

# SGI Australia

## Introductory Study Course

### Session 1 & 2



photo: Hirumi Hurley

# Human Revolution

## &

# Kosen-rufu



## Buddhist Study

“Those who take Buddhist study seriously develop a broad and expansive state of mind and brim with infinite hope for the future. Those who spurn Buddhist study, on the other hand, consign themselves to a benighted state of egoism and arrogance, turning away from a life of joy and true inner happiness. This is what I have seen happen.” (From SGI President Ikeda’s Essay, *The Light of the Century of Humanity* translated from the 19 October 2007 issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

Mention the word ‘study’ and often people’s eyes glaze over remembering the endless hours spent pouring over books and listening to lectures, while longing for it all to stop so that we could get on with our lives! Thus, study almost invariably connotes a dry, intellectual pursuit that entails understanding the idea before even considering its relevance to our daily life and the world. This sort of study feels far removed from reality. Buddhist study, in concert with striving to deepen our faith and practice, is completely different because it serves as the driving force of our daily life; it is a spiritual struggle to firmly establish the spirit of humanism in our actions and behaviour. It is the means to gain practical wisdom to contribute to the welfare (happiness) of many people in our life. The key point is that Buddhist study does not exist outside of our daily actions and behaviour. We deepen our commitment in our actions and gain wisdom in our behaviour through sharing with our fellow human beings in heart-to-heart dialogue and friendship, and striving with them to become better and happier people. Buddhist study is the highest field of learning because it is about the totality of our life and about revealing our highest potential!



## Purpose

It is through actions that ideas come alive. When ideas are relevant to our lives we act with clarity and confidence. More importantly, our understanding deepens as we engage in the action of dialogue. For this reason we are focusing on making this study course come alive by encouraging the dialogue to be based on these key aspects: Relevance, Understanding and Application. Throughout this course – in conversations with your study partner and in the group – you are encouraged to be continuously asking yourselves these questions about the key points and study materials:

- 1. How is this relevant to me? How is this relevant to humanity?**
- 2. How do I understand this concept? What does it mean to me in the context of my life?**
- 3. How can I apply this in my daily life?**



## Aims

-  To Polish, purify, deepen, broaden and strengthen our life for the sake of the happiness of all through our dialogue and shared commitment to each other’s growth within our study groups.
-  To inspire dialogue on the possibilities for humanity when we strive for peace through the inner transformation of each individual.
-  To inspire dialogue about the significance of consistently striving in our own human revolution to encourage and give hope to others.
-  To inspire dialogue on the role of the mentor in providing a compass for living a purposeful, creative and joyful life.
-  To inspire dialogue about the significance of sharing the same purpose and of believing in the unique potential/expression of each individual for the creation of peace.



## How to do this course

**The course consists of four sessions with an additional introductory session to introduce:**

- ✿ How the course works
- ✿ The significance of Buddhist study
- ✿ The key element of study partners meeting between sessions
- ✿ The importance of dialogue as the means for applying, making relevant and understanding the study materials and key points
- ✿ The Introductory Essay

**At the introductory session the facilitators are responsible for:**

- ✿ Explaining and outlining the purpose of Buddhist study and the aims and purpose of this course.
- ✿ Encouraging study partners to meet between sessions for dialogue about the relevance and application of key concepts and decide on question to present for group discussion based on each sessions' study material and key points.
- ✿ Reminding the group at the conclusion of each session of the next session's topic and allocating the study partners who will be presenting the questions to help facilitate the dialogue.
- ✿ Facilitating a discussion based on the introductory essay to the course.



## Study Partners

The facilitator will introduce all the participants and request people form pairs to meet between each of the sessions. This is a significant component of the course. All the participants of the group benefit greatly from the deeper bonds of friendship that are created based on this additional effort and cause to meet before each session. These informal get-togethers are the opportunity to delve more deeply into the application, relevance and understanding of the key points introduced in each session as well as to share experiences of the course and each other's development of faith and practise of Buddhism.



## Preparation of Questions

For each session, study partners will be allocated to prepare a question relating to the key points and the study materials in each session. This gives everyone the opportunity to contribute to leading the dialogue in the truly egalitarian spirit of the SGI discussion group meeting.

**Each session reminder:**

- ✿ Remind each set of partners to develop and present a question to reflect on and form the basis of the dialogue at the next session.
- ✿ Encourage all study partners to discuss relevance, understanding and application of key points between sessions.



## Introductory Essay

A life lived without purpose or value, the kind in which one doesn't know the reason why one was born, is joyless and lacklustre. To just live, eat and die without any real sense of purpose surely represents a life pervaded by the world of Animality. On the other hand, to do, create or contribute something that benefits others, society and ourselves and to dedicate ourselves as long as we live to that challenge-that is a life of true satisfaction, a life of value. It is a humanistic and lofty way to live. (For Today and Tomorrow: Daily Encouragement p15)

### **Devotion to the Happiness of all is to keep Striving and Challenging Oneself Eternally with the Mentor**

Endo: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind". This is the Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra pure and simple and the fundamental spirit of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Ikeda: I am Mr Toda's disciple. That is my most fundamental source of pride. When Mr Toda was in prison, he read the Lotus Sutra with his entire life. ... When newspaper reporters asked him whether he thought he was the Buddha, he replied, "No, I am a fine example of an ordinary human being". He stood up fiercely in the midst of the storms that raged about him. Always warmly supporting the cause of people who were bravely acting on the inspirational drama of transforming lives of despair into lives of shining hope and new beginnings.

Mr Toda's life was the epitome of human revolution. With these two words human revolution, Mr Toda demolished the danger of self-righteousness that can so easily afflict a religion and marvellously combined the supreme wisdom of Buddhism with an unsurpassed way of life for the human being and a superlative path of social prosperity ... Human revolution simultaneously leads to a revolution of society and of our environment ... Viewed through

the eyes of the Buddha ... happiness for living beings independent of their environment is impossible. Similarly, peace only in terms of the environment independent of living beings is also impossible.

We cannot be truly happy while others remain miserable. Nor is the misery of another that person's alone. The more happiness we bring to others, the happier we ourselves become. As long as one unhappy person remains, our own happiness cannot be complete ... (Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, vol1 pp188-189)

This study course covers four weeks of material with the hope of inspiring invigorating dialogue, deeper understanding and the practical application of Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy to our daily life. During the course we will examine extracts from guidance's, dialogues and books written by SGI President Ikeda that express profound belief in human potential, the core of Buddhist philosophy. Life's immense reserve of creativity, energy and compassion, holds tremendous hope for all people. From the individual to the whole of humanity causality applies. It is by drawing on the wisdom of Buddhist humanism to direct our causes to value creation that we can joyfully engage in our human revolution while making effort to inspire hope for others.

In Session One, we examine the non-violent revolution of self that defines human revolution as the means for counter-acting current tendencies of complacency and powerlessness. It is the method for building a compassionate and cohesive path forward for humanity. Only when we put our humanistic belief into action does the transformation of self, or enlightenment, become a reality. Our behaviour is the proof of this while at the same time being the cause for an expanded possibility of its expression.

“And what is the weapon of our revolution? It is dialogue with one person after another. Ours is a revolution carried out through the power of words. In a more basic sense, it is an effort to inspire people through our own humanity. That’s why polishing our lives is an indispensable part of our movement.” (NHR vol9 p236)

Session Two challenges us to develop beyond our smaller self and to engage with our environment. Moreover, when we engage in sincere dialogue our own heart opens. When we do this we are able to reflect honestly on our own development, simultaneously causing a new determination to awaken in our life. The actions we make towards others happiness is, in fact, the polishing of our own ‘tarnished mirror’. It allows us to reveal the enlightened qualities of our own life, transforming negative to positive by utilising every aspect of our character and tendencies to inspire hope in others.

The sole purpose of Buddhism, the sole purpose of the SGI, is to save people from suffering. The SGI is doing its utmost to bring happiness to humanity. It has no other reason for existing. How praiseworthy are the lives of those who strive towards that goal with the SGI! How noble!  
(Wisdom of the *Lotus Sutra*, vol1, p190)



Session three opens up our heart to the central concept of the mentor and disciple relationship and the significance of the mentor’s vision as a compass for our own life. It is accurate to interpret the SGI as the expression of the Buddha’s will. More than an organisational structure, the SGI activities of personal practice, one-to-one dialogue, small group gatherings and applied study offer the opportunity to remove the barriers of difference and open the heart of compassion and equality to humanity. The mentor and disciple relationship as it is expressed in Nichiren Buddhism provides a practical foundation for the transmission of the spirit of humanism without hierarchy or the need for gurus or priests. It is the perfect basis for the creative development of all of our human relationships.

The Daishonin was committed to bringing Buddhism to all and leading them to the highest state of being, the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime. The word *rufu* in *kosen-rufu* means “to flow like a mighty river,” or “to spread out like a huge fabric.” It signifies spreading or flowing out to all humanity. As I have said repeatedly, *kosen-rufu* is not the end point of a process but rather the process, the flow, itself. There is no particular destination, no completion of *kosen-rufu*. We can speak metaphorically about what *kosen-rufu* is, but in fact it has no definitive form.

*Kosen-rufu* is concretely expressed through such actions as reviving all fields of society through the compassion and wisdom of the Mystic Law, and building a society that shines with the sanctity of life, respect for human rights, and a culture of peace. It is a movement to spread the philosophy of ultimate happiness and peace, from mentor to disciple, from parent to child, from one generation to the next. *Kosen-rufu* transcends all distinctions and divisions, including nationalities and classes.  
(HFABF January 2008, pp52-53)

Session four brings the previous discussion to a conclusion by challenging the barriers of separation that prevents our belief in, and engagement with, the totality of our life. By linking the practice of Buddhism to our daily life, society and humanity as a whole we explore the great possibility that human revolution provides for a new culture of peace. The reality of causation is that through each person's engagement in human revolution the possibility of a peaceful and creative evolution of humanity is actualised.

Each week our aim is to open our hearts and minds to a new possibility based on a practical and clear method of action. Buddhist study is not intended for theoretical discourse. It becomes relevant only through our courageous will to progress our own life in harmony with others. The SGI provides a perfect vehicle for human development and unity. The method of engaging in dialogue as exemplified by this course is the humanistic movement that has eluded humanity up until this time. The SGI is none other than a movement of purposeful dialogue for the sake of this and future generations. Predicated on transforming the self and working to inspire others through dedicated efforts and open-hearted exchange, the SGI offers a new possibility of truly democratic, non-violent revolution with each person taking personal responsible for its success.



## Key Points

- ❁ **Purpose:** Why we study and how to conduct the study course; Making study the soul of our practice.
- ❁ **Understanding/Relevance/Application:** What is relevant to me, what is the relevance to humanity? How do we understand our role and responsibility for our own human revolution?
- ❁ **Dialogue is actively pursuing the spirit of the course; making the key points springboards for dialogue; encouraging preparation of questions with study partners.**

# Session One

An Inner Revolution – Revealing Buddhahood  
– Our self in relation to others



## Aim:

**To inspire dialogue on the possibilities for humanity when we strive for peace through the inner transformation of each individual.**

## Introduction

*“In order to bring Hope and Joy to others one must feel Hope and Joy oneself” (Daisaku Ikeda)*

Human revolution is the essential act needed to change the world! A statement like this may strike one as dogmatic and unmistakable, but it is actually the compassionate message of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Buddhist humanism views the human being as responsible for everything and based on the interdependent reality of life, when we change we effect a change in our family, our community, society, the world and history itself.

But how is this possible? How is it that Nichiren’s Buddhism can hold so much hope for the human being? The reason is, Buddhahood – a supreme

state of life available to all people and characterised by boundless wisdom and infinite compassion. However, many of us live life based on the belief that solutions to our suffering and our happiness can be found in acquiring something else, being somewhere else or depending on someone else, other than ourselves. Indeed, we live at a time when humanity is rapidly engaging in more and more scientific and technological achievements that actually have not made us any happier. Our spiritual life remains undeveloped, unable to transform these technological advances into benefit for all humanity. Without a corresponding spiritual revolution, we are unable to realise that humanity can only prosper when individuals change their hearts so as to ensure that all human inventions and actions are based on creating value for everyone and everything.

Buddhism's sole purpose is to help humanity recognise and use this inherent endowment of Buddhahood to bring peace and happiness to the world. Simply, when we are 'enlightened' to this wondrous property of our life, we experience supreme joy. Can you imagine what it would be like if you and everyone around you were able to consistently believe in themselves, that is, believe in the potential to address and overcome all the problems life presents in harmony with others at the same time? Wouldn't this be a magnificent and fulfilling way to live? It is indeed possible to live each day filled with a sense of well-being – looking forward to whatever the day might present including the challenges, not at all worried or anxious about the future, confident in the knowledge that our Buddhahood will be expressed everywhere at all times. Backed by a practical and accessible methodology, this is the promise of Nichiren's Buddhism.

A life engaged in human revolution cultivates the inner strength to overcome any and all difficulties by making these the driving force for consistently improving for the better and inspiring others to do the same. Our ongoing commitment to facing and overcoming our weaknesses through self-reflection based on prayer, study and dialogue, is the way we are able each day to challenge, change, and grow a little more steadily and surely becoming a better person. Through this process we begin to see and even appreciate ourselves as unique and irreplaceable. Rather than borrowing from or imitating others, we develop the conviction

to engage in creative thought and take action from our own sense of responsibility, thus positively influencing and learning from our environment. This is a revolutionary change in our perspective of self. Simultaneously we transform our view of others, beginning to appreciate that through our interactions with all the people around us we are able to polish our lives and grow. Respect for others, we learn, is identical to respect for ourselves. Importantly, facing our weaknesses and engaging optimistically and compassionately with life, in all its manifestations, can only occur in relationship with others. So it is, that when we engage in a study course in the context of the SGI we are in essence engaged in our human revolution. Because life is a series of changes, of ups and downs, it is essential to have a firm foundation from which to redetermine and revitalise ourselves so as to remain connected to our purpose of human happiness. The world of friendship provided by the SGI, where we can talk things over and prepare for a fresh departure, is the perfect place to do our human revolution. A path to absolute happiness is assured when, with our fellow believers, we base our actions on sincere prayer to the Gohonzon and open our heart to the mentor's vision thus ensuring the humanistic philosophy of Buddhism can be transmitted for the sake of future generations.

## Study Materials

### Seven Characteristics of Human Revolution

*From The New Human Revolution volume 19 chapter 3*

Shin'ichi wanted to impress upon the young people that Nichiren Buddhism is a philosophy of human revolution, and to articulate concrete guidelines for accomplishing that aim.

Looking around the room at the participants, he then said, "Our lives, both body and spirit, are entities of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and human

revolution is the process of manifesting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the life-state of Buddhahood, therein. What, then, characterizes human revolution? What does it look like? I would like to offer some points on this subject to you today.

“The first is regarding health. We need to demonstrate the power of our practice in accord with the concept of ‘faith being manifested in health.’ There is of course also the question of karma involved, but it still remains that when our health is compromised we can’t be as active as we would like. Given that we are made of flesh and blood, it is only natural that we will experience sickness. But the important thing is to pray earnestly to be healthy and to attune our lives to the fundamental rhythm of the universe at the deepest level. Without such profound prayer and a balanced lifestyle, we can’t say that we are genuinely practising the Daishonin’s Buddhism.”

The second characteristic of human revolution that Shin’ichi introduced was youthfulness. Maintaining a youthful spirit throughout our lives is proof of our human revolution. As long as we continue to practise vibrantly and strive to improve and develop ourselves, we will never lose our youthful spirit.

The third characteristic of human revolution he mentioned was good fortune. All of the victories we achieve through chanting sincerely and working diligently for *kosen-rufu* come back to us as benefit and good fortune that adorns our lives and the lives of our loved ones. In our turbulent society, it is this good fortune that protects us and enables us to experience genuine fulfillment.

The fourth quality cited by Shin’ichi was wisdom. To perfect ourselves and develop into leaders who can function effectively in society, we need to cultivate our minds. Failing to do so will lead to our defeat.

The fifth distinguishing characteristic of human revolution, Shin’ichi stated, was passion. True practitioners of the Daishonin’s Buddhism burn with a passionate spirit to achieve *kosen-rufu* and their lives shine. No matter how intelligent we are, if we lose our passion and enthusiasm, it would be no exaggeration to say that we are little better than a living corpse.

Passion is also a requirement for happiness. For the most part, whether or not we are happy comes down to whether or not we are able to feel passionate about things in our life.

The sixth quality Shin’ichi introduced was conviction. Human revolution means to become a person who shines with firm conviction. Without a sound philosophy, without conviction, we are like a ship without a compass; we lose our way in life and run the risk of becoming shipwrecked when the winds of adversity start to blow.

The seventh and final characteristic of human revolution Shin’ichi put forth was victory. Buddhism is about winning. It is through our achieving victory upon victory that we carry out our human revolution. A life of victory is a life of human revolution. Our lives and *kosen-rufu* are a struggle. When we triumph in those struggles, we are able to demonstrate the truth and correctness of our cause.

After offering these seven characteristics of human revolution – health, youthfulness, good fortune, wisdom, passion, conviction, and victory – Shin’ichi went on to say that being a true Buddhist practitioner also requires manifesting compassion, which embraces all of these characteristics.

## 7 Characteristics of Human Revolution

- ✿ Health
- ✿ Youthfulness
- ✿ Good Fortune
- ✿ Wisdom
- ✿ Passion
- ✿ Conviction
- ✿ Victory

 **Study Materials**

**Human Revolution Is Transforming Ourselves As We Are**

*From The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, vol2, p116*

There is no attainment of Buddhahood separate from the earthly desires and the sufferings of birth and death of ordinary people. Attaining Buddhahood does not mean becoming some kind of super-human being who transcends all else. This is a point that second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda consistently emphasised. Mr Toda was a master in the art of being oneself, just as one is. Outwardly, he was in every way an ordinary person, but his mind was always keenly focused on the advance of the Soka Gakkai. Above all, his sense of responsibility for *kosen-rufu* was truly a reflection of his towering state of enlightenment. Cherishing a fervent earthly desire to achieve *kosen-rufu*, Mr Toda demonstrated a commitment to this cause transcending life and death, based on a vast life-state that I would describe as “enlightenment manifesting as responsibility.”

To be “just as we are” means to continually polish our life while being ourselves. In other words, it means that the essence of achieving our human revolution is none other than showing actual proof of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form. That is, the principles of “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” are actualized in our lives in the midst of our Buddhist practice to keep challenging ourselves through faith. (Lectures On *The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life and Death*, number 12)

Ikeda: Buddhahood seems like a goal; but it is not. It is a clear path. It is hope itself- hope to advance eternally toward self-improvement, greater fulfillment, and increased peace of mind and enjoyment. The future attainment of Buddhahood that the *Lotus Sutra* predicts teaches the attitude of focusing on the present and the future, the progressive spirit always to strive toward further growth and help more people become happy.

Endo: If Buddhahood meant achieving a state of perfection beyond which there was nothing else, wouldn’t it be rather boring?

Ikeda: When we enter the path of Buddhahood, we can thoroughly enjoy from the depths of our being all of life’s storms, blizzards, and withering gales as well as, of course, its spring breezes, blue skies and sunshine; we attain the supreme state in which life is a joy and death is joyful, too. Following this path guarantees that we will experience such eternal fulfillment and hope. In a sense becoming a Buddha means continually actualising the principles of ‘attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime’ and ‘attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.’

Endo: The ultimate summation of these endeavours is the state of life of Nichiren Daishonin, who says, “when difficulties arise, we should regard these as ‘joyful’” (GZ p7500)

**Human Revolution Is Creating Lasting Happiness**

*From The New Human Revolution, vol 9 pp243-246*

“That evening, [Shin’ichi] attended another guidance meeting at the Kawasaki residence. At the meeting, several French members shared very moving experiences in faith. One was by a young French woman named Jeanne. From the time she was a child, Jeanne had been afflicted with asthma and spinal problems. Severe asthma attacks had brought her close to death on numerous occasions, and she couldn’t attend school on a regular basis.

With tears of joy in her eyes, Jeanne finished telling her experience, “While participating in the Resistance [when German forces invaded and occupied France in WW2], Jeanne’s mother, Francoise, said, “I always believed that once France was liberated there would be peace, and if there was peace we would all be happy. I was struggling because of my daughter’s illness, and there seemed nothing I could do to alleviate her suffering. My heart was always shrouded in dark clouds. But through my encounter with Bud-

dhism, my daughter was able to overcome the illness that plagued her for so many years...Business is also starting to pick up at the gallery that I run. Now hope shines in my heart. Genuine peace will be realized through each individual becoming truly happy. I am determined to devote my life to sharing the Daishonin's Buddhism with others in order to achieve the real peace that I have always dreamed of." Shin'ichi said to her, "Please become the happiest person in the world. As a person who has suffered so much, you fully deserve it." Francoise's eyes sparkled as she nodded joyfully.

This is an excerpt from a poem (HFBF Nov 2007) that SGI President Ikeda dedicated to the members of the 27th World Congress of Poets, held in Chennai, India, 1-6 September 2007.

### The Salute To Poets

War, nuclear weapons,  
environmental destruction,  
discrimination,  
the trampling of people's rights –  
all these problems  
are caused and created

Thus there is  
no misery or cruelty  
beyond our power  
as humans  
to resolve.



## Keypoints

❁ **The human being is the foundation for everything. War, nuclear weapons, environmental destruction, discrimination, the trampling of people's rights—all these problems are caused and created by human beings.**

❁ **Peace comes from the actions we make in our lives to become genuinely happy. To be happy we need to grow. Growth can only come about through interactions with others.**

❁ **The only perfection is embracing each challenge to the best of our ability.**

❁ **Human Revolution is polishing ourselves just as we are.**



## End Session one

# Session Two

**Looking beyond the smaller self begins with our own transformation, not others**



photo: Hiromi Hurley



## Aim

**To inspire dialogue about the significance of our own human revolution to encourage and give hope to others.**

## Introduction

Directly experiencing the transformation in our lives as a result of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we quickly realise our own happiness is not achieved in isolation. The desire to share our happiness with others provides the foundation for a continuous joyful and vibrant interaction with life itself. The principle of oneness of self and the environment means that our inner state of life is reflected in the environment. Of course, this also means all of humanity's states of life are expressed in the environment. The premise of Buddhism is the easiest states of life to express and witness are greed, anger and stupidity. We see examples all the time!! The most difficult to believe is that Buddhahood exists and that we can express this where we are and just as we are. Taking responsibility for our self and the environment, could be

said to be having the desire to imbue the environment with the state of Buddhahood, confident we can draw out this creative potential in our own life and others. The aim of the Soka Gakkai is for the life state of Buddhahood to have its practical expression in society by fostering each individual's unique potential while sharing the same goal and purpose with each other.

In session one we discussed how this begins with the individual transformation of the heart, the inner spiritual realm of our life. To encourage others to believe in the inherent potential of life, our individual inner transformation in the depths of our own life is essential. We do this through our efforts to challenge our weaknesses while working for others happiness. We are then able to move beyond a focus on the past (karma) and self-absorption, to break through the "closed, hardened shell" that we may have built around our own heart and in this way encourage others to do the same. Human revolution is the surest way to do this. Human revolution is the core to showing proof, as without it we merely resort to teaching others about the ideals of Buddhism.

Strong prayer and striving in our daily life is necessary for us to fight against the notion that "Buddhism is a nice ideal but one that doesn't really change reality." In other words, without embracing this core principle of human revolution we lose focus on the effort required for our own development in the reality of our daily life to influence society in a positive direction. By opening our heart to the potential of our life and that of other's, we can gain confidence that the environment will reflect our inner transformation. Although change is always occurring, positively and negatively, we create suffering and hardship when we believe the answer is for the other person or the environment to change in the way we think they 'should'.

In effect, with these expectations we can inadvertently pressure others, albeit with good intentions, creating a foil for others to do to their human revolution and perhaps ignoring the opportunity for human revolution ourselves. Putting into practise the spirit of valuing each individual by opening our heart to the struggles and sufferings of others is actual proof of our human revolution. This

expression of compassion demonstrates to them proof of the possibility of enlightenment as a core tendency of life.

As we develop our life-condition of Buddhahood, we express it through our concern for the environment and the happiness of the people directly in our environment. When we desire to help others overcome their suffering and feel joy we make the greatest cause for our own happiness. From the Buddhist perspective of life, this works because in order to truly help another, we need to expand our life, show proof as inspiration of what is possible and demonstrate absolute happiness as a fact. Actual proof is the most authentic way we show the transformative power of Nichiren's Buddhism.

Appreciation of all aspects of our life becomes the starting point of our human revolution. The practical expression of our appreciation and belief in the creative potential in life is to continuously conduct an inner-transformation ourselves, providing hope, encouragement and proof to those in our environment. SGI gives the perfect opportunity, the three presidents having revived the Bodhisattva practice, to enable each individual to gain the same lofty state of life as the Buddha. In others words, through our efforts in Soka Gakkai we are able to be practitioners, not just believers in a nice ideal. The dialogue movement is the place where we are able to consistently make the cause to open our hearts to diverse and unique individuals, thereby creating a strong community and actively contributing to global peace.





## Study Materials

Inner joy and vitality are indispensable to the struggle to realise happiness for ourselves and others, and to construct an alliance of people dedicated to the cause of good. We can only deeply inspire others through our own lives, and we can only spur them to embark on inner change through our actions and conduct as people who are ourselves undertaking this same challenge.

How can we break through the closed, hardened shells of people's lives in the Latter Day of the Law, which often resemble an inhospitable frozen wasteland as a result of karma and self-absorption? And how can we activate their Buddha nature and awaken them on a fundamental level so that they can transform their lives? This is the endless challenge of our Buddhist practice. And that is why we ourselves must first of all be active and engaged Buddhists who continue to work on our own inner transformation. *(The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life 11)*

Unless the spirit of valuing each individual is put into practice, any talk of the heritage of the Law, no matter how exalted, will be nothing but empty theory.

This also means that those who practise the Daishonin's Buddhism must have the awareness and confidence that they can definitely change their lives on a profound level. *(The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life 12)*

The Soka Gakkai has revived this bodhisattva practice in the modern age through its practise of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi once remarked:

“We must clearly distinguish between believers and practitioners. While there is no dispute about the fact that someone who believes [in the Mystic Law] will have their prayers answered and realize benefit, this alone does not constitute bodhisattva practice. There is no such thing as a self-centered Buddha who

simply accumulates personal benefit and does not work for the well-being of others. Unless we carry out bodhisattva practice, we cannot attain Buddhahood.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr Makiguchi recognised that the power of Buddhism can only be demonstrated through the actual proof of faith shown by practitioners in their daily lives. He also keenly perceived that Buddhist salvation was not about the Buddha saving people by means of his resplendent appearance<sup>2</sup>, but rather about people bringing forth their own inner potential through personally challenging themselves in bodhisattva practice and inspiring others to do the same.

*(The Heritage of The Ultimate Law of Life 10)*

### The Significance of Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime from the Individual and Collective Perspective

#### *From On Attaining Buddhahood In This Lifetime instalment 1*

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, attaining enlightenment is not about embarking on some inconceivably long journey to become a resplendent godlike Buddha; it is about accomplishing a transformation in the depths of one's being. This revolutionary view of realising enlightenment fundamentally changed the whole meaning of Buddhist practice as it was traditionally viewed.

In other words, it is not a matter of practising in order to scale the highest summit of enlightenment at some point in the distant future. Rather, it is a constant, moment-to-moment, inner struggle between the opposing courses of revealing our innate Dharma nature or allowing ourselves to be ruled by our fundamental darkness and delusion. This unceasing effort to polish our lives is the heart and essence of Buddhist practice.

The only way for human beings to change is for them to conquer their inner darkness and rediscover the eternal sanctity and dignity within their

<sup>1</sup> Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu (*Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*) (Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1987), vol10 p151. At the 5th General Meeting of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (forerunner of the Soka Gakkai) on November 22, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the remarkable characteristics, such as the thirty-two features, attributed to Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

own lives. Cultivating the noble spirit with which all people are originally endowed will directly lead to a change in the destiny of humankind. With that conviction, we of the have been working to build a network of good all around the globe. ... All people at the core of their lives yearn to attain enlightenment. But there is no teaching more difficult to believe or understand than the teaching that we can definitely attain Buddhahood in our present existence. We of the SGI have taken on the challenge of practising this profound teaching and sharing it widely with others in Japan and throughout the globe.)

Many leading thinkers and intellectuals share a recognition that modern civilization has lost sight of the human being and become deadlocked on many fronts. There is no denying that the inner spiritual realm has been neglected and all too many people are obsessed with seeking comfort, ease, and pleasure in external things – things outside of themselves.

Without surmounting the fundamental human delusions of greed, anger, and foolishness, we will not be able to solve the many problems that the world faces today, including the preoccupation with economic growth, politics that are devoid of humanism, international conflicts, warfare, growing disparity between rich and poor, and rampant discrimination. One conclusion from my dialogues with leading thinkers is that the only real solution is for human beings themselves to change, that the sole key lies in “human revolution.”

### *From On Attaining Buddhahood In This Lifetime instalment 4*

Practising the Daishonin’s Buddhism means not being swayed this way and that; it means constructing a self that is solid and resolute like towering Mount Fuji. But if we neglect this task and focus our energies somewhere else, we can end up veering onto a path of seeking the Law externally before we’re even aware of it.

For example, if we chant to the Gohonzon but always blame other people or our environment for our circumstances, we are avoiding the challenge of tackling

our inner darkness or ignorance. By doing so, we are seeking enlightenment outside of us. It is by changing ourselves on a more profound level that we can begin to improve our situation. Prayer is the driving force for that change.

It is also important that we don’t fall into the trap of practising “dependent faith,” where we pin our hopes on having our prayers answered through the divine or transcendent powers of gods or Buddhas. This is a typical example of viewing the Law as outside oneself. The provisional Buddhas of the pre-*Lotus Sutra* teachings<sup>3</sup> readily lend themselves to this kind of faith, the essence of which is escapism.

Even when they’re obviously suffering, people with this kind of dependent faith avoid looking at their problems. They don’t have the courage or make any actual effort to challenge their situation. Without a struggle, however, we cannot directly engage the gears of our human revolution. In such a scenario, quite frankly, faith is simply being used as something to hide behind and avoid having to deal with reality.

To use the analogy of mountain-climbing, if we just walk around the base of the mountain and never actually make any attempt to ascend its slopes, we’ll never reach the summit, no matter how much time passes. If we avoid challenging our own issues, we’ll never be able to strengthen and develop ourselves, and we won’t possibly be able to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

In addition, it is also important that we try to rid our lives of general doubt and disbelief as well as grumbling and complaining. The erroneous belief that Myoho-enge-kyo (the Mystic Law) exists outside of our life has at its core an inability to believe that all people, both ourselves and others, possess the Buddha nature. And this disbelief stems from fundamental darkness or ignorance.

In terms of attitude in faith, this tendency to sceptically regard the Buddha nature as “a nice ideal but one that doesn’t really change reality” will manifest

<sup>3</sup> The provisional teachings that preceded the *Lotus Sutra* do not teach that the world of Buddhahood exists in all people, and instead describe Buddhas as idealised and superior beings. The Pure Land (Nembutsu) teachings, for example, explain that instead of relying on one’s own efforts, one should exclusively depend on salvation through such a Buddha — namely, Amida.

itself as prayer that is weak, vague, and lacking confidence. If our efforts in faith are half-hearted, we won't be able to change our attitude or fundamentally transform our life.

*From Winds of Happiness Chapter in The New Human Revolution Volume 10 pp140-141*

The young man continued to attend Soka Gakkai meetings. The thing that surprised him most was the consideration the members displayed for others. In one case, an elderly member had been diagnosed with cancer. Fellow members visited her on a daily basis to offer her encouragement and support, as well as to pray for her recovery. One member said to Ozaki: "I found happiness through Buddhism, which is why I want to share it with everyone I know. I believe that bringing happiness to a single individual and creating world peace both stem from the same source."

Gradually Ozaki's attitude toward the Soka Gakkai underwent a profound change. Up to then, he had thought that a dubious religion that promised things such as faith healing must be alienated from normal society and conduct strange rituals, but the Gakkai was not like that at all. Discussion meetings were held regularly, serving as open forums for dialogue, and members all sought to be good citizens who played leading roles in their places of work and society.

Ozaki had also thought that the Soka Gakkai was guided by the arbitrary teachings of some "guru," but he found instead that it was based on a thick book called the Goshō – a compilation of the writings of Nichiren Daishonin – as well as the teachings of Buddhism.

It was true that the members deeply admired their youthful leader President Yamamoto, but it seemed to be largely a matter of being inspired by his character. And everyone said that President Yamamoto was a person who placed great emphasis on dialogue. After observing the Soka Gakkai for himself, Tad Ozaki decided to join. He had discovered that rather than "sinister ulterior motives," the organisation was dedicated to the pure and noble ideal of constructing a world of happiness and peace for all.

## Keypoints

- \* **Action based on belief that we can change at a profound level transforms theory of Buddhism into practice.**
- \* **Expressing our inner joy and vitality is actual proof of the Buddha nature.**
- \* **Everyone is seeking enlightenment; our moment-to-moment struggle reveals enlightenment to inspire hope in others.**
- \* **Challenging our own issues strengthens and develops our life.**
- \* **Grumbling and complaining does not change anything. Prayer is the driving force of change.**
- \* **Actual proof that is expressed in our community through dialogue corrects deeply held misconceptions about Buddhism and SGI.**
- \* **How becoming an example and inspiration positively affects those around us.**



photo: Wayne Wong