

SGI Australia Autumn Study Course

prepared by the SGI Australia Study Department



Human Security

A Shared Victory of the Human Spirit



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Study Course Introduction

“Education that is truly practical arises from natural interaction among people.”
The New Human Revolution, vol 4, p222

“Even plants and trees naturally undergo steady, continuous growth. In passing, we might only notice striking events such as when they're in flower, but a person who looks at things with the eyes of a poet or a keen observer may perceive even the most subtle day-to-day changes.

Similarly, our faith will also continue to grow and deepen surely and steadily day after day as we exert ourselves in our practice of *gongyo* and in SGI activities. Persevering in the two ways of practice and study in the SGI – the organisation advancing *kosen-rufu* in exact accord with the Daishonin's teachings – continually functions to deepen our faith toward attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. The Daishonin writes, 'If one dyes something repeatedly in indigo, it becomes even bluer than the indigo leaves. The *Lotus Sutra* is like the indigo, and the strength of one's practice is like the deepening blue'. (WND1p457) Through our efforts in faith each day, our lives are increasingly imbued with Myoho-enge-kyo.

In more concrete terms, deepening our faith means deepening our prayer. Our prayers are a reflection of our life-state. As we continue in our Buddhist practice, our prayers will evolve and our conviction will deepen.” (Lecture on *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life*, Instalment 7)

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 based on the study course introduction
 - Study partners meeting between sessions for additional dialogue on the key points of the course, as well as preparing a question for discussion at each meeting.
 - 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:

- Drawing attention to the purpose and aims of the study course, and session summaries
- 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 a question for the next study meeting.

Note: Some time needs to be allocated for a brief discussion on the summaries to give participants an overview of the course.

PREPARING QUESTIONS

At the end of each session please remind each pair of study partners to prepare a question from 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.

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PURPOSE AND AIMS

Human Security – A Shared Victory of the Human Spirit is part of an on-going study programme in Australia of producing discussion material for Buddhist study to be used at group meetings. These courses draw from models of community based adult education where each participant is actively involved in their own learning. Rather than instruction, the emphasis is on dialogue to encourage belief in the possibility of creating value out of struggle and transforming suffering into opportunities for growth and victory. A unique and dynamic activity of SGI Australia, to engage in courageous dialogue in this way allows everyone to manifest their greatest potential and in doing so, experience, create and contribute to human security.

This course aims to explore human security from the profound viewpoint expressed in one of Nichiren Daishonin's most famous treatises, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. In addition, concepts of Buddhism will be introduced to support participants in the challenge to enact their own human revolution, highlighting that this unified purpose of Soka Gakkai members is a foundation from which human security can become a reality.

SESSION SUMMARIES

SESSION 1

Human Security and Establishing Peace

Will introduce the concept of human security as a contemporary global and personal challenge for which the Daishonin's treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* sheds light and in this age, remains relevant. The Daishonin, by focusing on inner transformation of the heart, rejects a passive, isolationist philosophy to appease suffering. Instead his conviction lies in the possibility of creating happiness, transforming suffering into creating value and fulfilling individual potential, as a path to human security and a peaceful society.

SESSION 2

Human Dignity and Human Revolution

Will examine the tendency towards isolation and the impasse reached by externalising and abstracting problems and their solutions, drawing from President Ikeda's 2009 *Peace Proposal*. This session opens discussion on the application of striving to unify self and environment, making possible a shared purpose for humanity. This unifying and tangible victory of faith reveals a potential for a foundation of human security.

SESSION 3

Challenging Inner Negativity and Creating a Victory of the Heart

Will explore the concept of the oneness of body and mind, through posing the idea that challenging fundamental darkness is enlightenment itself. The example of Shariputra's defeat illustrates how we can succumb to the subtle nature of negativity. In contrast, the victory won by fighting negative functions and unifying our prayer and action (mind and body) is a victory of the human spirit that can make human security a reality.

SESSION 4

Courageous Dialogue Based on Prayer

Will challenge us to be confident in the profound cause of engaging in courageous dialogue that begins with prayer. We will also examine the nature of prayer as an expression of taking responsibility, deepened at the profound level of the heart by the commitment to engage with others. The concept of evil is introduced as a lack of belief in the potential to combat the tendency to externalise evil to 'the other', which justifies so much violence. The commitment to caring for others, in "the Orchid Room" while developing ourselves expands the possibility for more people to experience human security.

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Session 1 Human Security & Establishing Peace

“The concept of security means different things to different people. In fact, there is no broad consensus on the meaning of security. Terrorism and the fight against it; the diffusion of weapons of mass destruction; the Iraqi war; the spread of infectious diseases; the loss of employment and the decline in economic growth, have all had an impact on security in different ways. As a consequence, people and countries feel more insecure and apprehensive today than at the start of the 21st century.¹”

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Human Security

Human security is a set of ideas about human dignity and quality of life put forward to counter a focus on national security. The limitations of competing national interests have been challenged by proposals developed promoting human security. These aim to assist with processes toward restoring the lives of those in conflict-ravaged societies. Whether it is political or economic interests that are served through cycles of destructive war and costly reconstruction, it is clear that the founding principles for creating a secure human existence are not met in many parts of the world. Human security has a face: it is the lives of human beings free of fear and threat. Human security is expressed in the dignity of a human life unfettered and creative. This means creating the “means to be free from fear of being killed, persecuted or abused; free from abject poverty that brings indignity and self-contempt; free to make choices”.²

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda writes in his 2009 *Peace Proposal* that at the root of the crises humanity faces, is the tendency toward abstraction. Stemming to the very origins of Buddhist thought, the tendency to separate – whether it be self and the environment; body and mind; good and evil; and even mentor and disciple – is the cause

of endless cycles of suffering. The ramifications of greed, anger and delusion are all too apparent as the 20th century has been described as a century of mega-death. We now face, at the beginnings of the 21st century, a global financial crisis likened to the great depression of the 1930s.

President Ikeda writes, “Nichiren Daishonin’s lifelong teaching begins and ends with his treatise *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. The title of this work is based on the concept of *rissho ankoku* (jpn) – ‘to establish the true and bring peace to the land’. ‘Establish the true’ means winning over evil and injustice, spreading the true Law, and thereby firmly establishing the principles of respect for the sanctity of life and human dignity. ‘Bringing peace to the land’ means realising security and happiness for all and actualising a prosperous society and peaceful world.” (*Indigo*, July 2007, p9)

The profound philosophical message the Daishonin reveals in this *Gosho* is the life and breath of the Soka Gakkai’s reason for existence. 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. From the Daishonin’s perspective transforming ourselves and our most deeply held beliefs

about the nature of life begins with a change in the heart.

“During World War II, Soka Gakkai founding President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and his disciple, second President Josei Toda, fought courageously against Japanese militarism, holding aloft the banner of *rissho ankoku*, a teaching of hope for all humanity (ibid.).” From the ‘black rain’ falling as a result of atom bombs dropped on two cities in Japan as the final curtain on the war, the sun of the Soka Gakkai, under the leadership of Mr Toda, rose. Living the heart of the teaching, which is *kosen-rufu*, the seeds of a real, not abstract, human security were sown in a time of instability, confusion and man-made disaster. In 1957, Mr Toda made a significant address to youth members of Japan, condemning those who would use nuclear weapons and declaring the proliferation of nuclear weapons as “absolute evil”. President Ikeda says in his most recent *Peace Proposal*, “He (Toda) saw that the national egotism that underlies the urge to possess nuclear weapons presented a dire threat to the future of humankind.” (2009 *Peace Proposal*, summary, p6) Nuclear weapons symbolise the cloud of darkness shrouding the human heart. Nichiren’s powerful cry was to, “quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle,

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the single good doctrine (of the *Lotus Sutra*)." (WND1p25)

From the perspective of the *Lotus Sutra*, which President Ikeda has written extensively on, "Life is also free and unfettered. It is an open

human security in his annual peace proposals, offering practical solutions and alternative approaches to challenge the deadlock humanity is facing. Rather than a focus on ideology, whether it is political,

between our own day-to-day struggles to reform our negative tendencies and the global struggle for human security. Through efforts of courageous and open-hearted dialogue starting with prayer and conviction in the proof of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism demonstrated by the three presidents, we can share in the sufferings of others as our own and contribute to the betterment of society. Nichiren Daishonin provides the blueprint for people to become happy in harmony with the environment and in doing so, transform the self and environment simultaneously. Positively influencing the direction of society is then founded on the hope and conviction that the unifying goal of *kosen-rufu* can offer to humanity, expressed in efforts to enact our own human revolution and striving for value creation. This course provides the opportunity to reflect on and appreciate the original purpose of religion to empower all of humanity with tools to create happiness in whatever their environment or circumstance. Based on the confidence that engaging in life's challenges is the most noble of victories for oneself and also for humanity, this course offers a Buddhist perspective on the application of humanism to the current global and personal challenge of human security.

“Nuclear weapons embody an absolute evil that threatens humankind's right to live; they are incompatible not only with the interests of national security but with human security. (SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, *Toward Humanitarian Competition: A New Current in History, 2009 Peace Proposal, Summary, p6*)

entity in constant communication with the external world, always exchanging matter and energy and information. Yet while open, it maintains its autonomy. Life is characterised by this harmonious freedom and openness to the entire universe. The infinite and unbounded state of Buddhahood can be described as a state in which the freedom, openness and harmony of life are maximised." (*Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, vol1p24*)

How do we determine what is valuable in life? How do we respond to ever-changing circumstances and experience security ourselves and impart it to those around us? How do we fight negative functions, which undermine and conceal the compassionate, harmonious nature of life?

President Ikeda has participated in this global policy debate on

economic or emotionally based extremism or idealism, he focuses on the inner reformation of the individual, the importance of self-mastery and the revitalisation of a spirituality based on symbiosis. These stem from his conviction, inherited from his mentor Josei Toda, that the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin have a relevance to the challenges facing humanity today. The Daishonin's Buddhism offers deep insight and concrete ways in which we can all participate in creating a movement where people experience human security and a life free from fear and indignity. *On Establishing The Correct Teaching For the Peace of the Land* resonates with the Daishonin's spirit of calling out for the human security of all people.

This course hopes to inspire confidence in the relationship

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Establishing Peace

Buddhism takes a fundamentally positive view of human life. Its core message is that every individual has infinite dignity and potential.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, the scripture which is recognised in the Nichiren tradition as the highest, most complete teaching of Shakyamuni, the image of a massive jewel-decked treasure tower is used to illustrate the beauty, dignity and preciousness of life.

If we truly understand that human life is the most precious of all treasures, we will value our own lives and those of others. From this perspective it is clear that war, as the ultimate abuse and cruelty to human beings, is to be absolutely and totally rejected, and peace should be our constant goal.

If society embraced this view of life's value, preventing violence and addressing all forms of suffering would become the highest priorities of humankind, as opposed to the accumulation of material wealth and power. Those who nurture and care for life – parents, nurses, doctors and teachers – would be treated with the greatest respect.

But humanity's common curse is an inability to fully believe in or appreciate the value of our own lives and those of others. Even if we do accept this in theory, to act on it

on a day-to-day basis is extremely difficult. When faced with a bitter interpersonal conflict we may still experience poisonous thoughts of jealousy and hatred, and wish to harm another person or wish that they could somehow be "got out of the way".

INNER TRANSFORMATION

The UNESCO Constitution states that, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." Likewise, Buddhism stresses that only an inner transformation of our lives, from the deepest level, can make our compassion stronger than our egotistical desire to win over or use others. It offers us teachings and tools which enable us to affect this kind of core transformation.

Buddhism views life as a struggle between the forces of good and evil. Good is defined as the creative, compassionate nature inherent in people, the desire to be happy oneself and aid others in their quest for happiness. Evil is defined as that which divides and breaks down our sense of connection, propelling us into a fear-driven competition to use and dominate others before they can do this to us.

During the lifetime of Nichiren, 13th-century Japan, a series of natural disasters – earthquakes,

floods, pestilence and fire – had devastated the country. The sufferings of ordinary people were enormous. Nichiren's determination to uncover the fundamental cause of this misery drove him to study and analyse the underlying belief structures of society. Specifically, he was aware that although the country was filled with Buddhist temples and priests, somehow their prayers and actions were failing to produce results in the form of peace or security for the people.

He felt that the disorder evident in the world reflected disorder within human beings. To this end he wrote, "In a country where the three poisons (of greed, anger and foolishness) prevail to such a degree, how can there be peace and stability? ... Famine occurs as a result of greed, pestilence as a result of foolishness, and warfare as a result of anger." He was convinced that only Buddhism could give people the strength to overcome these spiritual poisons in their lives, but as a result of wide-ranging study, he concluded that Buddhism as it was being practised in his time was encouraging a passivity that left people vulnerable to the sway of these poisons rather than empowering them to overcome them.

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HAPPINESS NOW

Nichiren specifically rejected the prevailing belief that all Buddhism could offer was the hope of comfort after death, and that the best attitude to take toward life was one of patient enduring. He passionately believed that Buddhism, as originally taught, had something much better to offer: the possibility of happiness and fulfilment in this present life, and that it could give people the strength to transform human society itself into an ideal and peaceful land.

One of Nichiren's most important treatises, entitled *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, presented to the political ruler of the day in July 1260, was a passionate cry for a return to the original purpose

of Buddhism – securing the peace and happiness of the people. A key function of Buddhist priests at that time was to pray for the protection of the rulers of the nation. In contrast, Nichiren's focus was the ordinary citizens. In *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*, for instance, the Chinese character Nichiren chose when he wrote "land" has at its centre the character for "common people," rather than more frequently used characters that show the king within his domain or armed protection of the domain.

In a sense Nichiren's concern can be said to be what is now defined as "human security". SGI President Ikeda said in a recent discussion on this treatise, "In the past,

'security' has solely implied national security... But what kind of security is it if, while the state is protected, the lives and dignity of each citizen are threatened? Currently, the prevailing view of security is steadily being altered from one that focuses on the state to one that focuses on the human being."

Nichiren starts his treatise by describing the turmoil he saw around him. "Over half the population has already been carried off by death, and there is hardly a single person who does not grieve." His prime motivation was a wrenching sense of empathy for the people's plight. He had taken a vow to lead himself and others to happiness, and this meant struggling to awaken and empower people to challenge



PHOTO: WAYNE WONG

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their own destiny. His outspoken determination earned him a controversial reputation which persists to this day. "I cannot keep silent on this matter," he wrote, "I cannot suppress my fears."

In terms of concrete action, Nichiren urged the political leaders of the day to cease official patronage of favoured sects and for open public debate on the merits of the different schools of Buddhism. On a personal level, he called on the leaders to "reform the tenets that you hold in your heart". In today's terms this means transforming ourselves and our most deeply held beliefs about the nature of life.

PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE

Commenting on the nature of that transformation, President Ikeda says, "What matters is that the spirit of the great philosophy of peace expounded in the *Lotus Sutra* (with its teaching that all people are Buddhas) be given full play in society as a whole. 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."

Many people today live with a sense of confusion, emptiness and despair. They feel powerless to effect change either within their own lives or society as a whole. Idealism is equated with naivety and cynicism serves as a cover for the failure of hope. Disrespect for human life fuels violence and exploitation.

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"It is vital to understand that the world of nature includes human nature, and the imbalance in the natural world at large might be more or less in proportion to the imbalance in human nature. If the world is heating up and the climate going haywire, it is worth considering the idea that so too is humanity overheating and becoming more extreme – and that perhaps there's a link and there are questions to be considered.

The foolish and fatal illusion of humanity's independence from and mastery over nature may now be evaporating like water in the sun."

— Michael Leunig, *The Age*, 30 December 2006

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The function of any religion or philosophy should be to give people the courage and hope needed to transform their sufferings. We need to develop the strength to engage successfully in a struggle against the forces of division and destruction within our own lives and the larger social realm. Unless empowerment for ourselves and others is our goal, we will be unable to resist and overcome the negative influences within our own lives and their environment.

To create an age of peace, one in which life is given supreme value, it is vital for us to have a philosophy that reveals the wonder, dignity and infinite potential of life. When we base our actions on this belief and take action out of compassion for others, the result is a pure joy which in turn motivates us to further action. Empowering ourselves from within, our sphere of compassion becomes wider and wider, encompassing not only ourselves,

our own families and nations, but the whole of humanity. We develop the wisdom and compassion to reject and resist all acts that harm or denigrate life. In this way, both an inner sense of security and a peaceful society which prioritises protection for the vulnerable can be assured.

(Article on *Establishing Peace* appeared in the July 2003 *SGI Quarterly* <http://www.sgi.org/rishsoankoku.html>)

END SESSION1

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Session 2

Human Dignity and Human Revolution

From SGI President Ikeda's 2009 *Peace Proposal, Toward Humanitarian Competition: A New Current in History*

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The impact of the financial crisis that started with defaults in the subprime mortgage market in the United States, leading to the bankruptcy of the US investment bank Lehman Brothers, has now spread to encompass the whole world.

The present crisis inevitably provokes associations with the nightmare of the 1930s, when a severe economic depression created the conditions for the global conflagration of World War II. The situation remains fluid and unpredictable, and there are growing signs that the financial crisis is undermining the real economy, bringing about a global recession and driving up unemployment.

The main cause of the crisis can be traced to the rampant dominance of speculative financial assets, whose scale is said to be four times the cumulative value of actual goods and services. The origin of the crisis is found in the fact that the financial markets, whose true function should be to support and lubricate other economic activities, have thrust themselves to centre stage, with market players becoming the “stars” single-mindedly pursuing earnings and profit, often with no thought for the impact on others.

As I have pointed out in these proposals on a number of occasions, the deepest underlying root of the crisis is the love of money itself, of currency, the global mammonism that constitutes an essential pathology of our contemporary civilisation. The currency that controls and dominates market economies has, of course, virtually no use value, it has only exchange value. And exchange value stands only on the foundation of understanding

and agreement between people; in its essence it is both abstract and anonymous. It is not directed at such concrete (and therefore finite) objects as real goods and services; thus, as the object of human desire, it has no real or inherent limits.

Soon after the end of World War II, the French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel offered a penetrating perspective, examining the “spirit of abstraction” as a key causal factor in war. While the ability to develop and manipulate abstract concepts is indispensable to human intellectual activity, to Marcel the spirit of abstraction is destructive, a process in which abstractions are alienated from concrete realities, taking on a life of their own.

For example, it is only possible to participate in war if we first deny the individual character and humanity of the opponent – reducing him or her to an abstract concept such as fascist, communist, Zionist or Islamic fundamentalist etc. Without this kind of reductionism, it would be impossible to justify or find meaning in one's participation in war.

When looking at the present financial crisis, we have to ask if we as a society have not been caught up in this spirit of abstraction. Have we not fallen prey to the Medusa-like spell of the abstract and anonymous world of currency, losing our essential human capacity to see through to the underlying fact that – however necessary it may be to the functioning of human society – currency is nothing other than an agreement, a kind of virtual reality?

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HUMAN DIGNITY

Human security has many facets, from state sponsored institutions and armies to the sanctity of the rights of each individual. By its very nature the term 'human security' indicates that the threat exists outside of the person, city or country. However, it is worthwhile examining this concept from the Daishonin's profound viewpoint.

"If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?"

It seems to me that when people are in this world they all fear what their lot may be in the life to come. So it is that they put their faith in distorted doctrines and pay honour to slanderous teachings. It distresses me that they should be so confused about right and wrong, and at the same time I feel pity that, having embraced Buddhism, they should have chosen the wrong kind. With the power of faith that is in their hearts, why must they recklessly give credence to distorted doctrines? If they do not shake off these delusions that they cling to but continue to harbour erroneous views, then they will quickly leave this world of the living and surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Thus the *Great Collection Sutra* says, "Though for countless existences in the past the ruler of a state may have practised the giving of alms, observed the precepts, and cultivated wisdom, if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands

idly by without doing anything to protect it, then all the inestimable roots of goodness that he has planted through the practices just mentioned will be entirely wiped out... Before long, the ruler will fall gravely ill, and after his life has come to an end, he will be reborn



photo: Chris Russell

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If you care anything about your personal security you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not? (WND1p24)

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in the great hell... And the same fate will befall the ruler's consort, his heir, the high ministers of the state, the lords of cities, the village heads and generals, the magistrates of districts, and the other officials.”

The *Benevolent Kings Sutra* states, “If persons destroy the teachings of the Buddha, they will have no filial sons, no harmony with their six kinds of relatives, and no aid from the heavenly deities and dragons. Disease and evil demons will come day after day to torment them, disasters will descend on them incessantly, and misfortunes will dog them wherever they go. And when they die, they will fall into the realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals. Even if they should be reborn as human beings, they will be destined to become soldiers or slaves. Retribution will follow as an echo follows a sound, or a shadow follows a form. Someone writing at night may put out the lamp, but the words he has written will still remain. It is the same with the effect of the deeds we perform in the threefold world.”

The second volume of the *Lotus Sutra* says, “If a person fails to have faith but instead slanders this sutra... When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell.” And in the Never Disparaging chapter in the seventh volume, it says, “For a thousand kalpas they underwent great suffering in the Avichi hell.”

In the Nirvana Sutra, we read, “If a person separates himself from good friends, refuses to listen to the correct teaching, and instead embraces evil teachings, then as a result he will sink down into the Avichi hell, where the size of his body will become eighty-four thousand yojanas in total length and breadth.”

When we examine this wide variety of sutras, we find that they all stress how grave a matter it is to slander the correct teaching. How pitiful that people should all go out of the gate of the correct teaching and enter so deep into the prison of these distorted doctrines! How stupid that they should fall one after another into the snares of these evil doctrines and remain for so long entangled in this net of slanderous teachings!

They lose their way in these mists and miasmas, and sink down amid the raging flames of hell. How could one not grieve? How could one not suffer?

Therefore, you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine (of the *Lotus Sutra*). If you do so, then the threefold world will become the Buddha land, and how could a Buddha land ever decline? The regions in the ten directions will all become treasure realms, and how could a treasure realm ever suffer harm? If you live in a country that knows no decline or diminution, in a land that suffers no harm or disruption, then your body will find peace and security, and your mind will be calm and untroubled. You must believe my words; heed what I say!” (WND1pp24-25)

This extraordinary piece of literature holds great significance to the future security of humanity. In this impassioned cry for people to take responsibility for their actions, the distorted doctrines mentioned refer to those philosophies and religions that do not empower the individual with the confidence, sense of awe and responsibility that is required to reveal the intrinsic creative capability of humanity. The truth of ‘one true vehicle’ is not alluding to an abstract ideal or elitist authority but to the

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unequivocal equality of all human beings to reveal their potential and take responsibility for value creation that our existence itself contains. From Nichiren's voice comes the hope which lies in taking full responsibility for self and the environment, unleashing the inherent nurturing power from within life itself.

The unification of self and environment is the conviction to appreciate and harmonise with the reality of life. Demonstrated in daily behaviour, it is the power through which we actualise human

dignity and that human progress can be proven. In the Daishonin's Buddhism, the foundation of unity is the mentor and disciple relationship. Due to the 'oneness' of humans and their surrounds we can effect change in the environment, including other humans, through our own transformation. Expressed in behaviour in daily life, we can choose to learn from the example demonstrated by Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin and the three presidents of Soka Gakkai. The challenge for us is the difficulty in believing, even though it is so

apparent in our daily interactions, that we are at the same time being influenced and influencing as a direct result of the workings of the oneness of life and environment.

In denying this relationship our behaviour will reflect a lack of belief in both our influence and responsibility for life and humanity, thus undermining our own and others' dignity. The current conflicts, political and financial crises, and environmental degradation result directly from this lack of responsibility to harmonise and protect what is, at the same

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BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF ONENESS OF SELF AND ENVIRONMENT

The Buddhist principle of the oneness of self and environment (jpn *esho funi*) means that life (*sho*) and its environment (*e*) are inseparable (*funi*). *Fun* means “two but not two.” That is, although we perceive things around us as separate from us, in reality, our lives are all interconnected and at one with the universe. Nichiren wrote, “Life at each moment encompasses...both self and environment of all sentient beings in every condition of life as well as insentient beings – plants, sky and earth, on down to the most minute particles of dust.” (WND1p1) Life means the subjective self that experiences the effects of past actions and is capable of creating new causes for the future. The environment is the objective realm where the effects of life take shape. Through causes, we create physical environments that reflect our inner reality. For example, someone who is depressed may tend to neglect their home and personal appearance. On the other hand, someone who is secure and generous creates a warm and attractive environment around themselves. By embracing the concept of our individual lives and life itself as a totality through our prayer and action, we transform our environment into the Buddha land where we are.

time, encompassing us and an extension of us – life. This is not new information, rather shedding light on how applying Buddhism’s perspective can help create a new possibility of tangible experience of human dignity and security.

One of the great obstacles to human security is the ability to empower individuals with the belief in their own significance and effectiveness in the face of life’s challenges. Nichiren Buddhism enables everyone to generate their own confidence in value creation in the face of any circumstance, both positive and negative. In particular, commitment to the vow shared with the mentor fuels the courage to transform all experiences for the benefit of self and others, revealing the profound meaning behind every struggle. In this way, everyone

can develop their lives in the most positive and compassionate direction. Nichiren’s philosophy is premised on this actual proof as a possibility for all humanity, and thus engages the most stringent test of any belief system yet established.

HUMAN REVOLUTION

The Daishonin’s view of life rejects the separation of individual and community. In doing so, an alternative is offered that transcends the prioritisation of individual over the State or vice-versa. This unification of self and collective interest has been encapsulated in the practice of Nichiren Buddhism and its implementation through the SGI across 192 countries. Expressed in the enactment of human revolution and value-creation, each of us has a tangible opportunity to

challenge the divisions, isolation and separation that cause suffering. Every encounter is an opportunity for us to face and confront our prejudices and assumptions, and provokes an inner struggle. When we perceive someone is attacking us or treating us in an unsympathetic manner, no matter how misguided their actions appear to us, this is always an invitation for us to challenge our own behaviour, response and judgement. By using the strategy of the *Lotus Sutra*, that is, praying to the Gohonzon and believing in the other person, we can determine to engage them in courageous dialogue. This is human revolution – the moment to moment self-motivated challenge to embrace the other regardless of their behaviour, just as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging³ did. It takes effort and

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humility to consider and understand other people's circumstances. It takes the willingness to engage in 'inner dialogue' before allowing our devilish functions to react to another person in a knee jerk way. In a dialogue with President Ikeda, Johan Galtung, the founder of the International Peace Research Institute reflects that; "the inner dialogue gives internal voice to both pro and con arguments. For this reason, I have come to consider my inner freedom of speech equally as important as the celebrated social outer version. We must examine our tacit assumptions and attitudes not by denying their existence, but by exposing them in the hope of understanding them. At dialogue time, many people exercise an inner dictatorship over themselves.

Instead of doing this they ought to re-examine the politics of their own minds and become less afraid of inner opposition (*Choose Peace*, p 88). This kind of non-judgemental self-challenge is described by President Ikeda as "developing the spirit of self-mastery based on the acute awareness of the humanity of others (*2004 Peace Proposal*)." The important point is that losing sight of the other limits the possibilities of our own life.

"It was Josei Toda who first used the expression 'human revolution' to describe the process of inner reformation that drives a process of positive transformation of one's circumstances and environment. What Toda was giving expression to is the Buddhist ideal of 'enlightenment' – a concept that

has rarely been put in such concrete and accessible terms.

For Toda this internal revolution was also the only way to bring about lasting and social reform. He asserted that the only way to make any progress in eradicating widespread social evil and realise peace is for each individual to revolutionise their inner nature. The essential foundation must be inner transformation taking place in the lives of each human being and steadily expanding through society." (*Ikeda, 2004 Peace Proposal*)

In general, human civilisation has been moving towards a philosophy of divisiveness – one that views human life as a means to an end, denying the effectiveness of dialogue and unwittingly promoting discrimination. In our western



The SGI exhibition, *Transforming the Human Spirit*, in Malaysia

human

“Many people today live with a sense of confusion, emptiness and despair. They feel powerless to effect change either within their own lives or society as a whole. Idealism is equated with naivety and cynicism serves as a cover for the failure of hope. Disrespect for human life fuels violence and exploitation...The function of any religion or philosophy should be to give people the courage and hope needed to transform their sufferings.”

— Article on *Establishing Peace* appeared in the July 2003 SGI Quarterly (<http://www.sgi.org/risshoankoku.html>)

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culture, for example, we tend to associate strength with autonomy and independence – promoting separation. There is a prevailing belief – albeit unconscious – that individual wellbeing can only be achieved through maintaining ascendancy; breeding envy and jealousy. We are taught to protect ourselves from others, while competing with them, thereby sustaining a pseudo self-determination. However, from the Buddhist perspective, the conditions of life affirm our mutual dependency and interconnectedness. Described as ‘Dependent Origination’, the “I” is known and experienced in relationship to others. In other words, the self forms in relation to others in our environment. The African Ubuntu tribe describe this principle as, “I exist because you exist” and “to be is to participate”. President Ikeda in his 2001 peace proposal quoted Takafumi Matsui who expresses it as “I interact or engage, therefore I am.” These are all ways of recognising the individual as part of the whole, defined by relationship and context. In this way we experience a different kind of strength from the ‘independence’ that is cultivated in our society. The result is flexibility and constant learning and an ability to deeply respect the other as an intrinsic part of our being. This is a form of unity based on humanism where people open their hearts to all others and forge bonds of trust. Such a unity has never been achieved to date

because there has not been an all encompassing philosophy to underpin it. This is the purpose of the Soka Gakkai movement and accompanying process of individual ‘human revolution’. Even so, to engage in such an enlightened way of life is much more difficult than it sounds.

Hand in hand with our enlightened aspect, equally inherent, is ‘fundamental darkness’ – a function of life that seeks to separate, discriminate, destroy and which Buddhism recognises is behind all the problems and insecurities facing humanity today – conflicts and war, financial insecurity, environmental degradation, famines and epidemics. Life essentially is a battle between this ‘dark’ life tendency and the enlightened; these co-exist. However, the exciting part is that Buddhist insight also recognises that struggling against fundamental darkness is the very means by which we reveal our enlightened nature. Which infers of course that we are never trying to eliminate what we refer to as devilish functions but rather use them for our enlightened ends! Our fundamental darkness thus becomes the fuel for our growth and happiness. This is the topic of the next session.

END SESSION 2
SESSIONS 3 & 4 will appear
in May Indigo

¹Sadako Ogata, Co-Chair of Commission for Human Security, www.humansecurity-chs.org/newsandevents/graz.html

²ibid.

³Bodhisattva Never Disparaging: A mythological character who appears in the 20th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. He venerated all people, no matter how much he was abused, always saying, ‘I have profound reverence for you, I will never dare to treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practising the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood.’ His example demonstrates the means we are able to bring happiness to ourselves and others.