

The West Amiable and Meriterious

Gift of

Field Marchal Thanom and

Thanpaying Chengkel Kittikachern

of Thailand.

19-3-1981.

by Daisaku Ikeda

## 11500

First edition, 1974 Second edition, 1976

Published by The East Publications, Inc., 10-5, Roppongi 3, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan. Copyright © 1974, by Daisaku Ikeda; all rights reserved. Printed in Japan. LCC Card No. 74-173564

## **CONTENTS**

## Introduction

Chapter One
Buddhist Philosophy of Life19
Chapter Two
Early Flowering of Buddhism 45
Chapter Three
Life and Mission of Nichiren Daishonin 59
Chapter Four
Nichiren Shoshu Philosophy Alive Today 88

#### Introduction

In this book I have tried to explain the Buddhist interpretation of the basic laws of life and to give a brief historical sketch of the way of Buddhist thought—particularly the Mahayana tradition from Sakyamuni, the first historically recorded Buddha; through Chih-i, the founder of Tien-t'ai Buddhism; to Nichiren Daishonin,\* the founder of Nichiren Shoshu and the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. Before doing this, however, I have

\* Daishonin is a title of great respect for wisdom and holiness. It does not carry the connotations of the word saint, by means of which it is sometimes translated.

examined the question of meaning in human life in an attempt to show why I believe that Buddhist philosophy is the way to help man find meaning and dignity in life and thus to bring about the kind of revolution that must take place if the world is to be saved from disaster.

Today, in many parts of the world the dignity of life is overlooked. Industrial technology has so polluted the environment that the rosy prospects once held out for civilization have vanished, and man now is having grave doubts concerning the very nature of technological civilization. It has been borne home on him that the civilization he has built is not the perfect thing he believed it to be and that, in the universal view, the course of human civilization is not very long after all.

The greatest of all contemporary problems is finding answers to two vital, unresolved questions: how to stave off the impending disaster incurred as a result of what has been—perhaps mistakenly—called technological progress and how to find values to replace the trust in technology that has prevailed till now.

The first question, which involves the basic nature of civilization, ultimately concerns the behavior of the individual human being in everyday life since it is the sum of individual lives that constitutes the total human consciousness of which civilization is the manifestation. The salvation of civilization from imminent disaster must de-

pend on whether individual beings and social organizations within that civilization live in accordance with the fundamental laws of life. Similarly, the basic values of a civilization must derive from the values of individual human beings composing the civilization. In short, life and the way it ought to be lived are the key to both of these questions. The only way to solve the issues is for individual human beings and organizations to deepen their understanding of the basic laws of life in order to make possible vital living in accordance with those laws.

A Japanese man who was taken prisoner by the British during World War II relates the following story. He says that of all the unpleasant things experienced by the prisoners, the most intolerable was work piling bricks. When told by their captors to pile bricks in a certain place and in a certain way, the prisoners set about their task with determination and eagerness. Though they of course had no idea why they were doing the work or what they were building, they felt sure that the job had some meaning. And this made it possible for them to complete their work. But, on the following day, the prisoners would be ordered to dismantle the pile of bricks they had made and repile them in another place and in another shape. Their belief that the task they were performing had some meaning was completely betrayed. Ordered to execute the same futile task time in time out the men became very

disheartened. It was not the work itself that the men found difficult to accept; it was its meaninglessness that sickened their spirits.

Of course human beings need not be conscious of a clear meaning in everything they do. We perform many acts, like unconscious habits, without considering their meanings; and in some cases, meaningless actions are necessary since they relieve tensions. But human beings need to be able to recognize the significance of undertakings involving suffering and effort, because meaning is the only thing that makes the suffering and effort worthwhile.

As long as human beings are conscious of the meaning of what they are doing, they can withstand almost unimaginable hardships. In both the East and the West there have been martyrs who happily embraced suffering because they believed in the supreme meaning of the faith for which they sacrificed themselves. But for people who do not perceive meaning, suffering, no matter how slight, is difficult to bear because it is pointless. For them meaning-lessness itself is pain.

From their own ideals and from a sense of relation with a larger set of circumstances, human beings are able to assign meaning to their individual actions and situations. In the final analysis, however, all of man's attempts to assign significances to things are for the sake of life itself. Life is the absolute condition regulating and giving meaning to everything.

Sometimes, however, people question the very reason for living and the meaning of life. Doubts of this kind inevitably arise when people realize the uncertainty and transience of human life. When it is recognized as fragile and brittle, human life can no longer serve as an absolute basis for the meanings of human activities and beliefs.

The higher religions developed to provide human life with a basis for immutable meaning. For this reason, some of them establish an absolute being transcending the realities of human life and teach that this absolute being illuminates all things and thus clarifies the meaning and order existing in the universe.

Before the emergence of higher religions primitive man devised gods that were symbolizations of the forces of nature. After the agricultural revolution made possible settled group living, nature gods were transformed into protective deities of groups of people or embodiments of the life force of those groups. For example, Amaterasu, the ancient Japanese goddess of the sun, later became the ancestral goddess of the Japanese people. The chief deity of the Grecian pantheon, Zeus, was originally the god of thunder. This shift in the nature of deities occurred in conformity with changes in living styles of the people worshipping them. In the hunting and gathering stage,

mankind had no recourse but to trust in the forces of nature; therefore, gods were personifications of those forces. But in the agricultural stage of his development, man found that by combining human forces into a group he was able to build a basis for a way of life that is not totally dependent on the powers of nature. When this happened, the gods themselves became symbols of the life force of the group or the communal body.

For many centuries, the individual remained submerged in the powers of nature and the undertakings of the group. Only when the struggle to remain alive became less demanding, when human thought became more profound, and when the individual assumed a more important place in the world, did it become possible to devote attention to examining the meanings of single human lives.

A god who can serve as a source of authority directly related to man's inner nature can be neither a concrete representation of natural forces nor a symbol of isolated groups: such a divinity must be fundamental, transcendent, unique, absolute, omniscient, and omnipotent. The Jehovah of the Old Testament, the god of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is a divinity of this kind and as such represents a great spiritual step forward for mankind. It is said, however, that originally Jehovah, like the Grecian Zeus, the Teutonic Odin, and the Indian Indra, was a god of thunder and volcanos. Certainly he was not a god

with a very wide following in his earliest stage. He was first the god of the nomadic Israelites and later, at about the time of Isaiah, came to be considered an omniscient, omnipotent, unique, and absolute divinity.

Through Jesus, the Son of God, and Mohammed, God's Prophet, Jehovah transcended the bounds of the Jewish people to develop into the god of a worldwide religion. The salvation offered mankind by a transcendent god gave significance to life on the basis of a universal principle. It was believed that, by the grace of a god who surpasses actual phenomena, people themselves attained eternal life and thus surpassed the transience of actuality. Furthermore, since the Judaic God is omniscient and omnipotent, the very actualities of life were considered significant as manifestations of God's will.

European history, from medieval to modern times and to the present, is a fabric woven of human spiritual light and darkness. It is fundamentally based on the belief in an absolute god. The light parts of the design are represented by the glories of European art and the progress of European science and technology. The dark areas are the religious wars and social struggles that have resulted in the spilling of vast amounts of human blood. Art was born as a hymn of praise to the glory of God, and the beauty art pursues is thought of as an innate characteristic of God. This immutable divinity, who is also thought of as truth,

blessed man by giving him the faculty of reason. Art and science are not a reaction against religion—though of course at times they have assumed this aspect—but have instead developed in hand-to-hand cooperation with religious faith.

But human ardor in the belief in one absolute god has sometimes resulted in misery. At first the spirit of religious intolerance was purely a matter of faith emerging from the battle with heresy. Later, however, it reflected vividly in race and class struggles and converted Europe into a jumbled sphere of disunity unlike anything to be found anywhere else on earth. Basically the two global conflicts that have taken place in the twentieth century are eruptions of this pathological European tendency. Tragically, the wars extended beyond Europe to envelop the whole world. The present threat of a third world war, too, may be traced to the same psychological illness. Currently the sickness introduced by faith in absolutes has expanded to its ultimate limits and threatens to engulf the fate of all mankind. To make the situation ironically grave, the faith in God that formerly inspired creative activity has been lost. One reason for the loss is the fact that science and technology, originally developed on the basis of faith, have encroached upon the very territory of that faith and in doing so have become so repugnant and the source of such misery that man now finds it difficult to believe that the

actualities of the world are manifestations of the will of God. But a more basic reason for the situation is man's current inability to believe in the existence of God as an unconditional prerequisite to all aspects of human life.

Abandoning the Bible ideas that God created man, human beings today tend to think that man created god. One symbol of this shift in attitude is the philosophy of the nineteenth-century materialist Ludwig Feuerbach, who modified the Hegelian dialectic by replacing the god-man nucleus of philosophy with a man-matter principle. The initial steps of the shift from a god-oriented to a manoriented philosophy may be traced to the Renaissance, but it required long ages and many complicated vicissitudes for the idea to penetrate to the consciousness of the ordinary people. It probably did not reach the level of the masses until the development of the astonishing technological innovations accompanying World War II.

These technological advances enable the common people to satisfy the desires of everyday life easily and with little effort. But the desires themselves produce a narcotic-like, habit-forming phenomenon in which the satisfaction of one desire inevitably produces new desires, which multiply into a huge flame that scorches the very spirit of man.

Nor is it merely material desires that consume man, block his field of spiritual vision, and submit him to fiery sufferings. The desires for power and glory produce an identical effect. The modern devotion to large organizations gives the masses a chance to pursue power. The nature of the information-communications age seduces man into the desire for fame. In the pursuits of power, wealth, and fame, man is on the verge of losing his humanity. Though living a superficially full life in material terms, spiritually he stands at the edge of a gaping pit of anxiety and despair.

It would be wrong to reverse the psychological shift in emphasis from god to man because the change itself is in the right direction. After many trial-and-error attempts to establish it and after overcoming enormous obstacles, human beings have at last arrived at the indisputable need to recognize the dignity of mankind.

As of yet, however, mankind in many parts of the world has discovered nothing to take the place of transcendent god. But if a sustaining power is not found, human beings will ultimately be overpowered by the violence of their ever-present desires and instincts. When subservient to these desires, human life, though intrinsically worthy of the greatest esteem, becomes the most repugnant and vile of all things.

One of the many parables found in the Lotus Sutra, the most important of all Buddhist works, relates the following story. After having been separated from his father's house in early childhood, the son of a wealthy man lived a life of poverty and wandering for many years. One day, the father accidentally came upon his now adult son and, in order to provide his house with an heir, took him home. But the opulence of his father's home inspired the young man with nothing but fear, and he found it impossible to believe that someday all of the riches he saw would be his own. The father, therefore, adopted the following policy. At first he employed his son as a servant and thereby familiarized him with the wealthy way of life. Later, he told the young man that he must be the heir to the family's fortune and finally entrusted all of his possessions to him.

The Buddha employed this parable in order to clarify the contents of the Lotus Sutra for his disciples because it makes the truth of the sutra easy to understand. The wealthy father stands for the Buddha, and the son for humanity in general. The Buddhahood taught by Buddhism is a state of absolute existence in which the truth of the basic nature of the universe has been revealed to the individual. The absolute element of Buddhahood is the Law. Anyone who perceives the full meaning of this Law can attain Buddhahood.

As the son in the parable was born rich, so mankind innately partakes of the Buddha nature. Man does not become a Buddha by being enlightened to the meaning of the Law, because in the depths of life force itself is the

power to become a Buddha if the human being will but recall and recognize it. The Lotus Sutra, in relating how the historical Buddha achieved Buddhahood, teaches the way for human beings to manifest the supreme dignity of the Buddha nature inherent in their own beings. By relating his own experiences, the Buddha clearly explains how to manifest the dignity of life on an actual plane.

## Chapter One

## Buddhist Philosophy of Life

## Life and Matter: Shikishin Funi and Esho Funi

Intuitively we all know the difference between animate and inanimate, but explaining wherein the difference lies is extraordinarily difficult. It is almost impossible to describe what life is in terms of life itself; but by relating life to inanimate matter, it is possible to describe life phenomena. Even in such descriptions, however, it is hard to produce an accurate account that is free of contradictions.

For example, one view argues that a living organism is a kind of precision machine, a special form of matter in motion. As such, the living organism is governed by the laws of dynamics, physics, and chemistry. Undeniably the beating of the heart, the coagulation of the blood, and the oxygenation of the blood are all explainable in terms of physics and chemistry. Yet to describe them as physical and chemical phenomena associated with life activity is not to elucidate the nature of the life force that controls them.

The scientific view has its opponents. For instance, some people who are unwilling to interpret life in scientific terms insist that the free will of a god creates and manipulates each life impulse and each life force. If one limits one's thought on this subject to the realm of verifiable experience, such a position becomes untenable. No one has ever advanced convincing evidence that life was at some time created in such a way as to break the laws of nature or to violate the processes of evolution. The ability of man to synthesize organic substances from inorganic substances and the success of artificial insemination prove that the will of a god is unnecessary.

The best way to approach the question is a philosophical, rational way. One can try to examine the issue in the light of the relation between mind and matter. Henri Bergson did this when he attempted to elucidate the relation between the human body (matter) and consciousness (mind).

Since this relation has been one of the traditional preoccupations of philosophy, many theories have been advanced to explain it. But all of these theories can be grouped into two major categories: those emphasizing the spiritual and those emphasizing the material aspects of life. The spiritual approach insists that thinking, making decisions, and other similar activities are the working of something that is variously called mind, reason, wisdom, and so on. This faculty is essentially distinct from the purely physical aspects of the body. Carried to its logical conclusion, this idea means that mind (or reason or wisdom) is capable of existing and functioning independent of the flesh. Furthermore, according to this view, mind (or wisdom or reason) lies at the basis of the whole world.

The material view argues that the history of the world must be seen as the development of matter, that the workings of the human mind are the product of matter, and that the consciousness is an epiphenomenon or an imitation of matter. This interpretation explains that living beings—including man—have merely come into existence somewhere in the course of the flow of time and that matter has continued functioning without reference to the existence of such beings.

The first view separates the workings of the mind (or

reason or wisdom) from the physical body. In favor of this approach, one can advance the idea that, no matter what doubts are cast on the forms of existence, the thinking self remains. In opposition to this, however, one must ask for proof that the thinking self could exist without the body.

The second—the purely material approach—insists that mind is no more than a byproduct of matter and that matter goes on its way whether there are minds to perceive it or not. This interpretation says that inanimate matter existed before and may continue to exist after mind; that is, it tells the order in which things came into existence. But it fails to explain the basic reason why and the process whereby mind evolved from matter.

No matter how skillfully put, neither of these arguments can adequately account for the relation between mind and matter. Yet, seen as it is in fact, the relation is clear: though mind and matter manifest themselves as two separate aspects they are indivisible, as any careful examination of the living organism proves. One or the other may serve as the basis for all kinds of deductions, but the results of this process are bound to be partial at best. Only by seeing mind and matter as an inseparable whole is it possible to come close to the essence of life. Contemporary biochemistry and theories of evolution offer evidence of this.

The modern theory of spontaneous emergence explains that life will occur spontaneously if a particular combination of conditions is provided: life proceeds from the emergence of organic compounds to the emergence of proteins and then to the appearance of living creatures capable of metabolism. According to this scientific view, life has continued to evolve ever since its spontaneous emergence and in this way has produced the forms we know today. Ancient fossils and the possibility of synthesizing organic forms from inorganic compounds seem to reinforce this approach, though the time at which spontaneous emergence might have occurred remains difficult to pin down.

It could not have been immediately after the original formation of the earth because at that time intense heats would have made life—at least as we know it—impossible. Modern science gives no credence to the idea that seeds of life might have been carried to earth from other parts of the universe. The countless different forms of life flourishing on this planet today make it patent that life emerged on the earth as the consequence of the evolution and development of something in or on the earth. In other words, life was implicit in the matter of the earth before its manifestation.

Ever since the time of Sakyamuni, nearly three thousand years ago, Buddhism has explained the nature of life from

the standpoint that life itself is latent in nature, the universe, and all things. In other words, inanimate matter carries the potentiality of manifesting life, and this potentiality only requires the fulfillment of certain conditions to become actuality. Refusing to adopt either the materialist or the spiritualist approach, Buddhism has consistently sought a transcendent synthesis of the two. This is especially true of the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism.

Seven hundred years ago, Nichiren Daishonin evolved a precise theory of the relation between mind and matter in the living organism and produced specific technical terms with which to explain his theory. The word shiki-ho means all matter or all physical phenomena. The word shim-po means the workings of the mind. According to the view of Nichiren Daishonin, the two are inseparable, or funi. Shikishin (combination of the first parts of shiki-ho and shim-po) funi, therefore, means the oneness of the mind and matter. This theory reaches its most subtle development in connection with the idea that life pervades everything.

### All-pervasiveness of Life

The materialist and the spiritualist inevitably oppose each other on the question of the relation between the human being and the environment. The materialists insist that the environment determines man's mental approach; the spiritualists insist that the human consciousness is independent of the environment. The resolution of this question is essential, because any theory of life that omits to clarify the relation between the organism and its environment can be nothing but abstract theorizing. Each organism has its own particular environment, which it is vital to understand if one wishes to understand the organism itself.

Nichiren Daishonin evolved a comprehensive theory to account for the relation between environment and organism. To understand this theory, it is necessary to know a few more items of Buddhist vocabulary. Shoho means the subject, the subjective position, or the living organism that is the subject. Eho is the object, the objective position, or the environment; that is, the object without which the subject shoho could not be shoho. As Nichiren Daishonin explained the relation between organism and environment, shoho and eho are two and yet not two; they are separate yet indivisible. If shoho is the body, eho is the shadow. There is no shadow without a body; similarly there is no eho without shoho. Just as there is no entity without form, color, and extension in space, so shoho cannot exist without eho.

Man must not be considered apart from his environment, which he influences and which influences him. According to Buddhist thought, the idea of a completely inanimate—that is, lifeless—world is inconceivable. Shoho and eho are two aspects of one thing. The moon, though apparently lifeless, is an eho of the earth and its animate beings. The universe before the emergence of life as we know it cannot be described as truly lifeless, but to explain why this is so, it is necessary to find out what shoho and eho are aspects of.

The Nichiren theory teaches that shoho and eho are indivisible because they are both ways in which essential life manifests itself. The environment, or the eho, contains the conditions that bring life into individualized manifestation in the form of the shoho. For example, before the emergence of life as we know it, the earth harbored the conditions conducive to the transformation of inorganic matter into organic matter and then into multimolecular compounds and the other evolutionary stages of the growth of life forms. If this is true of earth, one must conclude that the entire universe, which includes earth, must have harbored the power to generate living creatures before the emergence of such creatures.

On a level closer to daily life, animals and plants employ the theoretically lifeless elements of sun, air, water, and minerals in the act of metabolism to produce energy and living tissues. In other words, the environment is the source of material for the generation of individualized life. The environment (eho) and the life form (shoho) cannot therefore be thought of as two separate things because life is omnipresent throughout the universe and is the basic substratum of both.

Modern science too is now suggesting that life is the essence of the whole universe by rejecting ideas of absolute space and absolute time, by intimating that something has always existed and will always exist independent of physical time, and by predicting the possibility of extraterrestrial living creatures. Nichiren Daishonin's explanation of the universe as permeated with life predated scientific knowledge by centuries; furthermore it long ago taught how man ought to live in harmony with his environment, which is ultimately a part of the same universal life of which he too is a manifestation.

## Manifestations of Life

Nichiren Buddhism teaches that essential life pervades everything in the universe. But how does essential life do this? To answer this question, one must first examine the ways life manifests itself according to Buddhist theory.

Buddhism makes no distinction between animate and inanimate, but divides everything in the universe into sentient (ujo) and insentient (hijo) beings. Ujo means beings capable of emotions and consciousness; hijo means

beings incapable of emotions and consciousness. In Buddhist thought, trees are nonsentient forms of life. Man and the other animals are sentient, though in the lower orders of animals there are creatures whose sentience or insentience is difficult to establish accurately. Such things as trees, mountains, and rivers, though insentient, are thought to possess the latent potentiality of manifesting sentience. Sentient beings often contain insentient parts-Nichiren Daishonin cited the example of the hair and nails in the human body. Consequently, though the English words emotions and consciousness used to describe the state known as ujo suggest that the difference might depend on the presence or absence of a brain or nervous system, such is not the case. Ujo can comprise hijo; that is, sentient beings contain insentient elements. And hijo can manifest sentience; though their emotions and consciousness are dormant, given the right conditions, insentient beings can evolve into sentience.

On this point, Henri Bergson, in La Conscience et la Vie, made some provocative statements:

Even in the vegetable world, where the organism is generally fixed to the soil, the ability to move is not so much absent as dormant; it reawakens whenever it can be of use. I believe that all living beings, plants and animals alike, have it as their birthright, but many of them renounce it in practice. . . . It seems likely to me,

therefore, that consciousness, originally inherent in everything living, lapses into slumber wherever spontaneous movement has ceased, and arises as life tends toward free activity again. (Translated for this book from the original French)

Bergson's remarks about the ability to move suggest a broad substratum of life underlying all living creatures, but he seems to entertain a distinction between what is generally called animate and inanimate. Buddhism, as has been pointed out, does not. Nor in fact is the Buddhist distinction between sentient and insentient more than provisional, since the same essential life flows through beings in both categories. The sentient form represents life in action; the insentient form, life in a latent condition.

Modern biology too is finding it difficult to maintain a strict distinction between animate and inanimate in certain cases. For instance, the tobacco mosaic virus seems to partake of the natures of both classes. In 1935, Wendell Meredith Stanley produced glittering, needle-shaped crystals by adding ammonium sulphate to juice squeezed from tobacco leaves affected with mosaic disease. Later he dissolved the crystals in water and rubbed the solution on healthy tobacco leaves. As little as one billionth of a gram was enough to bring about the disease in the plant. The virus causing the disease is apparently a borderline case capable of being turned into so-called inanimate crystals

and then of being reconverted into a virus potent enough to contaminate healthy tobacco leaves. In order to contaminate, the crystals had to multiply; and multiplication of this kind is generally considered a characteristic of animate beings. If—as seems likely—future scientific studies show that there is no clear break between the so-called animate and the so-called inanimate, they will simply endorse a Buddhist view of life formulated hundreds of years ago.

## Life Eternal Because All-pervasive

The Buddhist awareness of the pervasiveness of essential life in all things, both sentient and insentient, leads to the awareness of the eternity of life. Some people object that this position is objectively unverifiable, therefore untenable. The greatest obstacle in the way of accepting the eternity of life is the inevitability of death. But, if one accepts the transition from latent life to manifest life—that is, from insentient to sentient—one must also accept the transition from sentient to insentient. Death is the point at which life returns to a latent state.

The substances harboring and supporting life in the living organism may become faulty or fail in one way or another. If the breakdown is not serious, the living organism becomes ill and then recovers. If the breakdown is

stances that supported individualized life decompose and lose the ability to shelter life, which departs to blend with universal life. The substances themselves revert to matter in which there is the latent possibility of life. This cycle continues eternally; therefore, life itself is eternal. Birth and death, phenomena occurring everywhere, are only varying modes of universal life, which is eternal and coexistent with the whole universe. The life of the individual cannot be said to exist in any specific place after death. It is, however, part of universal essential life and is awaiting remanifestation in the world of actuality.

This remanifestation will not take place in a mythical heaven or hell. When conditions are conducive to its reappearance, life manifests itself in the world of actuality in a form conditioned by all the forms it has employed in all its previous manifestations. It is impossible to determine whether a link of self-identity or consciousness connects the most recent manifestations with former manifestations.

As sleep is a source of energy for daily living, so death might be described as a kind of rest period for the process of the birth of a new life. In other words, Buddhism is not a teaching designed to prepare men for death. It is instead an affirmation, an exaltation, of life.

Nichiren Daishonin has described the nature of life

sions of distinction and separation is the meaning of the Buddhist term ku. In short, ku stands for the absolute, unbounded world of truth attained by transcending the relative, hypothetical, the conceptual, and all ideas of existence and nonexistence. Kutai perception comes closest to an understanding of the essential nature of the universe and of life.

There are, however, no clear boundaries among these three kinds of perception or the three aspects of reality with which they deal. Since life imbuing all existence—though in varying intensities—is an indivisible continuum, the three kinds of perception of life are interfused. Each of the three includes the other two. The Buddhist term en'yu-no-santai or "mutually inclusive kinds of perception," concisely expresses this unity. This theory was developed by the Chinese priest Chih-i (538-597), who founded T'ien-t'ai (Japanese Tendai) Buddhism.

## Organization of Life: Ichinen Sanzen

T'ien-t'ai Buddhism propounds a perceptive and keen interpretation of the organization of life and the processes by which this organization evolves in terms of the psychological experiences of living creatures and the laws that living creatures must obey.

The phrase ichinen sanzen is an intensely concentrated

expression of the T'ien-t'ai view of the organization of life. The literal meaning of the phrase is "three thousand in a single thought moment." This means that all aspects of reality are so closely interwoven that they are immanent in one thought or, more precisely, the universal life of one moment. The word ichinen in general usage also means something very small, or the microcosm. The word sanzen may refer to the many different aspects the universal life can assume—that is, the total of all phenomena. Consequently, it can represent the macrocosm.

But why three thousand? The figure represents a penetrating and subtle classification of the manifestations of life. There are ten realms of existence, through which living beings constantly range. Each realm contains all of the ten realms within itself, thus making one hundred realms. This situation is described as jikkai gogu or ten interpenetrating realms.

In addition, there are ten essential factors characterizing all things; these are called the ju-nyoze. Multiplying the one hundred realms by the ten factors gives one thousand realms. Finally, each living being is said to be able to relate to three environments. Thus, the total possible realms of existence are three thousand. To recapitulate, the term ichinen sanzen means that the universal life of the single thought moment (ichinen) contains all possible realms of existence (sanzen). But T'ien-t'ai Buddhism

warns strictly that one must not try to separate the two or give precedence to one over the other. All things in the universe are in some way related to all others: the microcosm suffuses the macrocosm, and the macrocosm is implicit in the microcosm.

The following paragraphs are an attempt to outline some of the details of the theory of ichinen sanzen; an exhaustive treatment is far beyond the scope of this work.

#### The Ten Realms of Life

1. Jigoku-kai (Hell-the realm of suffering)

This is life under the most painful circumstances of intolerable suffering like that occasioned by disease, extreme poverty, despair over family problems, and so on. The living being is in a condition offering no escape or hope of joy, pleasure, or progress.

2. Gaki-kai (Rapacity—the realm where one is dominated by desire)

The living being is completely controlled by material desires for wealth, fame, or other unspiritual gain.

3. Chikusho-kai (Animality—the realm where one is dominated by the instincts)

In this realm, the human being is reduced to the condition of an animal. He has abandoned reason and ethics and is following the lead of instinct only. The law of the jungle prevails: the weak are victimized, and the strong

are shunned in fear. The slightest thing is pretext for slaughter and wrangling.

4. Shura (Anger—the realm where one is dominated by the competitive spirit)

In this realm of life, the mind is warped by preoccupation with competition. The individual is continually driven by the desire to surpass others. Refusing to admit that he is sometimes wrong, he treats life as a perpetual race.

5. Nin-kai (Humanity or Tranquility—the ordinary state of life)

This is the state an individual finds himself in if he spends his life quietly occupied with everyday affairs and with memories of the past.

6. Ten-kai (Heaven or Rapture—the realm of joy)

This state results from satisfaction of a desire or a wish.

7. Shomon-kai (Learning—the realm in which one appreciates the joy of knowledge)

When the individual feels the joy of increasing knowledge by learning from the achievements of his predecessors he experiences this state, which is especially common among scholars, research workers, and intellectuals.

8. Engaku-kai (Absorption—the realm of appreciating the joy of creation)

In this state the individual appreciates, not simple, passive joy, but the active joy of creation like the emotion experienced by artists.

9. Bosatsu-kai (Bodhisattva—the realm of desiring happiness for others)

In this noble state, the individual is filled with a humble desire to devote himself, even at the expense of his own happiness, to the welfare of others. He seeks to attain a condition of absolute happiness for all beings.

### 10. Bukkai (Buddhahood)

It is difficult to give a simple description of the true nature of the highest of the ten realms, but the following are some of its aspects.

- (1) The individual has awakened to the true nature of the universe and experiences eternal life in its true sense.
- (2) He possesses the wisdom to elucidate all universal laws.
- (3) He perceives the nature of past, present, and future and can create the highest values through his endeavors.
- (4) His unbounding life force can alleviate all suffering.
- (5) He is completely enlightened about all worldly affairs.

In the state of Buddhahood, which is latent in all men and which is the highest state attainable by man, the individual rises above all things. He ceases to be immersed in the details of everyday life. He has advanced beyond all of its temporary knowledge, vanity, and halfhearted charities.

Human suffering involves the realms of hell, rapacity, and animality; these are called the Three Evil Paths. Sometimes this classification is expanded to include the realm of anger and to make the Four Evil Paths. Ordinary men constantly range among the Six Realms, which include the Four Evil Paths and the realms of humanity and rapture. The next three realms—learning, absorption, and Bodhisattva, are higher than the Six Realms of ordinary men. They are, however, still temporary; that is, they are not worlds of true happiness. Buddhahood alone is a realm of absolute, indestructible happiness; and all the other realms are, to varying degrees, delusion. This indicates that, though latent in all men, Buddhahood cannot be achieved solely through study and training. Firm faith and practice of the Buddhist philosophy of life is the sole way to reach the Buddhahood realm.

As has already been stated, each of the ten realms contains all of the other realms within itself. This means that each realm contains, in addition to all the others, the Buddhahood realm. Consequently, this philosophy is based on a thoroughgoing equalitarianism in that all men of all kinds and degrees have the possibility of attaining Buddhahood. On the other hand, extreme self-examination and control are demanded by this philosophy, for it is

believed that even in the Buddhahood realm there may exist the possibility of retrogression to one of the other realms.

Ten factors characterize each of the ten realms at each moment when life is experiencing that realm. It is through these factors that the realms manifest themselves. In other words, the ten factors are the conditions of existence for all beings and are immanent in all things.

## Factor 1. Nyoze-so-form

The surface forms of all things. The outward expressions of suffering as experienced by life in the realm of hell are the forms (nyoze-so) of the hell realm. Similarly, the expressions of joy in the realm of rapture are the forms of that realm.

## Factor 2. Nyoze-sho-nature

The inner nature, including spirit, mind, and wisdom. The mind in an ecstasy of joy is the nyoze-sho of the realm of rapture. The mind concentrating on study is the nyoze-sho of the realm of learning or the realm of absorption.

## Factor 3. Nyoze-tai—substance

This is the whole resulting from the combination of the form and the inner nature. This factor can be illustrated by referring to the whole living being, its appearance (form) and spiritual makeup (inner nature).

## Factor 4. Nyoze-riki-power

This means the essence of inherent power both physical

and nonphysical. Power exists only in life in motion, not in static things.

Factor 5. Nyoze-sa-activity

Nyoze-riki is inherent power; nyoze-sa is power—either physical or spiritual—actualized and made manifest. In some cases the inherent power is great, but the activity resulting from it is infinitesimal. Furthermore, inherent power manifest in the form of activity can result in either positive values or negative antivalues.

Factor 6. Nyoze-in-inherent causes

These are the causative factors that result in phenomena. Buddhism teaches that the inherent causes (in) and the inherent effects (ka; see below) are present in life but cannot be known physically or chemically. The inherent cause is not a thing of the past, but is always part of life of the present moment. Bergson has come close to this idea in saying that past causes are not finished but have no connection with the past. They are, according to him, immanent in the present moment. (Bergson, it must be noted, does not speak of life, but of consciousness.)

Factor 7. Nyoze-en-external causes

These are external causes that supplement and to an extent condition the effect of the inherent causes (in). In other words, the external cause serves to activate the inherent cause. Every activity of life occurs as a consequence of contact with an external cause. The part air plays in

combustion illustrates something of the way in which the external causes operate. If one strikes a match in air, it bursts into flame. The same match would not produce the same effect if struck under water. The air is the external cause that enables the inherent cause to produce an effect. Differing causes can produce similar effects. And the same inherent cause (in) can produce differing effects depending on the nature of the external cause (en).

### Factor 8. Nyoze-ka-latent effect

This is the effect produced in the living being as an outcome of the combination of inherent and external causes.

# Factor 9. Nyoze-ho-manifest effect

The inherent cause (in) activated by the external cause (en) produces an inherent effect (ka) which is inevitably followed by a manifest effect (ho). There may be a time lapse between the internal development of the inherent effect and its manifestation; but no matter how short or long, the manifest effect must come. In other words, the manifest effect is a characteristic of the combination of inherent cause and inherent effect. This can be illustrated in the following way. A man slips and falls (manifest effect) as a result of a loss of equipoise (inherent effect) brought on by failure to concentrate on balance (inherent cause) while walking on an icy sidewalk (external cause). Of course, interreactions of causes and effects almost al-

ways produce a more complex set of relations than this simple example suggests.

Factor 10. Nyoze-honmatsu-kukyoto—the synthesis of the other nine factors

This factor represents the true nature of the living being in which all other nine factors exist separately, yet are interrelated to form an integrated whole. If any one of the factors is missing, the synthesis cannot be complete; and the living being cannot assume its true, full form.

The first three of these factors—form, nature, and substance—describe the physical and spiritual realities of life. The remaining seven—inherent power, activity, inherent cause, external cause, latent effect, manifest effect, and the synthesis of all the others—describe the way in which life operates.

In summary, the ten realms of life describe the conditions that life experiences, and the ten factors are an analysis of the workings of life and the laws governing its workings in the ten realms.

Buddhism further establishes three comprehensive areas in which life is manifest. These are known as the san-seken or three worlds.

### 1. Go-on Seken—world of the aggregates

The five aggregates compose all of the physical and spiritual elements in the phenomenal world. They are form (shiki), perception (ju), mental conceptions and ideas

(so), volition (gyo), and consciousness of mind (shiki, written with a character different from the one used in writing the shiki meaning form). All five of these aggregates may be distinguished within each separate living being.

## 2. Shujo Seken-world of living beings

In this world the five aggregates have temporarily come together in living beings, each of which is clearly distinguishable from its fellows.

### 3. Kokudo Seken-world of environment

Each entity has its own distinct environment. Though many entities may live together in what would appear to be the same setting, because each being relates to its surroundings differently, the environment of each is essentially different from all others.

The T'ien-t'ai analysis of life, its manifestations, and the laws governing it is extremely comprehensive, yet extremely subtle and profound. The ten realms of life and their reciprocal relations, the ten factors of life, and the three worlds of existence—multiplied together to give three thousand—completely cover the nature of life and the surroundings in which it exists. As has been pointed out, all three thousand of these realms are immanent in the single moment of existence. Consequently, all human beings are equally capable of attaining Buddhahood. Attainment of this state for all men is the major goal of Buddhist teaching.

# Chapter Two

# Early Flowering of Buddhism

How can the human being live as meaningfully as possible? The answer to this question involves a second question: how can one draw strength from essential life, the source of all life? Since ancient times religions have put forward many different methods whereby the individual may relate to the vital essence. But immense effort is required to establish such a relation, and life is not easy. History has therefore seen a current of fatalism dismissing such efforts as futile.

Fatalism sees the whole universe, including man, as directed by supernatural forces. In the face of the mighty powers of nature, man often feels frail. At such times he is likely to imagine the existence of a power—fate—that he cannot control. Unfortunate human beings living in unhappiness in spite of all their desperate efforts provoke an awareness of fate. But, without more evidence than we can possess, it is illogical to attribute the cause to a volitional, supernatural being controlling the universe.

The fatalist is prone to resignation and escapism. Yet the highest human aspiration is to cut a path through the intricacies of fate. To submit unresistingly to fate is to forfeit one's value as a human being. The point of man's existence lies in deflecting fate into different paths and creating a worthwhile life.

The Buddhist theory of causation sees the present self as an accumulation of actions from the past. All past causes contribute to the present effect. As Buddhism sees it, fate is the continuous working of cause and effect in life; it is a stream of strict cause-and-effect relations extending back into a limitless past and forward into a limitless future. Buddhism teaches that, by revising one's view of life in each present moment, one can gradually change the course of fate. Buddhism is not escapism masquerading as resignation or a religion of impotent idealism, but a philosophy of life that seeks energetically to change the self

for the better and to influence the course of fate.

Though it is a powerful system of thought taking into account the possibility of changing destiny, there are still some people who look on Buddhism as a religion that prepares the individual for death or as a kind of tranquilizer that helps the individual escape from reality. In the views of such critics, Buddhism fails to come to serious grips with the grave problems of life and society and seeks instead to run away from them by concentrating on preparation for death or on means of escape. In truth, however, Buddhism is above all a religion of life.

As many philosophers and scientists alike have pointed out, modern man's suffering derives largely from his lack of a guiding philosophy or religion. Such thinkers, however, have so far failed to come up with a clear definition of the nature of the urgently required religion. The great physicist Albert Einstein, for example, used the term universal religion, and historian Arnold Toynbee looks forward hopefully to the emergence of what he calls a "higher religion." But neither gives concrete details about the nature of the religion, though both agree that it ought to be logical and scientific in accordance with the requirements of the space age; that it ought to penetrate to the very roots of life; and that it ought to afford the leadership needed to bring about rebirth in the individual, society, and all mankind. The needed modern religion cannot be

at odds with the bewilderingly rapid developments of modern science. At the same time, beliefs must have the power to effect a reform of man living in the actual world. Both Einstein and Toynbee point to Buddhism as a religion that potentially fulfills these conditions.

E. H. Fromm, an authority on modern psychoanalysis, has the following to say in his work *The Sane Society*:

The most important feature of such a religion would be its universalistic character, corresponding to the unification of mankind which is taking place in this epoch; it would embrace the humanistic teachings common to all great religions of the East and of the West; its doctrines would not contradict the rational insight of mankind today, and its emphasis would be on the practice of life, rather than on doctrinal beliefs. . . . Religion can, of course, not be invented. It will come into existence with the appearance of a new great teacher, just as they have appeared in previous centuries when the time was ripe.

The three conditions that Fromm puts forward for the new religion of the future—a humanistic outlook, rationalistic doctrines, and emphasis on practical life—represent the very essence of what a modern religion should be. Such a religion would be truly worthy to be called a religion of life. Buddhism, which originated in India nearly three thousand years ago and which reached its

finest flowering seven hundred years ago in Japan in the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, is the living religion for which man is thirsting.

# Buddhism Before Nichiren Daishonin

Born a prince of the Sakyas, in a small state near Nepal, in India, Siddartha Gautama (called Sakyamuni or Sage of the Sakyas) was greatly troubled in his youth by the universal human suffering: old age, sickness, and death. At that time, it was common practice for people wishing to obtain release from human suffering to leave their families and go into the country singly or in groups to practice meditation or religious austerities. Siddartha Gautama too, after much profound thought, left his wife and child and became an ascetic.

At nineteen, he left the pleasures and splendors of his father's home to pursue a course of rigorously ascetic disciplines in the search for enlightenment about the true meanings of life and death. He studied with many famous Brahman sages, but ultimately found their teachings unsatisfactory. He then submitted himself to severely rigorous disciplines for twelve years, only to find that this too was not the way to enlightenment. Upon abandoning this course and deciding that he must recover physical strength, he first purified his body in a river, then drank milk gruel

that a village maid brought him. He then sat under a large tree and began to meditate.

That night he had an astonishing inner experience. In a flash, he realized that all life extends throughout the vast universe from a limitless past into the limitless future. He intuitively perceived the essence of life pervading the whole universe and became aware of his own life breathing in harmony with the rhythm of the entire universe. At that moment, he truly became a Buddha, or one awakened to the truth.

The Buddha realized that the only way to bring happiness to all men was to create a human society based on this profound principle, the truth of which no one else had ever realized. In practical terms this means that one must purge one's own life of defilement and then refashion human society from the foundations. To succeed in this task one must make a close examination of the nature of life—the basic starting-point for all human activities—and acquire a grasp of the laws that govern it. In other words, implicit in the truth to which the Buddha had become enlightened was a mighty, unprecedented revolution.

The Buddha devoted the rest of his life to carrying his philosophy to the ordinary people, who had started to show a tendency to abandon traditional Brahmanism in favor of his new religion. During his last eight years, this trend encouraged him to expound his ideas in their fullest form. His most mature thought is embodied in the Lotus Sutra.

The quintessential Buddhism of the Lotus Sutra became the mainstream of Buddhist thought after the Buddha's death. In the course of time, every philosophical and religious system inevitably engenders misunderstandings and perversions. Buddhism gave birth to a large number of mistaken interpretations and different sects.

In the sixth century A.D., the famous Chinese priest Chih-i, as a result of examinations of the vast body of Buddhist sutras and of the commentaries written on them by scholars of later ages, became convinced that the true essence of Buddhism was to be found in the Lotus Sutra. He was not, however, content merely to interpret and understand conceptually what was written in the scriptures but devoted himself entirely—as Sakyamuni had done before him—to contemplation of the life within his own being. Thanks to his penetrating powers of intuition, Chih-i grasped the essence of the life-including his ownthat pervades the universe. After having come to doubt everything, Descartes finally arrived at a thinking self that is absolutely impossible to doubt. Chih-i, on the other hand, as a result of meditation, arrived at an essential life that lay deep within himself yet was omnipresent throughout the universe and extended back into the boundless

past. To explain the essence of life, he worked out the system of ichinen sanzen discussed above (see pp. 34.-44) and founded T'ien-t'ai Buddhism.

T'ien-t'ai Buddhism is difficult to understand, and its philosophy, based on introspective meditation, is ill suited to shaping society and history. It is a theoretical development of a method of establishing an unshakable self, but it does not communicate itself readily to others. In short, T'ien-t'ai Buddhism was a philosophical revolution within the religious world, though it did not extend to the practical world outside. This is the shortcoming that was eventually to divorce T'ien-t'ai from the ordinary people and give rise to a Buddhism for priests, aristocrats, and hermits living in the mountains.

But a truly great religion not only must penetrate to the heart of human existence, but also must be relevant to daily life. It must be an underlying force potent enough to sway society and the course of history. Besides possessing a profound philosophy of life, it must be simple in its expression and practical in its approach. The profundity of Buddhist teaching does not stem from difficult terminology. The whole truth is ideally comprised within a series of simple and readily understandable conclusions. If religion is to achieve the salvation of mankind, all people must be able to practice it in everyday life. Both Sakyamuni and Chih-i were keenly aware of the need for

a popular Buddhism; yet both of them were preoccupied with their duty as teachers to ensure the lasting survival of the Buddhist philosophy of life, which they believed to constitute eternal truth.

A truly popular religion, however, must be realistic and practical; it must embrace all the people. Sakyamuni and Chih-i predicted that the true spirit of Buddhism would eventually be distorted and fall into neglect in the Latter Day of the Law. This era of chaos is the end of Sakyamuni's teachings, but Sakyamuni did not say that it would mean an end to Buddhism. Sakyamuni predicted that the true spirit underlying Buddhism would be reborn in new forms and that a person would appear to give it new, practical expression. A number of passages in T'ien-t'ai writings and in works by other heirs to true Buddhism betray a longing for the advent of the Latter Day of the Law.

# Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin

Nichiren Daishonin, born the son of a humble fisherman 625 years after the death of Chih-i, was the man, who, during the Latter Day of the Law, came to change the history of Buddhism and to make it a religion of the people. Nichiren Daishonin, as a child of the poor, affords a sharp contrast with Sakyamuni, who was a prince in a

small kingdom, and Chih-i, who was of aristocratic descent.

In a letter written to one of his disciples, Nichiren Daishonin takes pride in his obscure, low-ranking family probably because he knew how well such background fitted him for the task of developing a popular Buddhism. Though Nichiren Daishonin effected a radical reform of existing Buddhism, he did not totally reject the Buddhism of Sakyamuni and T'ien-t'ai. His teaching is heir to the essential Buddhism that flows from Sakyamuni and through T'ien-t'ai. But he did more than merely inherit. He revealed the ultimate Buddhist teaching, to which his two predecessors had aspired yet never realized in practice. Nichiren Daishonin took as his starting point the secret, ultimate wisdom that all outstanding Buddhists since the time of Sakyamuni had acquired as part of final enlightenment yet had been unable to expound because the time was not ripe. On that basis, he sought to secure the fundamental happiness of the masses and to create a peaceful, culturally rich society. Sakyamuni and Chih-i almost seem to have provided detailed plans used later by Nichiren Daishonin to create fresh, new values with his practical religion for all people.

Buddhism as taught by Nichiren Daishonin may be summed up in the phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which means, "I devote myself to the inexpressibly profound

and wonderful truth—the philosophy of life—expounded in the Lotus Sutra, which embodies the loftiest teachings of Buddhism." In different words, the phrase signifies dedicating oneself to the ultimate reality of life—to the life that is omnipresent in the universe. Nichiren Daishonin held that only when man becomes one with the life of the universe does he achieve absolute, unshakable happiness (the Buddhahood realm).

According to the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, once a person trusts himself entirely to Nam-myoho-rengekyo, the power of universal life suddenly wells up in him, and he begins to live in unity with the life of the universe. Sakyamuni and Chih-i meditated on the inner self in order to devote themselves to the truth expressed in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Daishonin, however, wanted to spread Buddhism among the ordinary people. He believed that achievement of enlightenment through introspection, which requires long religious practice, was not appropriate for the masses. He argued that since the activities of man as a living being are characterized by a powerful consciousness and free will, the essential life of the universe must be still more vital and must have a powerful consciousness of its own. It follows, therefore, that dealings with essential life should involve active engagement and total devotion. To give the ordinary people a graphic central object of reverence, Nichiren Daishonin

created the Gohonzon, entrusted to each believer in Nichiren Daishonin and his true teachings. As a central object of veneration for all people everywhere, he inscribed the great Dai-Gohonzon, which is now housed in the Sho-Hondo main hall of the Daiseki-ji, the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu. Whoever has faith in the Dai-Gohonzon and recites Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to it will feel his individual life combine with the essential life of the universe. He will be suffused with wisdom and strength. According to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, one may experience universal life directly and personally as long as one has faith and lives according to its truth. The Lotus Sutra is not merely something expounded in the distant past in India by Sakyamuni; it is a living reality representing the truth in the present moment. And perhaps more important for the ordinary man, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Lotus Sutra and everything it means. If a person faithfully repeats this invocation, he will become one with the essential universal life; that is, he will attain Buddhahood, the state of immutable, permanent happiness and of direct experience of the universal life. Having attained this state, the human being can create values constantly in daily life and practical affairs. It must be remembered, however, that reciting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is not mere recitation: it involves prayers and deeds as well.

Buddhist practice as set forth by Nichiren Daishonin

consists in faith in the Gohonzon and frequent recitation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. There is, however, one other very important element: the theory of the kaidan. Historically, the kaidan is a Buddhist hall in which novitiate priests take religious vows. But it means much more in the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. In Nichiren Buddhism, the kaidan is a central place of worship where all men can declare their determination to change their lives for the betterment of themselves and of all mankind and to purge themselves of unhappy karma through the immense power of the Dai-Gohonzon. Nichiren Daishonin prophesied that the time would come when mankind would at last see that all human activities-political, economic, diplomatic, industrial, and so on—must be founded in individual human revolutions achieved through Buddhist faith if they are to have meaning. When this time arrives, he foretold, it will become essential to build a great kaidan where people can come together to worship the Dai-Gohonzon and to recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the profound determination to bring about a spiritual revolution within their lives, a revolution based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. This prophecy derives from the belief that society will undergo a vast reform whereby religion will assume the leadership in the practical, everyday life of man and whereby Buddhist teaching will become the foundation for the creation of true values in all fields of human endeavor.

The ultimate meaning of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism then covers all human experience and finds expression in what is known as the Three Great Secret Laws (Sandai Hiho). These are the faith in the Gohonzon as a crystallization of the content of the Lotus Sutra, the highest teachings in Buddhism; the practical expression of faith and the determination to change one's life from within represented by the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; and finally the building of a great kaidan as the place where all men may come together in the assurance that through the power of the Dai-Gohonzon and the strength it gives humanity, society in all of its aspects can be peacefully rebuilt and brought to a new, rich flowering.

# Chapter Three

### Life and Mission of Nichiren Daishonin

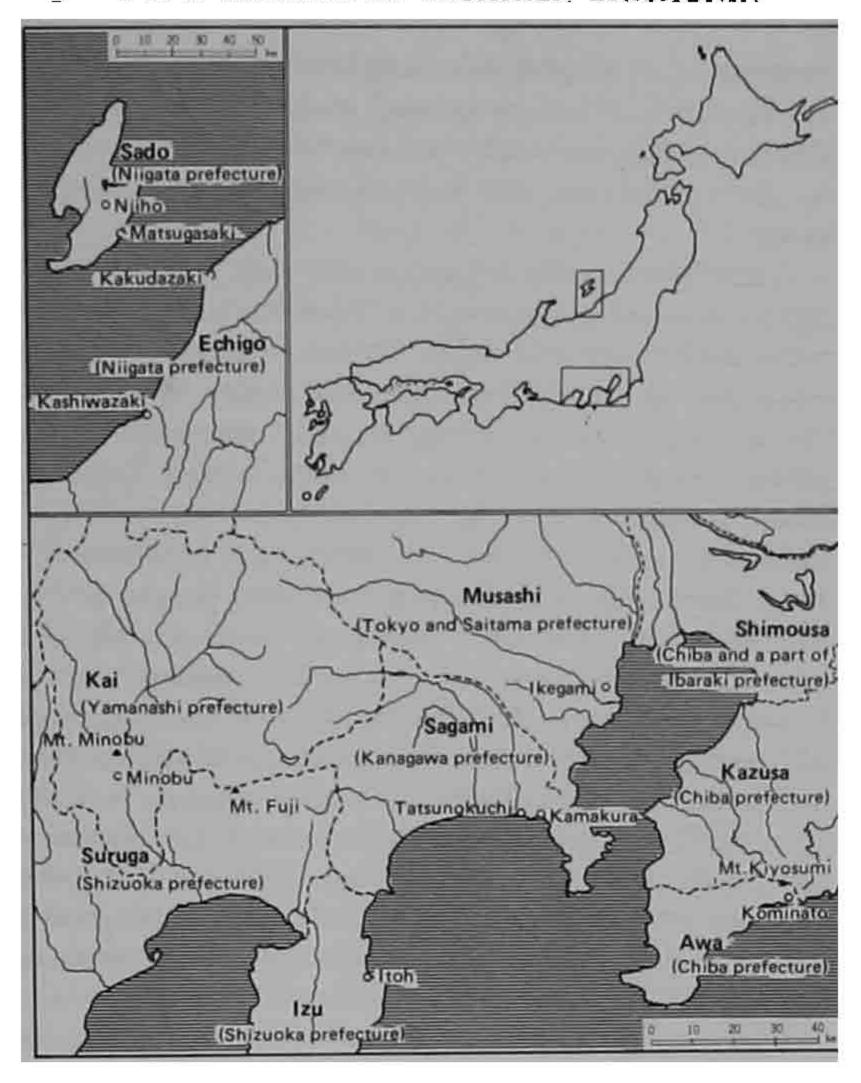
The major part of the text of this book deals with the Buddhist philosophy of life in accordance with the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. Here I shall examine briefly the life and mission of Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of Nichiren Shoshu. In no other human being has the power and compassion of this faith been as vividly manifest as in the life of the man who brought its philosophy to magnificent fulfillment.

Nichiren Daishonin, who was to found the Buddhist sect bearing his name, was born into the family of a poor fisherman who lived in the small village of Kominato, Tojo township, Nagasa county, Awa province (modern Chiba Prefecture), on February 16, 1222. Legend has it that on the morning of his birth the sun shone with overpowering brilliance and the waves of the Pacific Ocean were still.

At that time, political power in Japan had shifted from the imperial court nobility in Kyoto to the samurai class, who established a military government, or shogunate, in the town of Kamakura, on the Pacific coast many miles from Kyoto, the traditional and ancient seat of the emperor.

On the international scene, the Mongol hordes, raging like a great storm, were driving toward India, where Buddhism was already practically eliminated from the religious life of the people. Hindu influence had overpowered Buddhism three centuries earlier, and only sixteen years before the birth of Nichiren Daishonin, the Muslim conquest effectively completed the task. The world was the scene of many new and vigorous impulses. European Christians were continuing the enterprises called the Crusades: the fifth ended the year before the birth of Nichiren Daishonin, and the eighth and last occurred about fifty years later. Contact between Islam and Christianity as an

# LIFE AND MISSION OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN



outcome of the Crusades and the Mongol expeditions had a stimulating effect on human history. It is especially significant that such cultural impulses were alive just at the birth of the man who was to bring a new religion into being.

The religious world of Japan at the time was characterized by disorder and dissension. Tendai and Shingon, the established Buddhist sects, had become completely aristocratic and as a result had lost their ability to guide the people. Especially disturbing was the corruption of the priests, who sought only fame and personal gain and often allied themselves with the holders of secular power. A movement away from the established sects in search of a meaningful religion began to grow among people.

From early childhood, Nichiren Daishonin devoted himself to study. He seems even to have delved into the popular belief in the Buddha Amida, who was thought to promise salvation to those who would but call on his name.

When still a child, Nichiren Daishonin began to doubt the efficacy of the Buddhism that the entire Japanese nation was supposed to be following. Buddhism is believed to bring protection and peace to the nation, yet Japan, ostensibly a Buddhist nation, was plagued with incessant fighting among the samurai. How could this be?

The youth touched on many other fundamental problems connected with the Buddhism of his times. He was especially concerned about the bewildering multiplicity of Buddhist sects and the textual conflicts in the Buddhist canon of scriptures. He was convinced that, just as a nation cannot expect to prosper with more than one ruler, so there ought to be one sutra of the many in the canon that holds preeminence over all the others. Instead of this, however, tens of different sects, each with its special sutra, spent a great deal of time disputing with each other. Nichiren Daishonin was convinced that under such circumstances peace could not exist.

So burdensome did his doubts on these subjects become that Nichiren Daishonin resolved to leave home to study and to resolve basic questions about Buddhism. After obtaining his parents' permission, he traveled north from his home village to the temple Kiyosumi-dera located on Mount Kiyosumi. There, on May 12, 1233, when he was twelve, he became a disciple of a priest named Dozen.

In the Buddha hall of the temple was a statue of the bodhisattva Kokuzo — Bodhisattva of Space, so called because his wisdom is as vast as space. Nichiren Daishonin vowed that he would become the wisest man in Japan, and day and night he sat before the statue of the bodhisattva praying that the wish expressed in this vow would become a reality. But he exerted himself to this end as well. From the age of twelve to the age of sixteen, he studied and contemplated. In later years, he figuratively

recounted that finally the bodhisattva Kokuzo presented him with the Jewel of Wisdom, which shone like the evening star.

Although Nichiren Daishonin discussed his doubts with Dozen and other priests and although he read all of the literature available in this remote mountain temple, he was unsatisfied. The library of the temple was incomplete, and the priests in the temple lacked the kind of rigorous training needed to help Nichiren Daishonin resolve his doubts. Nor is this surprising: many of the questions he asked were directed toward the most fundamental religious issues and in all likelihood had never been asked before.

At the age of seventeen, Nichiren Daishonin established the policy he would follow in his search for truth. First he would entertain no prejudices about any of the sects; he would accept any texts and any ideas that shed light on the teaching of the Buddha, that accorded with logic, and that were susceptible of realistic proof. He would not rely on scholars or leaders of the people but would trust ultimately on the sutras themselves.

He then set out to study all available literature on the subject. He learned the doctrines of the ten Japanese Buddhist sects and determined to understand their essences. He was striving to find out whether the teachings of the various sects accorded with the true meaning of Buddhism and whether all the sutras expounded that true meaning.

Somewhat later, Nichiren Daishonin obtained permission from his teacher Dozen to go elsewhere for further study. His first stop was Kamakura, the capital of the shogunate. He studied there for four years. At the conclusion of this period, he returned to the Kiyosumi-dera. Then in hope of further deepening his knowledge, he traveled to the temple Enryaku-ji, located on Mount Hiei and considered the most important center of Japanese Buddhist scholarship of the time.

During the twelve years he spent on Mount Hiei, Nichiren Daishonin studied all of the sutras and doctrines of all the sects of the time. He subjected himself to a rigorous program of meditation and as a consequence experienced a profound inner change and achieved enlightenment. He was convinced that the Lotus Sutra and the incantation Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra, are the heart of the teachings of the Buddha Sakyamuni. In addition, Nichiren Daishonin believed that the incantation itself represents Sakyamuni's will.

In 1253, Nichiren Daishonin returned to his former temple, the Kiyosumi-dera, where he called together his teacher Dozen, all the other priests, and the lay believers and announced to them the outcome of his study and of his religious experience. The world in those days was already in the last age of the teachings of Sakyamuni. This age, called the Latter Day of the Law (Mappo) was

characterized by degeneration and loss of faith. Nichiren Daishonin came into the world to point out the Lotus Sutra and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the only way for man to follow. He was thirty-two years old when he made this historically significant pronouncement.

After converting his parents to the new faith, Nichiren Daishonin left for Kamakura, where he intended to instigate a religious revolution by teaching the doctrine of the Lotus Sutra in the political capital of the nation.

Upon arriving in Kamakura, Nichiren Daishonin built a small hermitage in a place called Matsuba-ga-yatsu, southeast of the city, to serve as a base for the propagation of the faith. After the construction of the hermitage, a traveling priest called on Nichiren Daishonin. He had studied T'ien-t'ai Buddhism at the monastery on Mount Hiei but was unable to determine which of the sutras teaches the truth. Having heard that Nichiren Daishonin was preaching a new doctrine in Kamakura, this priest decided to find out what the teaching could be. Because he himself had struggled with and resolved the question of the truth of the teachings of the various sutras, Nichiren Daishonin quickly outlined his conclusions. As the traveling priest listened, his oppressive burden of doubts seemed to vanish. Even though he was one year older, this man at once became a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin and was given the name Nissho.

Nichiren Daishonin next resolved that the time was right to begin a conversion campaign, and he started teaching his doctrine to a small gathering at his hermitage. In addition to insisting that the Lotus Sutra is the most important of all Sakyamuni's teachings, Nichiren Daishonin severely criticized other Buddhist sects by pointing directly to their failings. For example, he fiercely renounced the belief in the saving grace of the Buddha Amida, who is the central figure in the Jodo, or Pure Land, sect. He showed that the followers of Amida were incurring the gravest danger by slandering the true way when they claimed that the Lotus Sutra was too difficult to teach to the ordinary people in a time as degenerate as the Latter Day of the Law. Nichiren Daishonin was equally severe with Zen Buddhism, which rejects texts and argues that enlightenment alone is significant. Because of this belief, followers of Zen slight the Lotus Sutra and rely only on the petty notations of their priests. Nichiren Daishonin denounced such denial of the sutras.

At that time, however, the Kamakura shogunate was offering maximum protection to priests of both the Jodo sect and Zen, who quite naturally offered the political authorities their full support. Nichiren Daishonin's vigorous attacks on these two religious sects upset both the secular arm of authority and the heads of the religious groups protected by that authority. Soon Nichiren Dai-

shonin was subjected to a deluge of vilification. As he criticized other sects, the followers of those sects hurled mockery, curses, and even stones and tiles at him. But he remained not only unperturbed, but also deeply devoted to his task. He came to see himself as a Bodhisattva carrying out his religious discipline in the face of all persecution, no matter how virulent.

During the next two or three years of his preaching campaign, many people came to question the beliefs they had formerly held. More and more people began returning to the hermitage at Matsuba-ga-yatsu to learn more about the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. And as they did this, they gradually abandoned their old faith.

Beginning in the year 1256, Japan suffered an astounding series of natural disasters. In August of that year, raging storms caused landslides that took countless lives and spoiled large tracts of farmland. In 1257, the buildings of the great council of state in Kyoto burned. Next, an unusually violent earthquake shook the capital, and later the Gojo palace, also located in Kyoto, burned. An eclipse of the moon in April of that year was followed by an eclipse of the moon in May. In June and July, Kamakura and Kyoto were severely damaged by floods and earthquakes. Drought struck and then more earthquakes climaxed by one tremor so intense that, according to historical documents, mountains collapsed and stately tem-

ples, other buildings, and humble homes were leveled to ground. Fire coming immediately after the earthquake claimed numberless victims. And still the calamities did not end: two years later there was a severe famine throughout Japan, and after another two years a plague broke out.

Seeing the horrors around him and hearing the cries of the stricken people, Nichiren Daishonin realized what the cause was and sensed that it was time to make the truth clear to all people. Although he saw that the reason for the immense suffering of the people was failure to recognize the truth of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, he knew that in order to convince the people he would have to search out logical proof within the canonical texts of Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra itself contains very little that is directly related to this subject; therefore, Nichiren Daishonin journeyed to the temple Jisso-ji, in Suruga (modern Shizuoka Prefecture). There he made use of the collected canon of all the sutras and other works in the temple library for two years while he immersed himself in study.

The most powerful man in the country at that time was Hojo Tokiyori, former regent of the Kamakura shogunate. It was to him that, on July 16, 1260, Nichiren Daishonin addressed a treatise based on the results of his long study at the Jisso-ji. This treatise, called The Security of the Land through the Establishment of True Buddhism (Rissho Ankoku-

ron), draws on three sutras, the Yakushi-kyo, the Daishitsu-kyo, and the Konkomyo-kyo, and explains that the cause of the disasters was the people's loss of faith in the true Law and their reliance on false doctrines. The source of these false doctrines was the belief in the Buddha Amida. In order to bring relief to the nation, this belief had to be abandoned, and the truths of the Lotus Sutra had to be embraced.

Nichiren Daishonin prophesied that, if the authorities persisted in turning their backs on the true Law, two great calamities of a kind never before experienced in Japan would strike: foreign invasion and full-scale civil war. This prophecy was a cry of warning, but Nichiren Daishonin offered hope. He said that if the people reformed their lives in accordance with the true Law and if they lived pure lives, peace and tranquility would bless the land. But the government failed to do so much as acknowledge this important treatise.

The scholars and priests of the Jodo sect, which professed faith in Amida and his illusive paradise, were less indifferent. The criticisms Nichiren Daishonin leveled at them drove them to a fury. At first they tried to defeat Nichiren Daishonin in open debate; but each time, his trenchant arguments reduced them to silence. Seeing that fair methods would not bring victory, they resorted to foul ones. With the backing of powerful priests, they plotted to

assassinate Nichiren Daishonin. Forty days after the publication of The Security of the Land through the Establishment of True Buddhism, a band of believers in Amida swarmed on the Matsuba-ga-yatsu hermitage and burned it. Nichiren Daishonin barely escaped with his life and went immediately to Shimousa (modern Chiba Prefecture), where he stayed for a while in the house of one of his disciples.

But his passionate sense of mission would not allow him to remain there long. In less than a year, he was back in Kamakura to resume his conversion campaign. While he hurled challenges at them and their faith, the adherents of Amida did not let up in their vilifications and plotting against Nichiren Daishonin.

When they saw that the tactics they had been following were producing no serious results, the enemies of Nichiren Daishonin took a new line of offense. They appealed to the shogunal government to banish him. Without trial or even investigation, the government, always partial to the Jodo sect, accepted the appeal and, on May 12, 1261, ordered Nichiren Daishonin banished to Izu (modern Shizuoka Prefecture).

The sentence was completely illegal, and Nichiren Daishonin objected vigorously. He pointed out to the authorities the danger of destruction they were inviting by allowing excess hatred to lead them to trample on the law. He charged them with forgetting their sworn duty to

guard the law and to place justice above private interests. He then offered to meet with priests of the Jodo sect in order to hold a debate for the sake of clarifying the content of his teachings. He added that if he was to be punished for what his accusers called slander, the crime of arson and violent entry, committed by the adherents of the Jodo sect at his Matsuba-ga-yatsu hermitage, ought to be much more severely punished. But silence was the only answer the shogunate gave to these proposals and questions. The ship taking Nichiren Daishonin into exile left the Kamakura harbor at Yuigahama beach.

At Izu a fisherman and his wife secretly cared for Nichiren Daishonin, who continued his writing and his study of the Lotus Sutra. He was touched by the warm concern these two people showed for him and told them that, without their kindness, he would have led a difficult life in his place of exile. He wondered if this man and his wife, who had probably been believers in the Lotus Sutra in a previous existence had been reborn in the Latter Day of the Law as a consequence of karma dictating that they should care for him in his great devotion to the sutra.

His banishment was ended one year and nine months after he left Kamakura. The shogunate, apparently at the instigation of the former regent, Hojo Tokiyori, who had respect for the character of the great teacher, issued a pardon and allowed Nichiren Daishonin to return to his

home province. Once there, he resumed his missionary activities, which soon extended to Kamakura. During this period, the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra won many converts.

In 1268, the foreign invasion that Nichiren Daishonin had prophesied was about to become a reality. The Mongol hordes, having overrun much of the Chinese mainland, issued a written ultimatum to Japan demanding submission or war. Though the shogunate attempted to put a bold face on the matter and take a firm stand, they realized that the danger to the nation was mortal. As defensive measures were being taken, every temple and shrine in the country offered prayers for the defeat of the enemy.

The turn in events convinced Nichiren Daishonin even more of the correctness of the principles he had expressed in The Security of the Land through the Establishment of True Buddhism. Among the many admonitions he addressed to the authorities at this time was a letter to an influential shogunate official. In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin mentioned the accuracy of his former predictions and warned that if the righteous way of the Lotus Sutra was not immediately adopted, national calamity would be inevitable. In usual fashion, the shogunate turned a deaf ear. Not defeated, however, Nichiren Daishonin sent other letters to top-ranking officials and priests and one to the de-facto ruler, the regent Hojo Tokimune. Once again, Nichiren

Daishonin urged the priests of the Jodo sect to join with him and his followers in public debate to determine which teaching was true.

In taking these steps, Nichiren Daishonin was aware of the danger of retaliation from the already angered priests and officials. By way of encouragement, he circulated a letter among his followers on the day that he issued his letters to officials. In the message to his disciples he explained that he had sent letters to the authorities. He said that his letters might incur serious punishment—banishment, perhaps even death-for himself and for all those who followed him. He counseled his people not to be affected by considerations of family and not to fear the secular authorities. Everything would be as he had predicted, and his disciples must free themselves from the transitoriness of the cycle of births and deaths and must thus attain Buddhahood. In these terms, Nichiren Daishonin encouraged the faithful to be ready for whatever might come.

Once again, the shogunal authorities and the priests to whom Nichiren Daishonin addressed his admonishing letters refrained from answering, though some of them must have cursed in suppressed anger at the contents of the documents.

When first six months then a year passed after the first letter from the Mongols and nothing had happened, the Japanese began to forget their earlier fright. Peace once again seemed secure. But in 1271, a four-month drought struck the country. The shogunate ordered Ryokan, a famous and highly respected priest of the temple Gokuraku-ji in Kamakura, to pray for rain. Ryokan gladly expressed his willingness to comply; he and his temple enjoyed the warm protection of the authorities.

When he heard of the imminent prayer for rain, Nichiren Daishonin challenged Ryokan by offering to become his disciple if his prayers were successful in bringing rain within seven days. If his prayers failed, Ryokan would have to pledge allegiance to Nichiren Daishonin. Ryokan thought he saw an opportunity to make Nichiren Daishonin look foolish, and this made him very glad since he had been the target of much of Nichiren Daishonin's severest criticism. He accepted the challenge.

In spite of the assistance of a retinue of 120 priests, Ryokan was unable to bring rain for the first 4 days. He called on the services of several hundred more priests and redoubled the fervor of his prayers. But all was to no avail; the full seven days passed without a drop of rain. Ryokan had failed miserably.

But he was far from willing to keep his part of the bargain. Instead of yielding as he had promised, he secretly began plotting to have Nichiren Daishonin done away with. After consulting with other powerful priests, he submitted to the shogunate an appeal in which he accused Nichiren Daishonin of wickedness in adhering to the Lotus Sutra alone and denying the validity of other scriptures and schools of thought. He further charged that Nichiren Daishonin and his followers were collecting weapons and gathering outlaws and rebels at his hermitage. The shogunate saw fit to hold an investigation on the basis of these allegations.

The official in charge of the investigation, Hei no Saemon, was an influential and devoted supporter of the position of the government and the Jodo sect. In the course of his explanation, Nichiren Daishonin called on quotations from the sutras and the writings of great Buddhist leaders. He explained the justice of his views and contended that his only aim in adopting his course of action was to bring peace to the nation. Nichiren Daishonin's authoritative exposition of the situation was so overwhelmingly convincing that it seemed as if the man being judged were calling his judges to account. Consumed with hatred, Hei no Saemon screamed madly at Nichiren Daishonin, who remained perfectly calm as he predicted that in a minimum of one hundred days and a maximum of seven years, a feud would break out in a ruling-class family and that foreign armies would invade Japan from the west.

Two days after the investigation, in the afternoon, Hei no Saemon and several hundred men burst into Nichiren

Daishonin's rebuilt hermitage at Matsuba-ga-yatsu. Nichiren Daishonin was arrested immediately and was sentenced that very day to exile to the island of Sado. He was to be taken to the residence of Honma Rokurozaemon, who was to be in charge of him during his period of exile. But that night, while on the way there, Hei no Saemon, leader of the escort party, arbitrarily decided to kill Nichiren Daishonin at the execution grounds in a place in Kamakura called Tatsunokuchi. A samurai who was a follower of Nichiren Daishonin accompanied the group to the execution ground. Weeping, he walked beside the horse on which Nichiren Daishonin rode and kept a firm hold on the bridle. Nichiren Daishonin noticed that the samurai was crying and told him he would be wiser to smile because there is no greater joy than dying for the true Law. Later when this same samurai was being harassed by his lord for persisting in his faith, Nichiren Daishonin wrote him a heartfelt letter of encouragement. In this letter he recalled with gratitude how the samurai had clung to the bridle of his horse and wept as Nichiren Daishonin rode to the execution grounds. He promised to remain with the troubled samurai through everything, even if it meant following him to hell. He went on to say that since he was a devoted follower of the Lotus Sutra, Sakyamuni would not desert him but would follow him and his faithful samurai disciple to hell if this became

necessary. But Nichiren Daishonin assured the samurai that such a necessity would never arise because he and his follower were destined to attain Buddhahood.

After a while, Nichiren Daishonin and the group accompanying him to the execution grounds reached their destination. Preparations were made, and the executioner raised his sword to strike. Suddenly he was blinded and cast to the ground by a luminous object as bright as the moon. The other officials in the party were terrified and ran away as fast as they could.

Shortly after the miraculous rescue, there was a series of murders and arsons in Kamakura. Although this was in fact a trap laid by priests and adherents of the Jodo sect, the shogunate claimed that followers of Nichiren Daishonin had committed the crimes in protest against their leader's arrest. Nichiren Daishonin was immediately banished to Sado, a bleak island in the cold northern part of the Sea of Japan. Some of his followers were thrown into prison for the part they allegedly played in the outbreak of lawlessness. Among them was Nichiro, one of Nichiren Daishonin's closest disciples. The imprisonment of Nichiro so worried Nichiren Daishonin, that, on the eve of his departure for Sado, he wrote his disciple a letter in which, while expressing his deep concern, he encouraged Nichiro to put his faith in the Lotus Sutra. He concluded by asking Nichiro to visit him on Sado when the prison

term had expired.

In October, 1271, Nichiren Daishonin, accompanied by samurai escorts, sailed across the cold waters of the Sea of Japan to Sado. The only friendly person to go with him on this sad trip was his faithful follower Nikko, who was later to inherit the true line of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and was to preserve them as the religious philosophy of Nichiren Shoshu, the one orthodox branch of Nichiren Buddhism.

The shelter allotted to Nichiren Daishonin on Sado was a small Buddhist shrine on a barren piece of land where unclaimed dead bodies were abandoned. Wind blew snow through the wide cracks in the ceiling. The snow fell to the floor but did not melt because inside the mean building it was almost as cold as it was outside. Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko spread skins on the floor and shivered out the wintry days and nights with little more to protect them than coarse outer garments made of thick layers of straw. Short of food and clothing, they had no fire. Even the pale sunlight rarely penetrated into their shack. Nichiren Daishonin was fifty years old at the time.

But he was far from defeated. He bore no resentment, and even under cruel conditions he was able to take joy in having been able to fulfill the prediction in the Lotus Sutra that the votary of the sutra would be exiled more than once. Ironically, the priests and officials who had

wished him the greatest ill had provided him with an opportunity to reach greater happiness in that they were instrumental in his realization of all of the predictions in the Lotus Sutra.

Even amidst these hardships, Nichiren Daishonin continued his conversion campaign. He converted several of the local priests of the Jodo sect to the true Buddhism. When other priests heard of this, they called fellow clergymen from neighboring regions to come to their aid in a campaign against Nichiren Daishonin. When they were faced with his presence and the brilliance of his exposition of the true Law, however, they found themselves powerless to argue. Indeed many of them immediately abandoned their old faith for the true faith in the Lotus Sutra. The power of Nichiren Daishonin's message soon convinced others, and the faith in the Lotus Sutra began to spread throughout the island of Sado.

Writing too played an important role in this part of the life and mission of Nichiren Daishonin. While on Sado, he wrote many theses including the Kanjin no Honzon-sho, which gave practical development to the important ichinen sanzen theory of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. This theory, explained in greater detail on p. 34, teaches that all the many forms of life are immanent in the single thought moment. It is the monumental philosophical achievement of Chih-i, the founder of T'ien-t'ai Buddhism. But Nichi-

ren Daishonin showed that theory alone is not enough. To be meaningful, the ichinen sanzen theory must be put to practical application. The way to do this is to make Nam-myoho-renge-kyo the sole object of religious faith. Nichiren Daishonin's writings from this period are especially notable for their profound conviction of having revealed the full meaning of the Law.

Only four months after they had exiled Nichiren Daishonin to Sado, the officials in Kamakura watched with alarm as the prophecies he had made began coming true. He had said that within a minimum of one hundred days and a maximum of seven years feuding would erupt in a leading family. Shortly after he left for Sado, a brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune began plotting to seize power. Tokimune halted the plotting by means of the swift expedient of having his brother killed, but the rift in the family shook the government and threw society into disorder.

The other of Nichiren Daishonin's prophecies was more deadly: the threatened invasion by the Mongol hordes. And to the consternation of the authorities, after Nichiren Daishonin's exile, the Mongols renewed their pressure for submission or war. Envoys called on the government three times, each time increasing the menace in their demands. Fear of the Mongols and hope that Nichiren Daishonin might be able to make further useful prophecies gave

impetus to a movement to have him pardoned and returned to Kamakura. In 1274, the regent who had never completely agreed with the severe treatment shown to Nichiren Daishonin, overruled all opposition and revoked the edict of banishment. Two years and five months after he had been exiled, Nichiren Daishonin returned to Kamakura a free man.

Eager for more information and anxious to have Nichiren Daishonin pray for victory in case of war, the government summoned him to an interview within two weeks of his return. Hei no Saemon was the presiding official, as he had been three years earlier when he had stormed and raged at Nichiren Daishonin. But he wore a different face and manner on this occasion. He was gentle and polite as he asked Nichiren Daishonin's opinions on the timing of the possible Mongol attack.

Nichiren Daishonin replied that scriptures offered no clear indications of the time but that he feared the attack would come within the year. He continued by informing the officials that the invasion, if it came, would be divine retribution against which they would all be powerless. Since the government had refused to heed Nichiren Daishonin's earlier warning, nothing could be done. Furthermore, he counseled them not to call on the assistance of priests of other sects, since such action would only aggravate the situation.

In spite of this warning, a few days later, the government ordered priests of the Jodo sect to pray for rain. Their efforts had some initial success in that a fine rain began to fall on the following day. But Nichiren Daishonin warned that it was too early for the false priests to rejoice. He prophesied the coming of a typhoon; and almost immediately after the fine rain, a fierce wind arose. As Nichiren Daishonin had predicted, a typhoon of great ferocity swept the country. Houses and shrines, stables, and palaces were destroyed; large numbers of people and animals were killed.

Nichiren Daishonin decided that he had done all that could be done in Kamakura, where the priests, the officials, and some of the people refused to heed him. Three times he had warned of imminent trouble—once at the issuance of his admonition to the government in the form of the treatise The Security of the Land through the Establishment of True Buddhism, once in his first interview with Hei no Saemon, and again in his second interview with the same man. Convinced that the shogunate and the large monastic organizations and temples would never see the evil of their ways, he left Kamakura and settled in a small dwelling on Mount Minobu in the province of Kai (modern Yamanashi Prefecture). There he entered a life of retirement, having followed advice given in an old Chi-

nese maxim: If you warn them three times and still they refuse to heed, leave.

Nichiren Daishonin's life on Mount Minobu was humble and hard. His followers in Kamakura worried about him. To make his situation a little easier, they sometimes sent him money, food, and cloth for clothing. Occasionally large groups of faithful followers would travel to Mount Minobu to increase their understanding of the Buddhist teachings under the patient guidance of Nichiren Daishonin, who, if severe with misguided religious sects, was extremely gentle with his own followers. His quarrel was always with the men in authority, not with the common people.

In the amazingly short space of one week after arriving on Mount Minobu, Nichiren Daishonin completed the Hokke Shuyo-sho, in which he explained how the Three Great Secret Laws will lead the people to true faith. After the death of Sakyamuni, there was no one to expound the Three Great Secret Laws, which are, according to Nichiren Daishonin, the true object of worship (Dai-Gohonzon), the true invocation (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), and the true place of worship (kaidan). Sakyamuni predicted that in the Latter Day of the Law the only way to restore order and tranquility to a world that has abandoned the right path is to propagate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. At that time, the bodhisattva Jogyo will appear in the world

to expound this greatest of the sutras and to establish the Three Great Secret Laws.

While Nichiren Daishonin was teaching and writing on Mount Minobu, matters in Kamakura were taking a very grave turn for the worse. Five months after Nichiren Daishonin entered his life of retirement, the dreaded Mongols attacked. About 39,000 men, including some Chinese and Koreans, swarmed into Japan in 900 warships. Landing first in Kyushu, the southernmost of the major Japanese islands, they moved northward. The Japanese tried to restrain the advance, but they were no match for the close formations of the Mongol army or for the formidable crossbows they wielded. Everything promised triumph for the Mongols until one night a violent storm struck and sank about two hundred of their vessels. In alarm, the army withdrew hastily to Korea. They were to return in June of 1281 only to be driven away—this time for good by another fierce storm.

Nichiren Daishonin heard of the attack and was greatly troubled. In a letter to one of his followers, he expressed his fervent desire to help his country and his bitter disappointment that his advice had been ignored by people in both high and low positions. He remarked that all of his efforts had met with such intense persecution that he had been forced to retire from the active world. His bitterness was all the more intense when he realized that the

government might have spared the nation the invasion if they had heeded his counsel. In spite of his grief at the sorrow of his nation, the accuracy of his predictions made Nichiren Daishonin even more strongly convinced that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra would spread through the whole world. This certainty sustained him in his life of teaching and writing.

Years passed, and more and more faithful followers visited the little hut on Mount Minobu in their search for religious truth. As Nichiren Daishonin turned sixty years of age, a handsome new temple building was erected on the mountain.

Nichiren Daishonin's health began to fail, and he decided to pay a visit to the memory-filled scenes of his youth. In September of 1281, he mounted a horse presented to him by his followers and set out for the province of Awa (modern Chiba Prefecture). By this time he had been living on Mount Minobu for nine years.

But he was not to reach Awa, for by the time he had arrived in Ikegami, Musashi province (today a part of Tokyo Urban Prefecture), he was too ill to continue. He was forced to go to bed, where he remained in steadily weakening condition for some months. Feeling that death was near, he nominated Nikko to be his successor and encouraged all of his followers to continue the work of propagating the faith. He then distributed his few worldly

### LIFE AND MISSION OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

possessions among his disciples. At eight o'clock on the morning of October 13, 1282, surrounded by disciples reverently chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, he died peacefully.

## Chapter Four

# Nichiren Shoshu Philosophy Alive Today

As a result of intense spiritual experiences, Nichiren Daishonin established the importance of chanting Nammyoho-renge-kyo and revealed the Gohonzon as the true object of worship. Before his death, he charged Nikko Shonin, his successor, with spreading the true faith and establishing a central place of worship where people from all over the world could come to purify their hearts and pray for peace.

For some years after Nichiren Daishonin died, Nikko Shonin continued to maintain the temple on Mount Minobu in accordance with his master's wishes. But as time went by, some of the other priests there perverted the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and used them in ways he had not intended. In opposition to this state of affairs, in 1288, Nikko Shonin led a large number of his followers away from Mount Minobu, taking with him all of the treasures of the faith including the Dai-Gohonzon, the central object of worship. Resolved to preserve the true teaching and to propagate it throughout the land, they established themselves on land at the foot of Mount Fuji, where, two years later, they started to build the temple Daiseki-ji. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism has been passed down through Nikko Shonin and an unbroken line of high priests for seven hundred years to become Nichiren Shoshu (the orthodox school of Nichiren Buddhism). Nichiren Shoshu traces its ancestry back without interruption or distortion to Nichiren Daishonin, the source of Nichiren Buddhist philosophy.

In 1930, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and a group of lay members of Nichiren Shoshu organized the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for the Study of Value-creative Education), the forerunner of the present Soka Gakkai. Makiguchi himself was the principal of a primary school. His conversion to Nichiren Shoshu had brought him into

contact with the Buddhist life philosophy for the first time. In it he found a basis for a reformation of the Japanese education system. In fact, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai was originally formed as a study group for educators.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi led his followers in a membership campaign employing the conversion technique called shakubuku. When Buddhism has reached all people and is the recognized worldwide religion, it may be possible to employ motherly gentleness in winning new members. But the Latter Day of the Law is a stern time when the Buddhism of Sakyamuni has lost its hold on the popular mind. For this reason, methods must be stern, like the love of a father for his children. Shakubuku is imbued with that stern, but deeply concerned, love that is reflected in paternal affection.

Shakubuku must be stern because people must recognize the danger of failing to see the truth. If human beings do not awaken to the true Buddhist philosophy, the human inner revolution—the restoration of the supreme dignity of life—cannot take place. And if this revolution does not occur, a new human society is impossible. To win people to this truth requires a passionate sense of mission, correct thinking and deep faith in the Law. These are the characteristics of shakubuku, and the actions of the man who performs shakubuku are filled with compassion.

Although, as has been pointed out, the Soka Kyoiku

#### NICHIREN SHOSHU PHILOSOPHY ALIVE TODAY

Gakkai was originally intended to be an organization for educators, the power of its message attracted people from all walks of life. Four years after its founding, it had a membership of three thousand people. But soon World War II came, and the militarist government, in their fervor to promote Shintoism as the cult of the emperor, persecuted all other religions and religious organizations. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was put in prison for his refusal to bow to government religious demands and died there before the end of the fighting. His faithful disciple Josei Toda, who was imprisoned at the same time as Makiguchi, was ultimately released. It became his task to rebuild the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai in the ruin and devastation that was the aftermath of World War II. His vision of the importance to Japan and to mankind of the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu inspired him to lead the organization in a vast campaign of study and member conversion. He changed the name from Soka Kyoiku Gakkai to the present Soka Gakkai (Society for the Study of Value Creation) and expanded the role of the group beyond the field of education. Today the Soka Gakkai is striving to create a new society based on an inner spiritual revolution in each human being. This revolution is only possible through the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.

Currently the Soka Gakkai, with about fifteen million members in Japan, has headquarters in Shinanomachi,

Tokyo. It operates in cooperation with Nichiren Shoshu members in many countries in North, South, and Central America; Europe; Asia; and Africa.

The goal of the Soka Gakkai is to create a peaceful, creative world through the universal propagation of faith in Nichiren Shoshu (this propagation is usually referred to by means of the Japanese words Kosen-rufu).

The principle on which the new society will be built is profoundly spiritual yet very practical. For society to be peaceful and prosperous, each of its members must live and act in accordance with the Law of the universal life force. In order to do this, each human being must experience a human revolution as a consequence of understanding the truths contained in the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism. One person who has experienced this revolution becomes the recipient of great force and wisdom, which he can direct toward helping others revolutionize their own lives. One by one, people living in accord with the universal law of life come together to build a world of peace and harmony. In such a society, all fields of human endeavor are vitalized and made more creative from within because of the wisdom of each member. In short, the Soka Gakkai finds the noblest religious thought and philosophy in the individual life, the aggregate of which becomes the basis for a new and better society. The individual human revolution starts with the true Buddhism; it then moves outward to infuse politics, economics, literature, art, education, and all phases of life with new value and intensified creativity. The human revolution and the propagation of the faith must obviously extend to all people everywhere since, according to Buddhist philosophy, the Law of the universal life force applies to all races.

As a society for the study of value creation, the Soka Gakkai recognizes three major categories of value: benefit or profit (ri), the satisfaction of material desires; true beauty (bi), or the satisfaction of spiritual desires; and goodness (zen), the satisfaction of altruistic wishes to share one's benefits and beauties with other people. This kind of goodness liberates the human being from selfishness and helps him transcend his own ego. If there is ever a conflict among the three, the Soka Gakkai philosophy is to give precedence to goodness over the other two. In keeping with the Buddhist teaching that life cannot be analyzed into pure mind or pure matter but must be understood as both, the values of goodness, beauty, and benefit are neither purely materialistic nor purely spiritual. They are both, and this is correct since mankind requires both kinds of values for happiness. Finally, these values as interpreted by Soka Gakkai philosophy are never the result of external stimulus. They must well up from the spiritual being of the individual person who has understood the

truth of the teachings of Buddhism.

Thousands of years ago, Buddhism was formulated as an answer to the basic sufferings of life—birth, illness, aging, and death. Today this religion, in which there is no place for absolutism or myths of omnipotent, anthropomorphic divinities, has an inexhaustible capacity to revitalize even a world like ours, where humanity has fallen on extremely dark times. Because it teaches that the life in all human beings is the same essential life that is the universe, Buddhism shows that all human beings deserve respect as the vehicles of that life. We are all one humanity bound together by the oneness of essential life, no matter what our race or nation.

Times are indeed dark, but we must not despair. We must devote our attention and our effort to rebuilding the society of mankind by means of the internal spiritual revolution of the individual. Man must comprehend the relation between his own life and the life of the universe because only by making this revolutionary discovery can he find the true path to real joy and to the real compassion that can shed its warming grace over the whole world. The road to the spiritual revolution is very close at hand; it is within you.

### INDEX

#### Buddha, Sakyamuni, 7, 17, 18, 23, A 49-56, 64, 65 Buddhahood, 17, 18, 38, 39, 44, 55, aging, 94 see also birth 56, 74, 78 Amaterasu, II Amida, Buddha, 62, 67, 70, 71 Buddhism, 16, 17, 23-25, 29-31, 39, 41, 43, 44, 46-48, 51-60, 62-64, B 67, 69, 79, 89, 90, 92-94 bukkai, see Buddhahood being, 38, 44 -and nonbeing, 32 living -, 28, 40, 43, 44 Chih-i (T'ien-t'ai), 7, 34, 51-55, 80 Bergson, Henri, 20, 28, 29, 41 chikusho-kai, 36 bi, 93 Christianity, 12, 60 Bible, 15 chutai, 32, 33 birth civil war in Japan, 70, 81 - and death, 31, 32 compound, multimolecular, 26 -, illness, aging and death, 94 Conscience et la Vie, La, 28 the cycle of -s and deaths, 74 consciousness, 25, 27-29, 31, 32, bodhisattvas, 38, 63, 64, 84 44 bosatsu-kai, see bodhisattvas creatures, living, 26, 32 Brahmanism, 49, 50

Crusades, 60, 62

D

Dai-Gohonzon, 56-58, 84, 89
Daiseki-ji, 89
Daishitsu-kyo, 70
death, 49 see also birth
Descartes, 51
disasters, 68, 70
Dozen, 63-65

E

eho, 25, 26
Einstein, Albert, 47, 48
emotion, 27, 28
en, 42 see nyoze-so
engaku-kai, 37
enlightenment, 49, 54, 65, 67
Enryaku-ji, 65
environment, 24-27, 44
en-yu-no-santai, 34
equalitarianism, 39
eternal life, 30, 31
evolution, 23
exile (of Nichiren Daishonin), 71, 77-79
existence, realms of, 35

F

faith, 58, 81 fatalism, 45-47 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 15 Fromm, E. H., 48 funi (oneness), 24

G

gaki-kai, 36 Gautama, Siddartha, 49 Gohonzon, 56, 88 Gokuraku-ji, 75 goodness, 93 Go-on Seken, 43 gyo, 44

H

happiness, absolute, 38
heaven, 37
Hegel, 15
Hei no Saemon, 76, 77, 82, 83
hell, 31, 36, 39, 77
hijo, 27, 28 see also insentience
Hojo Tokimune, 73, 81
Hojo Tokiyori, 69, 72
Hokke Shuyo-sho, 84
Honma Rokurozaemon, 77
human revolution, 57, 90, 92, 93

j

ichinen sanzen, 34-36, 52, 80, 81
idealism, 46
Ikegami, 86
illness, 94 see also birth
in, 41 see nyoze-so
India, 48, 49, 56, 60
Indra, 12
insentience, 27-30
invocation, 84
Isaiah, 13
Islam, 12, 60

ı

Jehovah, 12, 13
Jesus, 13
jigoku-kai, 36 see also hell
jikkai, 35
Jisso-ji, 69
Jodo sect, 67, 70-72, 74, 76,
78, 80, 83
Jogyo, bodhisattva, 84 see also
bodhisattvas
ju, 43
Judaism, 12, 13
ju-nyoze, 35

K	Mahayana, 7
kaidan, 57, 58, 84	Makiguchi, Tsunesaburo, 89-91
Kamakura, 60, 65, 66, 68, 71-73,	Mappo see Latter Day of the Law
75, 81, 83-85	materialism, 21
Kanjin no Honzon-sho, 80	Matsuba-ga-yatsu, 66, 68, 71, 72, 77
karma, 57, 72	matter, 24, 26
ketai, 32, 33	meditation, 51
Kiyosumi-dera, 63, 65	metabolism, 26
kokudo seken, 44 see also environ-	microcosm, 35
ment	mind, 24
Kokuzo, bodhisattva, 63, 64	Mohammed, 13
see also bodhisattvas	Mongols, 60, 62, 73, 74, 81, 82, 85
Kominato, 60	Mount Fuji, 89
Konkomyo-kyo, 70	Mount Hiei, 65, 66
Korea, 85	Mount Kiyosumi, 63
Kosen-rufu, 92	Mount Minobu, 83-86, 89
ku, 32-34	Muslim, 60
kutai, 32, 33	Mystic Law, 66
Kyoto, 60, 68	N. P.
Kyushu, 85	N
La	Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, 54-58, 65, 66, 81, 84, 87, 88
Latter Day of the Law, 7, 53, 65,	Nepal, 49
67, 72, 84, 90	Nichiren Buddhist philosophy, 24,
life, 27, 29-34, 46, 47, 55	27, 57, 79, 89, 92
- and death, 49	Nichiren Daishonin, 7, 24, 25, 27, 28,
eternity of -, 30, 38	31, 49, 53-60, 64, 66-86, 88-89
force, 20, 38	prophecies of -, 70, 81, 83,
latent -, 30, 31	warnings of -, 82
manifest -, 30, 35	Nichiren Shoshu, 7, 59, 89, 91, 92
nature of -, 31, 50	Nichiro, 78
philosophy of -, 46, 55	Nikko Shonin, 79, 86, 88, 89
religion of -, 47, 48	nin-kai, 37
roots of -, 47	Nissho, 66
ten realms of -, 36	nonbeing, 32
universal -, 27, 29, 31, 32, 35,	nyoze-so - nyoze-honmatsu-
45, 51, 55, 56, 92-94	kukyoto, 40-43
Lotus Sutra, 16-18, 51, 55-58, 65-67,	Saffer Saffer
69, 70, 72, 73, 77, 79, 80, 84, 86	0
	Odin, 12
M	Old Testament, 12
macrocosm, 35, 36	oneness, of the mind and matter, 24

<b>p</b>	
<b>_</b>	shomon-kai, 37
perception, 32-34, 43	shujo seken, 44
persecutions, of Nichiren Daishonin,	shura, 37
71, 77, 78	sickness, 49
R	Siddartha, seeSakyamuni so, 44
religion, universal, 47	Soka Gakkai, 89, 91-93
remanifestation, 31	Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, 89-91
<u> </u>	spiritualism, 21, 24, 25
Renaissance, 15 ri, 93	**************************************
Rissho Ankoku-ron, see Security of	Stanley, Wendell Meredith, 29
	suffering, cause of, 69
the Land through the Establish-	sunyata, see ku
ment of True Buddhism, The	sutras, 51, 70, 79
Ryokan, 75	T
S	Tatsunokuchi, 77 see also
Sado, 77-81	persecutions
Sakyamuni, 7, 23, 49	Tendai, 34, 62 see also T'ien-t'ai
see also Buddha	ten-kai, 37
Sakyas, 49	Three Evil Paths, 39
samurai, 60, 62, 77, 78	Three Great Secret Laws, 58, 84, 85
Sandai Hiho, see Three Great	T'ien-t'ai, 7, 34, 35, 52, 53, 80
Secret Laws	Toda, Josei, 91
Sane Society, The, 48	Toynbee, Arnold, 47, 48 .
san-seken, 43	ುಗಳುಗ <b>್ </b> ಕರ್ನಾಗ ಹಿನಿಗಳಿಂದರು. ಸ್ವತ್ತ ನವರನ್ನು ಮತ್ತು ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ ಕ್ಷಣ್ಣ
sanzen, see ichinen sanzen	U
sects, Buddhist, 67	ujo, see sentience
Security of the Land through the	Universe, 26, 27, 38, 51, 94
Establishment of True Buddhism,	Sold the Particulation of the Proposition Co. In the Particular and P. Sertard Property (1997)
The (Rissho Ankoku-ron), 69, 71	<b>V</b>
73, 83	void, see ku
sentience, 28-30	
shakubuku, 90	w .
shiki, 43, 44	worship, 84
shiki-ho, 24	Y
shikishinfuni, 24	
shim-po, 24	Yakushi-kyo, 70
Shingon, 62	- <b></b>
Shintoism, 91	. <b>Z</b>
shogunate, 60, 67, 69, 72, 73,76-78,	
83	Zen Buddhism, 67
shoho, 25, 26	Zeus, 11

