would remain an ideal with little relevance to the lives of ordinary people. Thus Buddhism is a courageous struggle of every human being to challenge unjust authority, out-dated tradition and formalism through dynamic interaction in the community centred on the example

of the mentor. Without waging a struggle for human rights – in particular the central focus on the right for each individual to become absolutely happy – the spirit of Buddhist humanism is lost. This struggle is waged within every individual not to succumb to hatred or violence by continuing to believe in, and open their heart, to the suffering of others.

Such a significant spiritual evolution began with the actual teaching of the nature of enlightenment expounded by Shakyamuni. Nichiren Daishonin, through his reading of various Buddhist texts, realised that the essence of Shakyamuni's teaching was contained in the *Lotus Sutra*. By invoking its title (Nam)myoho-rence-kyo and inscribing the Gohonzon, the Daishonin revealed a practice that is now available to all of humanity. The three presidents of the Soka Gakkai, by reviving and enacting the oneness of mentor and disciple, have steadfastly built the community of believers. Their courageous efforts and actual proof have enabled the spread of Buddhist humanism in a way that is achieving a sustainable global peace. Buddhist humanism is thus the dynamic interaction of a teaching, practice and community in support of each individual's inner human revolution, making it a universal and relevant method for creating peace and happiness in the midst of global uncertainties, conflict and human suffering.

In summary, this course aims to chart the lives and contributions of key figures in the spread of Buddhism, to the vibrant peace movement of the Soka Gakkai International.



A map showing the spread of Buddhism from India (courtesy of *Seikyo Shimbun*)

# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## SESSION I. SHAKYAMUNI – AWAKENING TO THE LAW – THE TEACHING

### THE STRUGGLE TO RELIEVE PEOPLE'S SUFFERING

Why was Shakyamuni able to employ language with such freedom and to such effect? What made him such a peerless master of dialogue? I believe that his fluency was due to the expansiveness of his enlightened state, utterly free of all dogma, prejudice, and attachment. The following quote is illustrative, "I perceived a single, invisible arrow piercing the hearts of the people." The 'arrow' symbolises a prejudicial mindset, an unreasoning emphasis on individual differences. (Ikeda, *A New Humanism*, pp155-156)

No matter, how much technological, scientific and economic advances we make, many people still find their questions about life and death remain unanswered; their spiritual life desolate and unnourished; a breeding ground for prejudice, isolation and violence created. Facing this kind of spiritual crisis requires a philosophy of courage, hope and belief that the natural struggles and sufferings of life can be wondrous, transformative and creative. Shakyamuni's teaching provides deep insight into the human condition and the harmonious, compassionate nature of life. His earliest realisation was about the shared suffering of facing birth, old age, sickness and death. Through his seeking spirit, he awakened to an unchanging eternal Law of Life that exists in the dynamic, ever-changing universe and within each individual. He realised that contained within this Law of Life there is a shared potential of humanity – an

inter-connectedness of limitless creativity unleashed through compassionate co-existence.

With little recorded information of his life, Shakyamuni's journey is said to have begun when he left the comfort of royal life and embarked on seeking answers to the suffering he witnessed of birth, old age, sickness and death. Although it is easy to perceive that we may fear growing old or dealing with the pain of sickness and facing our own immortality, we may not realise that without a spiritual compass, living itself can be a desolate and despairing experience. This was Shakyamuni's cathartic insight into the human condition and President Ikeda describes the anecdotal, yet symbolic view of the very beginnings of Buddhism:

Shakyamuni was for the most part confined to the royal palace and was shielded by his father from exposure to any knowledge of worldly woes. On four occasions, however, he succeeded in going outside the palace gates in the company of his charioteer. Emerging from the eastern gate of the palace on what was intended to be a pleasure excursion, Shakyamuni was confronted by the sight of an old man; emerging from the south gate on another occasion, he saw a sick man, and when he left by the west gate, he saw a corpse. Finally, going out by the north gate, he spied a man who had entered the religious life passing by, and, deeply moved, he determined to leave home and take up the same kind of life himself." (Ikeda, *Living Buddha*, p9)

Whereas, Shakyamuni was born with a high social status, he chose to live among people and devote



his life to seeking answers to the questions of the human sufferings of life. Although initially trying out various practices in his search, the enlightenment he was awakened to enabled people to relieve their sufferings and he spent his life spreading this teaching through dialogue. What is the essence of Shakyamuni's enlightenment? Extremely difficult to express in words, President Ikeda shares his insight into the essence of Shakyamuni's enlightenment in narrative form:

The entire universe is subject to the same constant rhythm of creation and change. This applies equally to human beings. Those now in infancy are destined to grow old and eventually die and then be reborn again. Nothing, either in the world of nature or human society, knows even a moment of stillness or rest. All phenomena in the universe emerge and pass into extinction through the influence of some external cause. Nothing exists in isolation; all things are linked together over space and time, originating in response to shared causal relationships. Each phenomenon simultaneously functions as both cause and effect, exerting an influence on the whole. Moreover, a Law of life permeates the entire process."

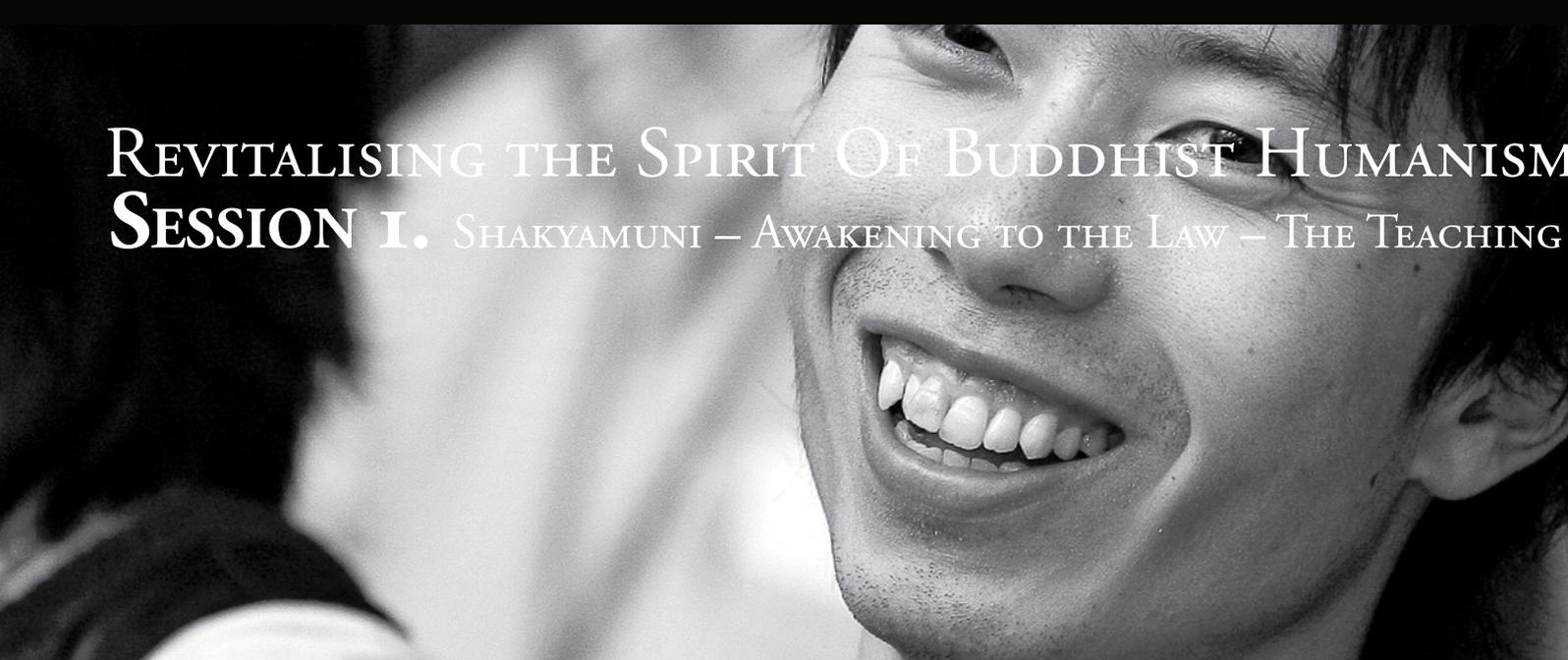
Shakyamuni had grasped the wondrous truth of existence. He was convinced that he could develop himself limitlessly through this Law he had awakened to. All criticism, obstacles and hardships would be nothing more than dust before the wind.

Shakyamuni thought, "Unaware of this absolute truth, people live under the illusion that they exist independently of one another. This

ultimately makes them prisoners of their desires, estranging them from the Law of life, the eternal and unchanging truth of existence. They wander about in darkness and sink into unhappiness and suffering."

"But such darkness stems from delusions in one's own life. Not only is such spiritual darkness the source of all evils but also the essential cause of people's sufferings over the realities of birth, ageing, sickness and death. By confronting this evil in our own lives – this delusion and ignorance – we can open the way to true humanity and indestructible happiness." (*New Human Revolution*, vol3, pp152-153)

Shakyamuni perceived that delusions, based on dualistic thinking of separating body and mind, and the individual self from the environment, were causes of an endless cycle of suffering. To be our most creative, our body and mind need to work in unity. Moreover, enlightenment centres on a dynamic relationship between life and its environment that involves constant change – the only certainty in life. From this perspective, for a religion to remain relevant, it has to avoid being bogged down in rituals or imposing rules of behaviour. Rather, for people to transform in an environment of constant change, they need to develop wisdom and learn from great examples of courageous behaviour. As we are constantly interacting with our environment, inseparable from it and changing it as we are changing, any religion that only encourages people to follow, rather than creatively determine their own life, may tend to stagnate. The fact that infinite potential for positive change resides in each life moment is a dynamic,



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## SESSION I. SHAKYAMUNI – AWAKENING TO THE LAW – THE TEACHING

revolutionary and empowering concept. How has this teaching been conveyed so that it is transformative for people's lives? It has been as a result of the Buddha's vow to share his enlightenment and the proof of his courageous behaviour to engage in dialogue.

### THE VOW TO SHARE HAPPINESS

The relevance of the vow in Buddhism is eternal. Life is a struggle as Shakyamuni recognised. People face all kinds of sufferings and courageous individuals do not retreat to seek only their own enlightenment, rather they engage in the compassionate struggle to relieve the sufferings of all people.

The original vow of the Buddhas was that the Buddha way, which they themselves practise, should be shared universally among living beings so that they too may attain this same way. (LS2p41) The 'original vow' of the Buddhas is to enable all people to walk the same path as they toward enlightenment. (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol1, p157)

Specifically, Shakyamuni's vow was to universally share his enlightenment so that all people could reveal their own unique, inherent potential just as he did. This vow is the foundation upon which Shakyamuni travelled throughout India, sharing his realisation of the creative life force residing in each human being, inspiring in them the means to overcome their own suffering and delusion in the depths of their own life. Shakyamuni's method was to engage people from all walks of life in creative dialogue as the means to open up their heart. Without this consistent action he could not fulfil his

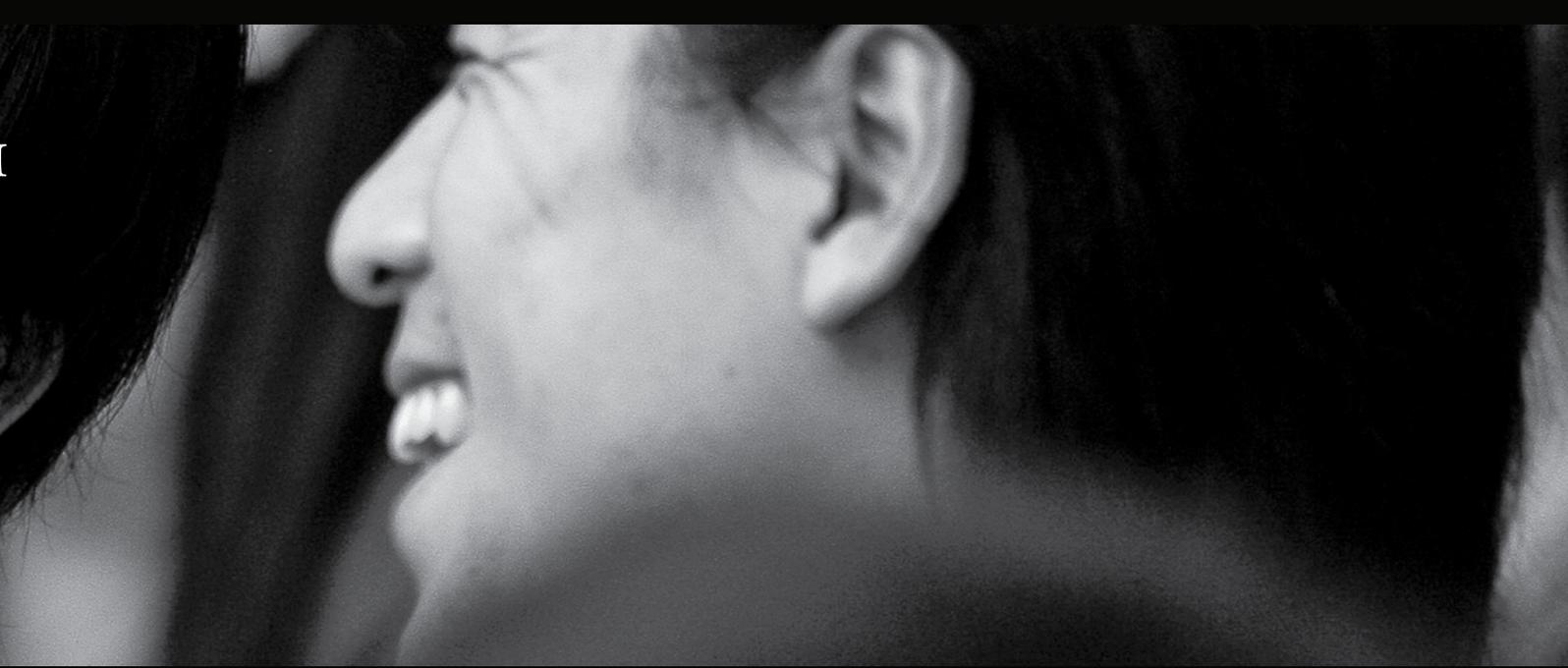
vow to enable all people to reveal their enlightenment. Creative examples of Shakyamuni's mastery of dialogue are shared in the *New Human Revolution*:

Sitting down to rest in a stretch of woods, he (Shakyamuni) saw a group of men and women frantically chasing someone. One young person with them asked him, "Did you see a woman run by?"

These people were largely a group of married couples who had come to the woods on a pleasure outing. One unmarried youth, however, had brought along a prostitute. While they were absorbed in their entertainments, the prostitute had run off with their valuables. Now they were trying to find her.

Shakyamuni listened and then, without responding to the youth's inquiry, asked quietly, "As a human being, which do you think is more important; to search for a fugitive prostitute or to search for your true self?" It was an unexpected question. Shakyamuni gazed at the group of young people in silence. In the presence of this serene and noble sage, they began to feel embarrassed and ashamed of themselves for being blindly obsessed with the pursuit of pleasure. One youth replied, "Well, naturally, to search for one's true self is most important, I think."

Shakyamuni nodded, "In that case, I shall teach you the means for discovering that true self." He talked to them with great empathy and warmth, striving to direct their focus from lives given to the mindless pursuit of pleasure to lives committed to creating lasting happiness. It was a



compassionate and inspiring dialogue. Through this exchange, the entire group of young people chose to embrace Shakyamuni's teaching. (*New Human Revolution*, vol3, p162)

Another example of Shakyamuni's sensitivity towards the subtle emotions at work in the human heart is contained in the following story:

One day, while in Shravasti, he encountered a mother, whose beloved child had died; she was wandering about in a grief-stricken daze with the tiny corpse clutched to her bosom. "Please give me some medicine to save my baby," she desperately implored Shakyamuni, her eyes red from tears. Summing up the woman's situation, Shakyamuni said: "All right, I shall prepare some medicine for you. Please go into the town and bring me some mustard seeds." The mother's eyes lit up with hope. "However," Shakyamuni qualified, "you must collect these mustard seeds from families in which there has never been a death." The woman hurried off into town, and proceeded to call on every household. But although some had mustard seeds, there was not a single house in which there had never been a death. The distraught mother gradually came to realise that every family lived with the sadness of lost loved ones quietly concealed somewhere in their hearts. Through this experience, the impermanence of life was communicated to her and she understood that she was not alone in her feelings of grief. The woman became a disciple of Shakyamuni and later even came to be revered as

a sage. It would have been impossible to console the woman, who was almost mad with pain and grief, with ordinary words of encouragement. Shakyamuni had keenly discerned this and prescribed instead the course of action outlined above. He was a brilliant physician of life, one who could revitalise people's battered and wounded hearts. (*New Human Revolution*, vol3, p169)

Revitalising people's battered and wounded hearts is the reason for religion's existence and it is why the vow is so important. Instilling a sense of purpose and hope, a dynamic, empowering philosophy centred on human happiness will always have eternal relevance but is a struggle to enact in daily life. It is the vow of disciples who remain focussed on learning from the behaviour of the mentor, imbuing their life with the same spirit to share people's suffering that ensures the heritage of Buddhism continues and the heart of the teachings is alive.

### **THE BEHAVIOUR OF PROOF**

Shakyamuni proved, by his own example, what actually enabled a person to reveal their enlightenment and full potential in the midst of a confusing array of beliefs common at the time. As President Ikeda relates, "It was commonly believed in India in those days that the body was tainted and the spirit alone was pure. The body held the spirit captive; by mortifying the body, thereby physically weakening oneself, it was thought one could attain spiritual freedom." (*New Human Revolution*, vol3, p146) Initially, trying yoga and meditative practices, Shakyamuni then engaged in demanding ascetic

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practices almost to the point of emaciation. These harsh practices of self-discipline and denial of physical desires were undertaken by young men who retreated from secular life. At the end of these attempts, Shakyamuni rejected yogic practices and extremes of self-denial as the means by which a state of enlightenment could be attained. He realised that retreating into the mountains to meditate or engage in yogic practices and the self-torture of asceticism, without a doubt, excluded ordinary people from practising them. These practices did not assist people in overcoming the four sufferings of life nor did they empower them with means to reveal their fullest potential.

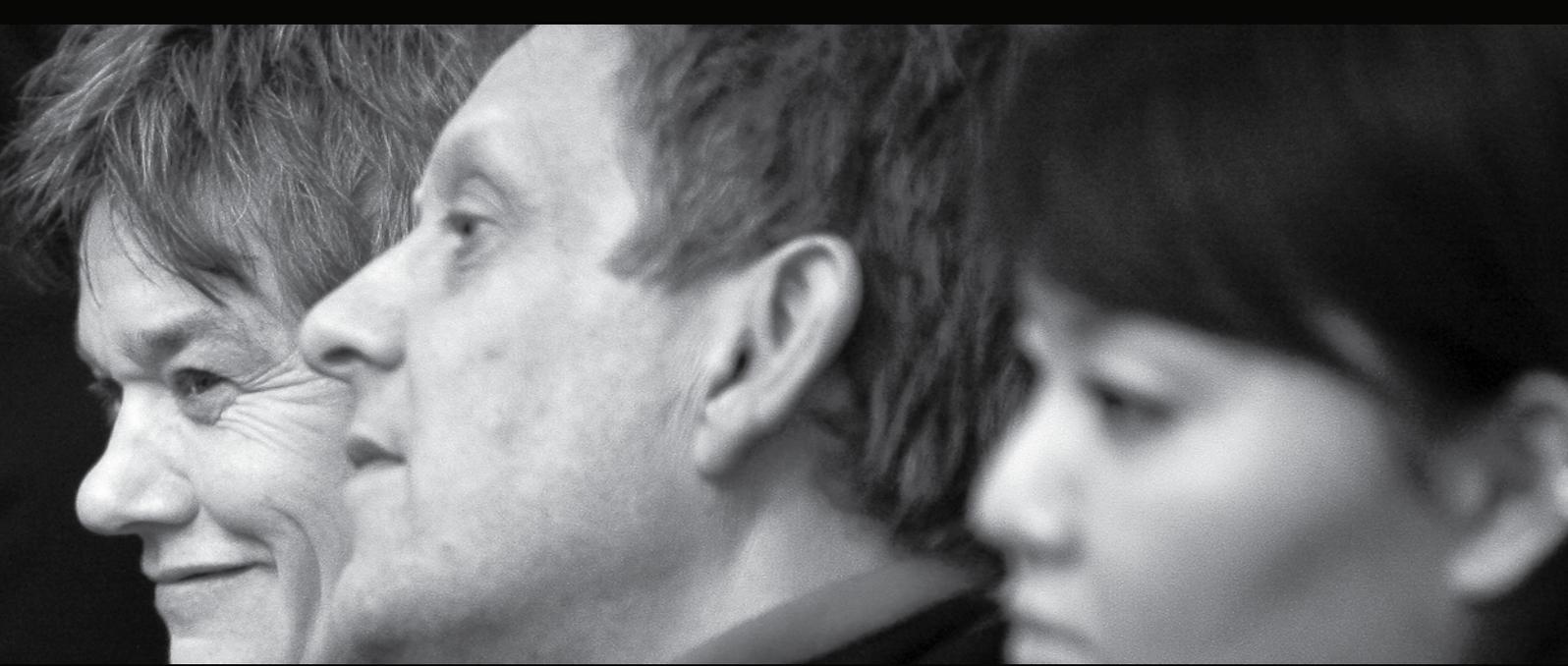
President Ikeda explains that the hedonism of secular life and the asceticism of those rejecting society, although seeming,

... poles apart, share one characteristic – they are both products of dualistic thinking. The ascetics, for instance, viewed mind and body as two opposing substances. The body is impure and evil; the spirit is pure and good. ... Hedonism, needless to say, goes to the other extreme. Rejecting the concepts of the purity of spirit and of life after death as mere figments of the imagination, it believes only in the existence of the body and matter, and in the importance of trying so far as possible to satisfy all physical desires (Ikeda, *The Living Buddha*, p52).

Attachment to the materialism of secular life creates fear and the escapist practices of rejecting society often lead to isolation and an inward, not necessarily positive,

focus on the self. Alternatively, a teaching that empowers people to believe in their potential and that of the universe as one Law of life opens up the possibility for transformation. This teaching is accessible to all people, not those who are able to retreat from secular life. Alternatively, passivity and merely following precepts or rules of behaviour fosters escapism from the reality of daily life, disempowerment and authoritarian leadership. As President Ikeda explains, “Precepts are intended as aids to Buddhist practice, not as ends in themselves. When upholding precepts becomes the sole objective and people are deprived of their liberty, it goes against the very tenets of Buddhism. The heart of Shakyamuni’s teachings is to enable people to develop an indomitable ‘self’; precepts merely serve to facilitate this process.” (*New Human Revolution*, vol3p189) Shakyamuni never sought to encumber his followers with a strict code of rules and regulations. Hence, shortly before he died, he instructed his disciple Ananda, “After my death, you may do away with detailed precepts.’ True precepts cannot be imposed externally; they must be cultivated within the individual. The spirit of Buddhism is not of imposing discipline from without; the emphasis is on self-discipline.” (*New Human Revolution*, vol3 p189)

Shakyamuni revealed his enlightenment through the integrity of his behaviour, not by following precepts alone or, as explained above, imposing these on his disciples. He courageously used every opportunity to prove the validity of his teachings by engaging with everyone he encountered, including Devadatta. The story of Devadatta, one of Shakyamuni’s foremost disciples, who wished to overthrow Shakyamuni’s leadership, illustrates how the guise of strict adherence to precepts



was used to negatively influence other practitioners. His motivation was jealousy and his purpose was to weaken people's perception of Shakyamuni's integrity. This pretence of moral superiority was an attempt to disunite the community.

As explained in September 2008 *Indigo*, "Commonly known to be Shakyamuni's cousin, Devadatta's attempt to usurp Shakyamuni describes the drama and destructive nature of jealousy and egoism. Devadatta was a disciple of Shakyamuni, however, he was overcome with the desire for power and ambition, asking Shakyamuni to bequeath the leadership of the Sangha, the Buddhist order at the time, to him. Shakyamuni, sensing Devadatta's arrogance and jealousy, refused his request. This incensed Devadatta and led him to plot to murder Shakyamuni. Even still, Shakyamuni continued to believe in the potential of Devadatta, claiming that in the future he will definitely attain Buddhahood and further still, refers to Devadatta as his teacher. "Shakyamuni attributes the fact of his own enlightenment along with his ability to broadly lead people to happiness to the role Devadatta played in his life as a 'good friend'." (*Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol3, p79)

Shakyamuni was a model of compassion and humility, and a true leader, who could discern the heart of his disciples. Based on his desire for each person to be the protagonist of their own life, he was able to guide them in an empowering philosophy of happiness. The consistent enactment of this profound respect for the sanctity of each person's life, placing people as the ends not the means, through compassionate dialogue is the heart of his teaching. Expressed in the spirit of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, as Nichiren states:

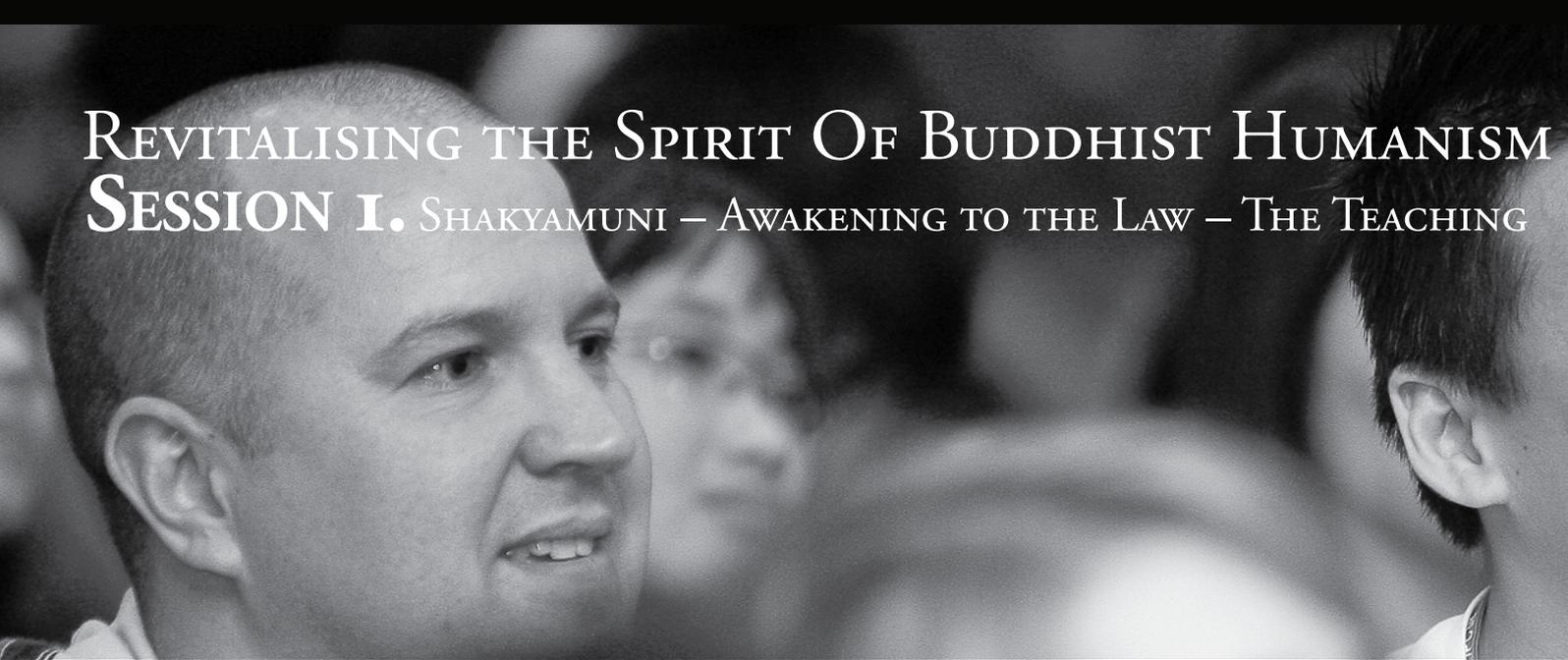
What is called Buddhism is found in this behaviour. The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the *Lotus Sutra*, and the heart of the practice of the *Lotus Sutra* is found in the *Never Disparaging* chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behaviour as a human being. (WND1p852)

It was the compassionate and creative efforts Shakyamuni made in sharing his enlightenment for relieving the suffering of others that inspires in us, today, the real possibility of absolute happiness and freedom. An understanding of the life philosophy of Shakyamuni, as expressed in the depths of the *Lotus Sutra*, is the foundation for the desire to work towards a peaceful world through transforming our own suffering into purposeful struggle.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE DISCIPLES

President Ikeda, in his introduction to the *Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, poetically describes the *Lotus Sutra's* heart and its contemporary relevance to the global concerns today:

The *Lotus Sutra* has the drama of fighting for justice against evil. It has a warmth that comforts the weary. It has a chorus of joy at attaining absolute freedom throughout past, present and future. It has the soaring flight of liberty. It



# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## SESSION I. SHAKYAMUNI – AWAKENING TO THE LAW – THE TEACHING

has brilliant light, flowers, greenery, music, paintings, vivid stories. It offers unsurpassed lessons on psychology, the workings of the human heart; lessons on life; lessons on happiness; and lessons on peace. It maps out the basic rules for good health. It awakens us to the universal truth that a change in one's heart can transform everything.

It is neither the parched desert of individualism nor the prison of totalitarianism; it has the power to manifest a pure land of compassion, in which people complement and encourage one another.

Both communism and capitalism have used people as means for their own ends. But in the *Lotus Sutra* – the king of sutras – we find a fundamental humanism in which people are the goal and purpose, in which they are protagonist and sovereign. (*Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol1,p15)

Shakyamuni left for humanity the life philosophy for instantly revealing Buddhahood as we are without needing to change form or waiting for the afterlife. This teaching was found only in the *Lotus Sutra* and would have been lost if it had not been for the theoretical contributions of the great Buddhist scholars Nagarjuna and T'ient'ai. Nagarjuna contributed the Treatises of the Middle Way and T'ient'ai established the theory of the three thousand realms in a single life moment and the superiority of the *Lotus Sutra* through the fivefold comparison. It was, however, Nichiren who understood the heritage of the ultimate Law of life and death, naming the

Law and revealing the practice that would become accessible to all humanity.

Shakyamuni's desire for his disciples is expressed in the following passage:

In the three pronouncements of the Treasure Tower chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, Shakyamuni called out in a loud voice to those gathered in the great assembly, urging them to propagate the *Lotus Sutra* after his passing. He said in effect, 'Many Treasures Buddha roars the lion's roar because of his great vow. All of you should likewise make a great vow to uphold and spread this sutra. (LS11)' This vow that all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas made in response to Shakyamuni's call for the sutra's widespread propagation in the Latter Day of the Law began to be fulfilled in a true sense with the appearance of Nichiren Daishonin (*The Opening of the Eyes*, p153).

Shakyamuni's path is known as the Middle Way – an approach based on reason, dynamism and dialogue, making enlightenment a possibility for all. The Middle Way is the path that transcends the duality of body and mind, and the separation of self from the environment; transcending existence and non-existence. However, there was no set practice to enable people to consistently enact their belief and apply these concepts to daily life. Although, the disciples took great care in recording the teachings of Shakyamuni for posterity, over time, the tendency emerged that Buddhism became splintered into many schools focussing on different aspects of



Shakyamuni's vast teachings. Shakyamuni came to be revered as a transcendental figure and the Mahayana stream of Buddhism became burdened with theory.

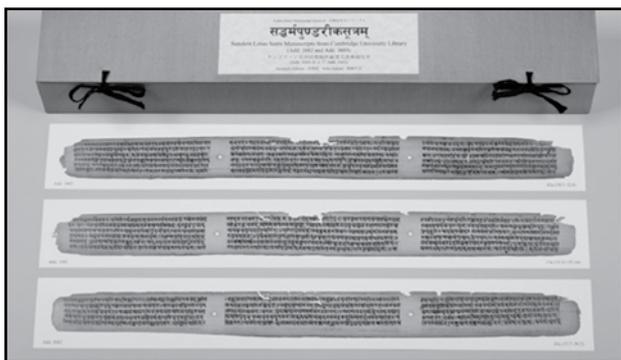
Nichiren was able to crystallise the essence of Shakyamuni's teaching of enlightenment and clearly articulate it in the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo to the Gohonzon so that all people could reveal their potential consistently. The founding of Nichiren Buddhism is the topic of the next session.

## FURTHER READING

*Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*

*New Human Revolution* volume 3

*The Living Buddha: An Interpretative Biography*



Facsimile editions of ancient Nepalese transcriptions of the *Lotus Sutra* published by the IOP.

## KEYPOINTS SESSION 1

- ❁ Shakyamuni founded Buddhism with the purpose of relieving human suffering.
- ❁ Shakyamuni realised that human suffering stems from birth, old age, sickness and death.
- ❁ Shakyamuni revealed his enlightenment through his behaviour (dialogue) as a human being to encourage others with the understanding of their own potential for enlightenment.
- ❁ The *Lotus Sutra*, the essence of Shakyamuni's teaching, expresses the potential for all people, equally, to reveal their enlightenment, where they are and as they are.
- ❁ Hierarchy and authority only function to inhibit the possibility of people becoming happy.
- ❁ Buddhism split after Shakyamuni's passing as his disciples lost the spirit of the mentor and disciple relationship, revering him instead as a transcendental figure.

## END OF SESSION 1



# REVITALISING THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST HUMANISM

## SESSION 2. NICHIREN – REVEALING THE LAW – THE PRACTICE

### THE STRUGGLE TO RELIEVE SUFFERING

“The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is by no means a religion for the sake of religion or for the sake of power or authority. It is not a religion for the sake of any specific race or nation. It is a religion for the sake of humanity, the human race, and human rights.” (Ikeda, *The Human Revolution*)

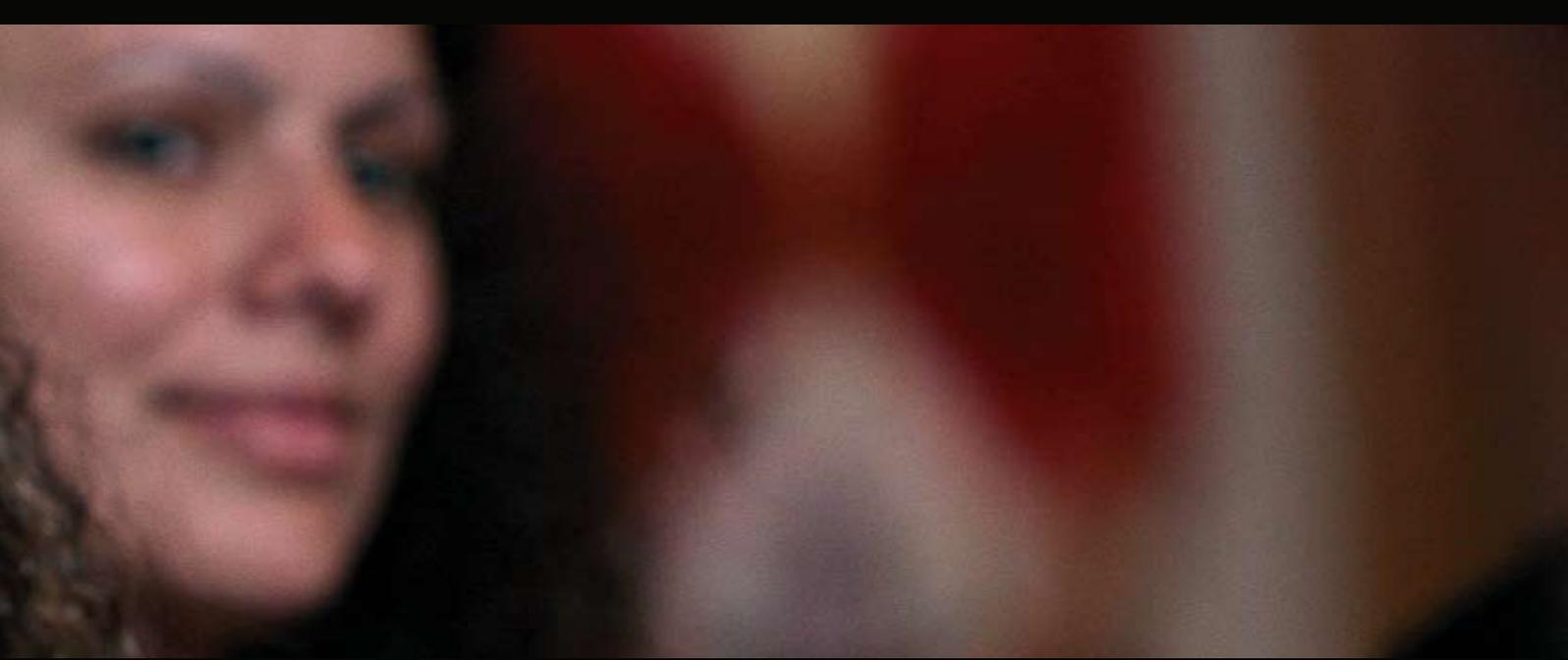
At the time of Nichiren’s advent in the 13th century, the priesthood of various sects of Buddhism formed an elite group of religious specialists. They had separated from the rest of society and worshipped statues of the Buddha. The spirit of transmission through the mentor and disciple relationship had been lost. As a result there were many sects based on differing interpretations of Buddhism, creating a situation where people generally followed the tradition of their families rather than try to untangle the complexities of the various disciplines. Practices became esoteric and remote from the lives of ordinary people and enlightenment was deemed beyond their reach. People had to rely on the clergy as intermediaries for their salvation. Having lost touch with Shakyamuni’s realisation of the eternal Law inherent in every individual’s life and the universe, the priesthood encouraged people to seek the ultimate truth outside themselves. Either worshipping various deities or simply meditating on their own minds, people were reliant on external forces or inwardly focussed on the self. “Also, losing sight of the true Law in their lives, people fall into the error of becoming attached to something that is not the true Law in the mistaken belief that it is.” (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings*, vol4, pp27-28).

Through his extensive research of the Buddhist sutras (Shakyamuni’s teachings) and study of the

interpretations of various schools, Nichiren realised that the root causes of people’s sufferings were the delusions of anger, greed and ignorance. These manifestations of fear and suffering amounted to slandering of the Law of life itself. The Daishonin’s purpose was to open people’s eyes to the Mystic Law as the ultimate source of life. He made this truth available to every person by realising and declaring this Law as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and inscribing the Gohonzon as the means to activate and reveal the Mystic Law within. In this way, Nichiren re-ignited the true purpose of religion as serving the people and revealed a practice for ordinary people to enable them to become self-reliant and empowered to transform their own life.

Shakyamuni’s *Lotus Sutra*, Nagarjuna’s theory on the Middle Way and T’ien-t’ai’s theory of Ichinen Sanzen demonstrated that the universe and the individual’s life are the same. However, it was almost impossible for the ordinary person to comprehend or apply this in daily life until Nichiren gave it concrete and practical expression. He inscribed the Gohonzon as the embodiment of the Law of the entire universe. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, written in the centre, is the consistent, creative life force that illuminates the compassionate qualities of all life. He encouraged his disciples to pray to the Gohonzon, invoking Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in order to consistently reveal the infinite potential from within their life. This became the practice by which human beings could at last eliminate the perceived gap between the nine worlds of daily life and the world of Buddhahood

“The *Lotus Sutra* calls out to people to earnestly seek the Law that was Shakyamuni’s own ‘teacher’ and



teaches the path to directly connecting with this Law. Doesn't this amount to a great religious revolution? Even today many people are under the mistaken impression that the Buddha is a being who dwells in enlightenment in some distant place and who occasionally descends among living beings to bestow a teaching upon them ... In short, the Buddha is someone who guides people to the 'eternal Law that is one with the eternal Buddha', to which he himself became enlightened and made his teacher. The Buddha is a person who continuously struggles to open people's eyes so that they can directly connect themselves with that Law ... Viktor E Frankl (Austrian psychologist, imprisoned in Nazi concentration camp) said, "Thousands of years ago mankind developed monotheism. Today another step is due. I would call it monanthropism. Not the belief in the one God but rather the awareness of the one mankind, the awareness of the unity of humanity".... such an aspiration, I believe, draws us a step closer to the *Lotus Sutra*" (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol2,p101).

Historically Buddhism has been a humane movement to promote the fundamental right of people to become happy. Nichiren Daishonin gave this humanist movement a sustainable possibility in the form of a practice founded on philosophical, theoretical and actual proof, thus reforming Buddhism itself. His sole purpose was never the use of religion for political ends, nor the rejection of political or religious authority outright, but he courageously challenged any errors or injustices that might threaten the freedom and happiness of the ordinary person.

It is clear that the Daishonin absolutely did not aim

to attack the followers of specific Buddhist schools or to simply expand his own school. The essence of the Daishonin's practice lay in the struggle against the devilish nature of power and authority that treats the people with contempt. Fundamentally, it is a struggle against the forces that seek to keep people from entering the path to enlightenment ... the inability of traditional Buddhism to lead people to happiness had become apparent. In the midst of this, the yearning for a new Buddhism that could serve that purpose and transform the age intensified, as did the Daishonin's fervent wish to become the 'wisest person in all Japan'. (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol1,p22).

### **THE VOW TO SHARE HAPPINESS**

At the time of Nichiren's birth, to be born of poor fishermen was a humiliating and scorned fate, but Nichiren always appreciated his origins. He was named Zennichimaro ('Splendid son') and was sent to study at the age of 11 at Seicho-ji temple to become a novice monk. Temples were like centres of culture and learning not unlike universities today. Nichiren became aware that there was much confusion within Buddhism. His first vow was to repay his debt of gratitude to his parents by becoming the 'wisest person in Japan'. He announced the results of his investigations into the Buddhist teachings on 28 April 1253 before an audience of the Priests at Seicho-ji – the first discussion meeting. He declared that Shakyamuni's true and ultimate teaching was to be found in the *Lotus Sutra*, specifically the title, Myoho-rence-kyo. He declared Nam-myoho-rence-kyo for the first time, took the name of Nichiren (Sun-Lotus) and refuted the four most influential Buddhist schools of the time. He realised, of course, that he would not

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be thanked for these ‘shocking’ pronouncements, and most certainly would experience persecution. However, at the same time he knew that if he didn’t make his declaration he would be turning his back on people’s suffering. In his own words, he states:

If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out. While thinking this over, I recalled the teachings of the ‘Treasure Tower’ chapter on the six difficult and nine easy acts. Persons like myself who are of paltry strength might still be able to lift Mount Sumeru and toss it about; persons like myself who are lacking in supernatural powers might still shoulder a load of dry grass and yet remain unburned in the fire ... But such acts are not difficult, we are told, when compared to the difficulty of embracing even one phrase or verse of the *Lotus Sutra* in the Latter Day of the Law. Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts. (WND1p239-40)

Said to start some 2000 years after Shakyamuni Buddha’s passing, the Latter Day of the Law was predicted to be a time of degeneracy when the Buddha’s teachings would lose their power to save people. Unlike his contemporaries who interpreted the age as a call to

look to the after life for a sense of relief and purpose, Nichiren sought to actively empower people to find happiness in this world just as Shakyamuni, himself, had realised and expounded in the *Lotus Sutra*. This was the background to his writing, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* submitted to the retired regent, Hojo Tokiyori and expressing his conviction that the fundamental cause of the disasters that had struck the country was that everyone, “from the sovereign to the most humble” was opposed to or ignorant of the teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*. In his treatise he predicted civil war and foreign invasion. The essence of ‘establishing the correct teaching’ lies in believing in the fundamental good that is the *Lotus Sutra* and in each individual establishing peace in their hearts. ... On a societal level, ‘establishing the correct teaching’ means establishing the concepts of human dignity and the sanctity of life as principles that support and move society. (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings*, vol1,p75)

Misunderstood and labelled as self-righteous and exclusivist, Nichiren’s first remonstrance provoked a series of intense persecutions. However this only proved that Nichiren was the votary of the *Lotus Sutra*, just as Shakyamuni Buddha predicted, “the ruler grew hostile and the common people began to attack me ... the earth shook as though it would turn over, internecine strife broke out, and they were attacked by a foreign



Photo: 1000 year-old tree at Seicho-ji, where Nichiren studied Buddhism and first declared Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Photo from Clique



country. All happened just as the Buddha had predicted, and there is no doubt that I, Nichiren, am the votary of the *Lotus Sutra*” (WND1p607). This realisation only encouraged him in his vow to awaken people to the heart of Buddhism, and to combat the causes of people’s suffering. Indeed, Nichiren’s enlightenment was inseparable from his profound and unshakable vow to repay his debt of gratitude and to realise *kosen-rufu*.

Looking at the Daishonin’s life from the time he entered Seicho-ji until the time he cast off his provisional status and revealed his identity as the Buddha of the Latter Day, we see the following sequence of events: making a vow at age 11, receiving a jewel of wisdom, studying the sutras, establishing his teaching and making a vow to realise *kosen-rufu*; striving as the votary of the *Lotus Sutra* and facing great persecution, and discarding his transient status and revealing his true identity. After discarding his transient status and revealing his true identity, the Daishonin poured his energies into establishing the entity of the Law (the Gohonzon) for the transmission of this teaching to actualise *kosen-rufu* over the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. In this way, he sought to transmit his own vow and enlightenment to people throughout the entire world ... we can view the Daishonin’s life in terms of vow, enlightenment, deeper vow, deeper enlightenment. (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings*, vol1,p29)

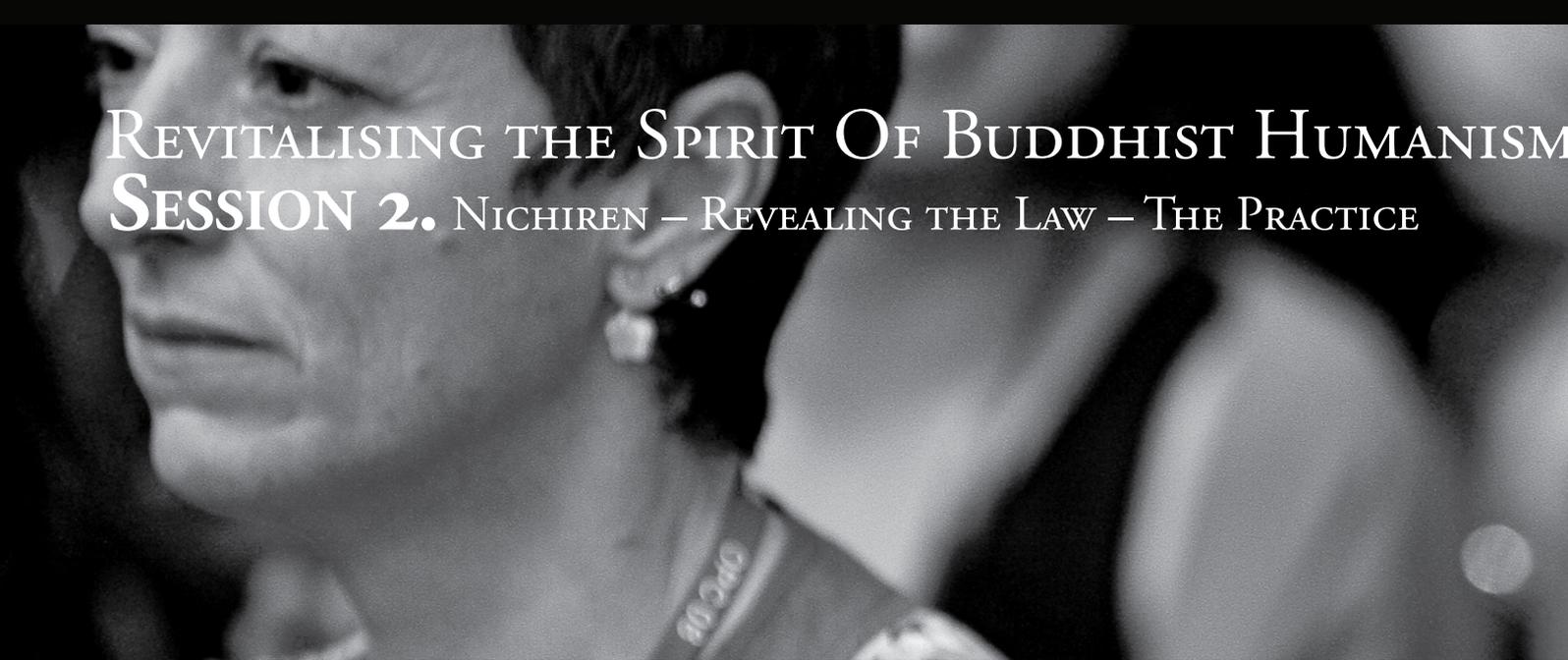
A vow can only be called a vow when it is carried out to the very end in the reality of daily life. The Daishonin remained true to his vow from the time he declared

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, through his exile to Sado and until the victorious end of his life.

## THE BEHAVIOUR OF PROOF

Nichiren demonstrated, with the proof of his behaviour, how an ordinary person could transform the sufferings of birth and death and realise absolute happiness just as they are. He never separated his Buddhist practice from engaging in life itself, including referring to literature and teachings outside of Buddhism, and stated that, “When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly when one knows the *Lotus Sutra*, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs” (WND1p376). Nichiren challenged the tendency of religious practitioners to isolate themselves and reject social engagement. Thus, through upholding the intent of the *Lotus Sutra* we can create the greatest possible value when engaged in ‘worldly’ affairs. Nichiren encouraged his disciples, such as Shijo Kingo, to take responsibility in their daily life, demonstrate wisdom and common sense, and never flout the laws of society. Consistently and courageously reforming his own life based on his vow, Nichiren dedicated his whole life to a selfless, fearless, and tireless fight to bring happiness to humanity. From the time he proclaimed his teaching in 1253 to his retirement to teach his disciples at Mt Minobu, the Daishonin’s life was a continuous series of harsh persecutions, including numerous violent attacks and exiles. These trials were unrelenting, as the Daishonin indicates when he writes, “As mountains pile upon mountains and waves follow waves, so do persecutions add to persecutions and criticisms augment criticisms” (WND1p241).

Nichiren was aware that Buddhism would not be threatened only by powerful authorities outside of Buddhism, but rather priests who had lost sight of the essence and ultimate purpose of Buddhism to relieve



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the suffering of ordinary people. One such priest was Ryokan, of the True Word-Precepts School. It was Ryokan who incited Hei no Saemon to plan the failed execution of Daishonin at Tatsunokuchi. However, it was due to this persecution and therefore to Ryokan and Hei no Saemon, that Nichiren was able to reveal his true identity as the original Buddha. Nichiren courageously challenged the evil machinations of authoritarian power from the life-state of Buddhahood, therein activating the protective functions of the universe. This life-state was expressed in the profound courage and humanity of his behaviour, including the expression of compassion to his would be be-headers, contributing to his stay of execution.

How can one develop such an immense state of life? How can a human being achieve such greatness? There is no greater mystery than this. I am confident that this is the power of making a vow. When we dedicate our lives to fulfilling a deep pledge and to correct ideals, our hearts develop limitlessly. Buddhism speaks of a 'pledge from the remote past'. Such a pledge is the foundation that enables us to drive away darkness and live in accord with the essential nature of phenomena. Specifically, this means a heart that yearns for the happiness of oneself and others, and for the accomplishment of the great vow for *kosen-rufu*. Absolutely nothing can obstruct the spirit of a person who has awakened to this original vow. Though one's body may be cut down, absolutely no one can destroy one's spirit. Such is the power of a person who lives a life of compassion. Even if facing hellish circumstances alone, such a person fears nothing. Rather, those

around someone so completely free of fear, may feel a sense of trepidation. It could be said that Nichiren Daishonin's lifetime of facing one great persecution after another proves that the power of a thoroughly developed human spirit is eternal. With his entire being, the Daishonin declared, "Behold the greatness that a human being can attain!" (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol2,p80)

Following the Tatsunokuchi persecution, Nichiren's exile to Sado island was the harshest he was to endure. Cut off from his community, without adequate shelter or food in unbearably cold temperatures, he was expected to die. However, because of his resolve and the dedicated assistance of his followers, not only did he survive, but between 1271 and 1274, he was able to produce many of his important writings including, *The Opening of the Eyes* and *The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind*, thereby outlining the significance of his advent and his mission in inscribing the Gohonzon for the Latter Day of the Law. Despite attempts to ostracise him, Nichiren never separated himself from the lives of ordinary people – endlessly exerting himself on their behalf. Moreover, unlike the leaders of his day, he respected women as the equal of men, and letters to women number amongst his most detailed and thoughtful writings. All his letters demonstrate an understanding of his followers' individual personalities and his guidance related to their unique circumstances. He laughed and wept with them – just as passionately as he thundered and roared against injustice. As a result his disciples were inspired to transform all manner of hardship to victory. The Daishonin took nothing for granted and went out of his way to show gratitude



for the smallest favours which were a lifeline to him. Indeed he was grateful for everything – for his parents, his country, his teachers; for his ruler even though he persecuted him, for Shakyamuni and the *Lotus Sutra*, but most importantly for his community of believers. He lived and breathed gratitude and compassion and this is at the heart of the practice of Buddhism and what it means to be a votary of the *Lotus Sutra* and truly human.

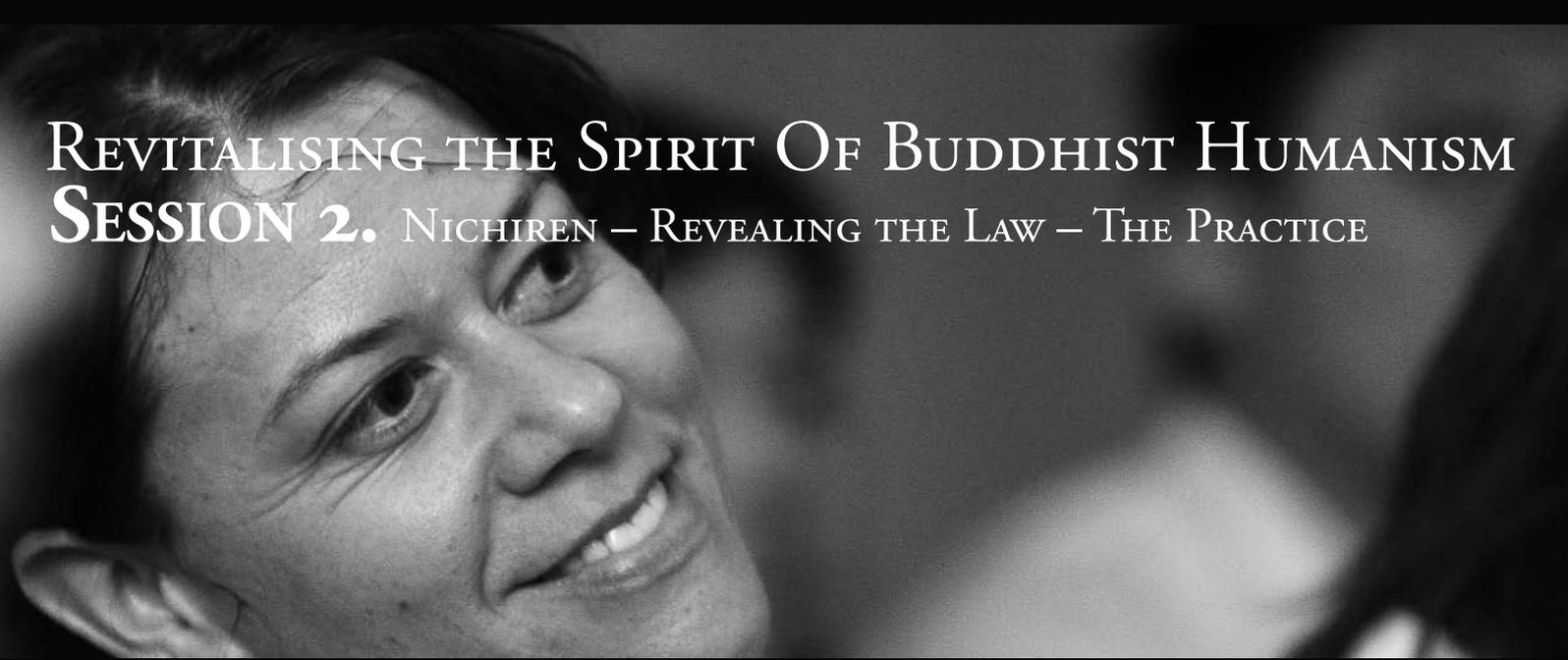
Key to this was the Daishonin's 'casting off the transient and revealing the true' at the time of the Tatsunokuchi persecution. During the Sado Exile, he manifested, in the form of the object of devotion (the Gohonzon), the Law by which all people in the Latter Day could attain enlightenment, and developed its doctrinal underpinnings. He also envisioned Buddhism's westward transmission. At the same time, he began teaching his followers the principle of faith grounded in the oneness of mentor and disciple. He explained that faith based on the oneness of mentor and disciple means carrying out the same practice as the Daishonin himself, that is to say, practice of selfless devotion to propagating the Law while maintaining the spirit of faith of not begrudging one's life (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vol3,p15).

Truly, in his lifetime he showed that the Law can only be conveyed through the life to life bonds of the oneness of the mentor and disciple expressed in compassionate and courageous behaviour for the sake of others. This spirit of Buddhist humanism was revived by the three presidents of Soka Gakkai.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE DISCIPLES

Throughout Buddhist history, each time the transmission of the Law, based on the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple is lost, priests and lay believers revert to taking statues and images as their object of worship. As a result, Buddhism becomes degenerate; the practice falls into formalism and focuses on upholding traditions, while tending to revere the mentor as a transcendental figure. This is the profound significance of Daishonin's contribution to humanity of the Gohonzon as the object of worship, a reflection of the state of Buddhahood that exists in every person's life. Also through bequeathing the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo he enabled humanity to practise self-awareness and autonomy, while striving to live harmoniously in the environment, rather than escaping from it. The practice and the object of worship, as bequeathed to all humanity, encourages practitioners to self-reflect and take responsibility for their life while enabling others to do the same.

When considering the Daishonin's wish to enable all people to share the heritage for attaining Buddhahood, the most crucial point is that the heritage of Buddhism is open to all. This universally accessible nature of the heritage is so important that it simply cannot be emphasised too strongly. When it is correctly understood, Buddhism can serve as a humanistic and universal religion; when it is not, Buddhism can become narrow and authoritarian, deviating from the original spirit of the Buddha (From SGI President Ikeda's Study Lecture Series on *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life*).



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The ultimate fulfilment of the Daishonin's vow could only happen by firmly establishing the flow of *kosen-rufu* into the eternal future and this meant the disciples firmly etching in their hearts Nichiren Daishonin's spirit. Nichiren's direct successor, Nikko Shonin, proclaimed that "without following the correct relationship of mentor and disciple, there is no attaining Buddhahood". The correct transmission of Buddhism needed a steady stream of disciples who would align their hearts and minds and share the vow of the mentor, and in unity would strive selflessly, fearlessly, actively and energetically for the peace and security of humanity, endlessly into the future. When the farmer-disciples were persecuted in Atsuhara, because of their desire to protect the Law at all costs, Nichiren was profoundly moved. It was because of the un-begrudging spirit of these disciples that he was able to achieve his life's purpose and fulfil his vow for *kosen-rufu* by inscribing the *Dai-Gohonzon* on 12 October 1279 for all humanity.

It wasn't until the 20th century, with the emergence of the Soka Gakkai, that Nichiren's vow for *kosen-rufu* would begin to be made a widespread reality. ■

### FURTHER READING

*Choose Peace* – a dialogue between Johan Galtung and Daisaku Ikeda, chapter 4, Pluto Press, London, 1995  
SGI-USA- web archive-ch. 3 – The Life of Nichiren Daishonin  
*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*- A discussion on humanistic religion – vol 1  
SGI President Ikeda's Study Lecture Series on *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life* [8 & 9]

### KEY POINTS SESSION 2

✿ Nichiren actualised the true intent of the *Lotus Sutra*: to reveal and name the Mystic Law, to clarify that all people are entities of the Mystic Law and to proclaim that all people can attain Buddhahood just as they are.

✿ The power of the Mystic Law is revealed in compassionate behaviour and embracing the *Lotus Sutra* means manifesting the wisdom to reflect on beliefs and attitudes existing in our life that obstruct our happiness and that of others.

✿ Nichiren compassionately and courageously created the opportunity for all people to directly reveal their enlightenment at every moment through the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon.

✿ The spirit of revealing the Law lies in compassionately sharing the teaching with others in dialogue.

✿ Nichiren encouraged individual empowerment, without a reliance on a priesthood.

✿ Courage lies in challenging injustices and our own negativity that might threaten the freedom and happiness of ordinary people.

✿ The transmission of Buddhism into the future requires a constant stream of disciples who will align their hearts and minds with their mentor based on a shared vow.

## END OF SESSION 2

NEXT MONTH ... SESSION 3 AND 4