

THE ART OF LISTENING WITH THE EYES OF A BUDDHA
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Taped from FNCC Arts Division Conference 10/30-11/02, 2003

I think the ability to hear ourselves, our true selves, as well as our ability to see everything from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism means to be able to view all of life from the standpoint of causality.

So that's what I'm going to talk about and first of all. I think that in order to really hear ourselves, our true selves, our limitless capacity for wisdom of what is the correct answer, I think we have to learn how to practice correctly. Because I find that far too many people, I think, really practice this Buddhism in what I call a Christian Buddhist kind of life and the problem with that is when you are not practicing this Buddhism correctly, the results you get are minimal in comparison to the results you get when practicing correctly.

The Gohonzon Is Not Outside Us

So, the first thing is, so many people I find still chant to the Gohonzon as if it is some God or some force or some being outside of themselves. So that the attitude with which we chant, the attitude with which we view the Gohonzon is most important. And so many people and even today I'm always so surprise... if I go to a meeting and sponsors bring up their guests and they're bringing them up to me because their guests are freaking out and because they have problems, I'm always looking at the sponsor thinking what in the world are you telling this person about Buddhism?

And so my fear is, since I started in the 70s, is that we're still explaining this Buddhism the way perhaps many of us had it explained to us. What I mean by that is, 'just chant and you can get anything you want' and I think if we just say that to brand new members or guests without deeper explanation, we encourage people to then start chanting which is in a way the equivalent of praying to the Gohonzon (which is obviously a physical object outside of them) in a way which is consistent with their prior religious training. And so then we start chanting in such a way where we are begging, asking this force, this being, this Gohonzon, to please bestow benefit upon us, which is not the correct way to practice this Buddhism.

So first of all, I want to talk about the Gohonzon itself, because it is a physical object outside of ourselves. And part of hearing ourselves comes from how many of us truly, with every fiber of our being understand that the Gohonzon is us. It is us. Nichiren Daishonin says it. He says 'Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourselves'. But how many of us get that point?

So it helps me when I can view the Gohonzon in a different way. As we all know Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is right down the center of the Gohonzon but because Nichiren Daishonin took the Lotus sutra and was able to extract that the essence of the Lotus Sutra and everything it talked about could be tapped with the words Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, he was able to extract that from the Lotus Sutra which was Shakyamuni's teaching.

Shakyamuni Buddha is someone held in high esteem. It was from his teaching that Nichiren Daishonin awoken to this truth of life and that it was his mission to reveal that essence or that key. I view it as a key. The key that unlocks the human potential that exists inside of every living being.

Under Asian Culture we know that they read from right to left. The reverse of what we do here. Under Asian Culture if you were to honor someone, the highest seat of honor would first be on the right. When you are looking at the Gohonzon, just as you are right now with Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo coming out of Gohonzon toward you... when you are looking on the Gohonzon, Shakyamuni Buddha should be on the right.

Right by Nam, but he is not. He's on the left.

The profound reason that Nichiren Daishonin put Shakyamuni Buddha on the left is because he was making the point that all human beings are equal. That everyone equally possesses that same Buddha potential in their life. And also up here, someone was asking about the cranes that we have on the Butsadan. One of the cranes has its mouth open which symbolizes the mentor. And the crane whose beak is closed symbolizes the disciple who's listening to the mentor. And so according with the way Nichiren Daishonin has written the Gohonzon, the mentor under Asian Culture should be on the right but instead it is on the left, making the same point, the mentor is not superior to the disciple. They are equals.

The other thing I get excited about, (I cannot read every character on the Gohonzon but we know from studying that the characters represent the two sides of life) is that all of the positive attributes that exist within every human life as well as that fundamental darkness that coexist inside of every human life.

Nichiren Daishonin is saying there is no life that is just one without the other. All life at every moment has both potentials always. The character representing both aspects of life are written on the Gohonzon. For me what is exciting is to know even without being able to read it, that Nichiren Daishonin wrote all of these characters on the Gohonzon representing every aspect of life in such a way that every character is looking at its center just like you, just like me. Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, do you see what I am saying?

Every character is written in such a way that every character is looking at Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. Think about the Ceremony in the Air and we're all forming a circle, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is the axis of the universe and we're all forming a circle around it.

All of us are looking at Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. It is the center of what every character is looking at. Why? It is because Nichiren Daishonin is giving us a message continually, every time we look at the Gohonzon we should get this message and that is we must base our life on the Law never on the person. It is the mystic law that has enabled every Buddha throughout eternity to be able to manifest their fullest potential that is the key, that is the center, for everything.

We have to make Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo the center of our life, that we base our life on Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo. It means in terms of being able to hear ourselves, it means, I think one of the things is that whenever we are facing a problem most of us use our brain to try to figure out, to strategize how to fix it. And then many members after they have exercised their brain as to the strategy of how I'm going to get to Point A and to Point B to fix this problem, they then start chanting the solution to the Gohonzon (laughter) to make it work. I think that is practicing incorrectly and let me tell you why.

One of the things that I have discovered through myself is we talk about the nine levels of consciousness, right? When we talk about the nine levels of consciousness, the first five are our senses. Sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. The sixth level is the conscious mind. The seventh is the unconscious mind.

The eighth level is what we call the karma storage area which is that storage area in our life that has accumulated every cause we ever made throughout all existences. Below that is the ninth level of consciousness which Buddhism says is the one pure, unchanging reality of our life. Every single one of us has fortune and lack of fortune in our life. Every single one of us in the areas in which we have fortune, can do the same things you see other people do to get the thing you want and you'll get it, but in the areas of your life that you lack fortune you can do the identical thing you see your neighbor doing to get the object of your desire and that thing seems to move further and further and further away (laughter), right?

Exchanging Misfortune For Fortune

Many times when we are dealing with problems in our life they have a causal connection to us. Many times they come from that place in our life that we lack fortune in. And so when we use our brain to strategize how to fix it, our brain can only go to the eighth level of consciousness, which is the karma storage. Which is the area that stores up and accumulates all of our causes and it's the place at which WE DO NOT HAVE FORTUNE (laughter,).

And so our brain then, will devise a solution based on lack of fortune. And if we do it, we just keep reinforcing the same pattern over and over and over in our lives. But what we've taught is that by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo you can pierce through the eighth level of karma storage.

Pierce through it, be unaffected by it and you can reach the pure unchanging reality and infinite wisdom of your life that is unaffected by karma storage. That answer is the correct answer for your life. That's not affected by your karma in the area in which you lack fortune. And this is why I believe Nichiren Daishonin says we must become the master of our mind rather than allowing our mind to master us. My point is this; when we pray I believe we first need to start from a determination: I will accomplish X, whatever X is.

And then we have to understand from the standpoint of Buddhism we create our life every moment with our thoughts, our words and our behavior. Prayer in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is profoundly different from prayer in other religions. We are not praying to something outside of ourselves to bestow something on us. Instead prayer here is the determination that I will create the object or thing that I am praying for through my causes of thought, words, and action. I am the creator of my life and I will take the responsibility to create the thing that I am praying for which means after I chant the kind of determined daimoku that I will accomplish X. I then must come to a realization... how in the world am I going to do this?

That answer only exists inside of my life. I can tap that answer when I come from a place of knowledge and conviction, that that answer exists inside of me. And I start chanting with the determination to pull that wisdom up from within my life to clearly see what it is that I need to do in order to create the thing that I'm praying for. That's why President Ikeda says BENEFIT COMES FROM YOU.

NOBODY GIVES YOU BENEFIT.

I want to talk about another thing in regard to this. We have to understand that one of the reasons we practice this Buddhism is to profoundly change our destiny in this lifetime. And what I mean is this, parents naturally want to give their children better opportunities than they had. So that their life can be better. And so generally in order to do that, one of the things that we feel in this society is that it is imperative that you get a good education. Because we know that hopefully, from getting a good education you will more likely earn more money and be more successful in life.

But if we look at this and we look at life from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism we will come to understand this point; there is no amount of education in the world that will ever allow you to change your karma. Let's get deeper.

Every single one of us choose to be born in the family in which we were born and we practice in that family because we share karma with every individual in that family whether we like it or not (laughter).

Me too.

You grow up and you think... my father was an alcoholic and my mother left him when I was three years old because of his alcoholism. My father always lived within a fifteen mile radius from me growing up. But because of my Dad's alcoholism he never came through on any of his promises that he made me.

As a child I internalize that there was something wrong with me. Otherwise Daddy would love me. I hated, I hated what I saw alcoholism do to him. I hated it passionately. I made a vow that I would never grow up to be like him. And I meant it.

And so, I don't drink. I won't be around anybody who does. I won't be around anybody who's close to my life, who drinks a lot. They scare me to death because I watched what it did to my father.

I may have an occasionally glass of wine once or twice a year, but that's about it. I've never been drunk in my life. People have tried to get me drunk when I was in college and I just fed it to the plants (laughter) because I didn't find it attractive. I found it disgusting. Again, because of my own personal experience.

As I got older I felt superior to my father, because look, I don't drink, I'm not like you. I felt superior. I have to be honest and what I have come to understand is that it was not coincidence that I was born into that family and what I'm starting to see is that I share this sort of addictive kind of nature. And the difference many of us don't always see because we think it has to manifest in the identical way in which it manifested in our parents. It does not.

Mine manifest in terms of food, my father used alcohol to sedate himself. Alcohol was something he used to celebrate. Alcohol was something to sedate from the pain and the frustration, I use food for the same thing. I celebrate with food. When I'm frustrated I use food. When I'm depressed I eat food. I use food for the same purpose he used alcohol. And so what I've come to understand is, no matter how much love you have for your children. No matter how much love your parents had for you they cannot prevent you from living out that karma.

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And the promise of Nichiren Daishonin is that we can change any karma in this lifetime. But again, people have misunderstandings about the practice. Many people tend to think that merely because I chant I will not have to experience my karma. No such thing. Instead this practice is based on Human Revolution.

This practice is based on demystifying life and really starts to explain to us, why things happen to people from a causal perspective. Nichiren Daishonin says we must get the point that everything from skin out is not separate from us even though visually it appears to be.

Everything we experience has a causal connectiveness with our life from both the negative side and the positive side. We must understand we create our lives everyday with our thoughts, our words, and our behavior. Therefore practicing correctly means more than the amount of daimoku you chant everyday.

How many of us take the responsibility during the day for the causes that you made? How many of us take the responsibility during the day for the thoughts that you have?

We're taught that we create our lives through our thoughts, our words and our behaviors. I call it living unconsciously. I find too many people are very sincere in front of the Gohonzon, then use this practice as if this force is something outside.

Its as if we're saying 'if we're sincere enough when we pray benefit will be bestowed on us and take care of us', and so when we get up from chanting we don't have to be responsible for the things that we do (laughter) and we live like that, right?

We do, we live that. And then we wonder... 'I've been chanting a million daimoku how come I've had no breakthrough?' People miss the point. This practice is much deeper than merely the act of chanting. You chant a million daimoku inside of your life not believing you can accomplish something that is your prayer to the universe, and the universe is this wonderful movie screen that projects back to us exactly what we ask for and in its most positive and negative senses.

We must also understand the Mystic Law just like the Gohonzon is both positive and negative. It encompasses everything in the universe. And everything in the universe and every moment has two potentials existing.

The circumstances in which we find ourselves never defines us. It never defines who we are or our potential in terms of what we can be. Instead our circumstances at this moment, I believe, have a cause and effect relationship with us and our beliefs. They mirror what we believe.

Let me give you an example, sometimes I'll have people particularly in LA where there are many people wanting to be all sorts of actors and that sort of thing. They're really chanting to be a successful actor. They are chanting a lot and going out to auditions and nothing is happening. And this goes on for a while and they come to me and they will go, "I chanted this much, I've gone to this many auditions, nothing is happening and so "reality" is telling me that maybe I need to think of doing something else with my life.

I hate that word when people use it that way; reality. I look at them it's like NO I DON'T THINK SO! Instead I think your "reality" is mirroring back to you something about yourself. Something about your profound belief system in your life. I need you to start chanting again for that wisdom, tapping that ninth level of consciousness for the clarity to see life from its true perspective of causality. That ability always exists inside of you when you realize it and you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with that kind of conviction.

Chant to see cause and effect operating in your life.

Chant to see what this lack of results in your life have to do with you in terms of your thoughts, your words and your behavior. Most often this lack of result in our environment mirrors the fact that deep inside of our life we do not believe we can achieve it. And the law of cause and effect is so strict that it is the one thing in life you will never ever shuck and jive (laughter). Our life at every moment absolutely reflects back to us what we truly believe.

I mean I've done this. I chanted sincerely for something in front of the Gohonzon and then I've gotten up from there and the reality of life is that every single human being on the planet whether they chant or not, every single one of us battles our deepest negativity every single moment of our lives.

Our Evil Twin Can Be Our Best Friend

I call it jokingly but very seriously, our evil twin that exist inside of us. And that evil twin never goes on vacation and never shuts up (laughter). You can chant sincerely for that thing when you're in front of the Gohonzon. Now when I say in front, it's the understanding that the Gohonzon's here to (inside). We just going through life, driving to work, and as you're driving to work, the evil twin is working overtime. You start thinking about the thing you're chanting about and the evil twin gives you lists of twenty-one reasons why you can not do this. Right? Have you ever had this happen? It's got this list going. What I have experienced is; how you react to your evil twin determines the effects that you produce in your life.

The negative thought does not produce the results, the response to the negative thought does. (claps and laughter) We talk about positive thinking. I'm like, give it up! I don't believe any person can think positively twenty-four hours a day. It's not natural. Nichiren Daishonin explains that all life at every moment is like these two opposing forces. These forces of the Buddha and the fundamental darkness are constantly battling each other both inside our life and outside our life. This is the nature of life that we must accept. Rather than thinking when I get enlightened evil twin will shut up and I will never ever have to experience that again. No I don't think so.

From the standpoint of Buddhism when we study the ten worlds we learn that the world of Buddhahood exist inside every other world. So there is another duality that goes on two but not two which means that even with that evil twin there is an both an enlightened side and an unenlightened side. There is a side to that negative thought that by challenging it, it becomes the motivation and the drive for us to change our life and from that perspective depending on how we respond to it. It can function as our greatest shoten zenshin in the world. But danger, because it also has a disruptive side and which way we choose to view it and use it in our life determines the results that we produce from it.

It is not the obstacle unto itself that determines our result. It is how we respond to the obstacle. Now understanding that, let's talk about how it is consistent with the word "responsibility". We hear this a lot, you got to take 100% responsibility. Most of us refuse to do that. Because we say "well how come? I'm having an argument with Eric. How come I don't have to take 100% responsibility? He's here too. I think it should at least be 50/50".

I got real excited when I finally decided to pull out Webster's. I realized that in English responsibility is comprised of two words, 'respond and ability.' And I think that that more accurately captures what Nichiren Daishonin means 100% responsibility. It means is change of karma, change of destiny always comes down to our ability to respond to the problem. This Buddhism is called the Buddhism of True Cause. The Buddhism of True Cause teaches us that none of us can change yesterday. But in this moment the most precious of all through our thought, words and action we can transform anything. What is important is the ability to be 100% in the moment with the determination to use our LIFE CREATIVELY.

Like that, CREATIVELY. Such that through thought, words and action we respond to the problem in a manner that is consistent with the direction we want to go rather than responding in the manner in which things are. Do you follow me?

This is called the Buddhism of True Cause, right? Because it means that in this moment we, through our thoughts, words and actions can change anything. And this is the point that most people don't get. When you're chanting, "I want to have the most harmonious relationship with Eric. We just had this fight". Right? "So I'm going to take responsibility that we have the greatest relationship and I'm going to take the responsibility to overcome this obstacle and make something wonderful out of it such that we have a better relationship than before the argument occurred."

Normally when we chant that way a lot of times what happens is maybe Eric and I get into another fight. "I was chanting, I mean how come we got into this fight? This was not what I was chanting for." The point we're missing is that the fight provides us the opportunity to transform our relationship in a way in which we prayed to transform it. But we can only transform it by how we respond in the moment of the argument (applause). It's in the moment of the obstacle we use to talk about the crucial moment in Buddhism... that's the crucial moment. It's when the obstacle is appearing.

It is providing us with the opportunity to transform our destiny by the way we choose to respond to it. Every time in the middle of the argument with Eric that I go into more of a negative funk place and start responding out of that I have been swayed by the negative side of this problem and it has sucked me into making more and more negative causes to cause that pattern to keep re-emerging in my life.

It's also in that moment (if I can remember), "here is my opportunity, and this is what I've been praying for". This is the point: Benefit comes from you. You create benefit through your thoughts, your words, and your behavior. This is the essence of Human Revolution.

Human Revolution means we must face our problems we must face our weaknesses and this time respond differently. And every time we respond differently, consistently with the direction we want our lives to go in, we have made a new cause moment by moment to transform our life. We transform it a moment at a time, an hour at a time, a day at a time. But the beautiful part about this is that when we learn how to view everything from the perspective of causality and use Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism... apply it, not just leave it to a theoretical understand that can apply to the reality of our daily life. Life takes on a whole new meaning because rather than being depressed by problems... rather than viewing problems as a sign I'm doing something wrong... I start to see problems as my opportunity to uncover more and more beauty from my life.

Problems are only problems because we get sucked into the negative side of them. When you can learn how to use every problem from its enlightened side... constructively... to move our life forward then even a midst the process of transforming my destiny I can have joy. Joy is no longer defined as only when I completely overcome this. Joy happens each moment when I win over it. When I no longer suffer on account of the problem.

When I can take control of the problem and use it positively for my life, then I'm in charge, life becomes exciting, start to view all of my problems as my mission. It is my mission to win over anything. That Nichiren Daishonin left this Buddhism to teach us how to become a master at problem solving in life. Because what he says is every human being is going to have problems including us as long as we live. In fact, we need problems, because only problems force us to keep getting out of our comfort zone.

Problems force us to keep challenging ourselves a little bit beyond what we think we can do. And so they are the impetus and the motivation that keeps forcing us day by day to go a little bit beyond what we think we can do. They are necessary in order for us to grow.

Our life inside what Nichiren Daishonin calls the Mystic Law what he calls the Gohonzon, what he calls Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, he says is limitless. That potential exists right now inside of everyone of our lives. Without us changing one thing about ourselves, but we have to learn how to call it out.

There's this limitless life force inside of us, life condition... but we have to learn to call it out and calling it out is very similar to developing muscle in the body. We all understand this now... if we want to develop more muscle I must do resistance training (laughter). I must do resistance training, which means I got to take on some weight and resist it as I'm lifting it. That weight to an undeveloped muscle is a problem (laughter) it may not necessarily feel so good (laughter) as you're continuing to do your repetitions. But the result of continuing is that we develop more and more and more muscle and my point is this... that potential always existed inside of the muscle. We couldn't call it out until we made the right cause in order to do so.

WE DEVELOP OUR STRENGTH BY RESISTING SOMETHING. The muscle of our life force and life condition is the same, it is by resisting negativity, rather than going with it. Resisting negativity, taking it on, challenging it, it then functions like the weight. It becomes the catalyst by which we pray more sincerely... more deeply.

By which we are more motivated to take action and it therefore becomes the means by which we are able to call out more and more of our potential. It has always existed inside. Think about it, every major turning point in my life has come from suffering. Not one of them has come from when things are going great. It is this ability to face that reality not run from it and to take it on with Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo with that determination... "I'm going to defeat this. It's not going to defeat me." And chanting out of that kind of determination that allows us to call up more and more of that strength, that muscle, that limitless potential, that exist inside of our lives. And that's what it takes to get us to pray deep enough, to resist... deep enough to call it out. It's always existed. But it needs some catalyst... and the catalysts by which we call out our potential are fighting against obstacles and negativity.

I want to move on to the Gosho, Reply to Kyo, because I feel that in this Gosho Nichiren Daishonin basically tells us everything we need to know. He starts off by saying "Believe in this mandala with your whole heart". The first thing is you have to believe. And then he talks about how powerful Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is. "Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is like the roar of a lion, what sickness can therefore be an obstacle." He's making a declaration that Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is so powerful there is no problem that you can not overcome. But then he warns us. The result you get in essence all depends on your faith.

And he says, A coward can not have any of his prayers answered. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith". And what I see in myself as well as in others is we allow fear and doubt to influence us to such a degree that we run away from our problems and my experience is, we can not change anything we will not face 100%.

While we think in some way that we are protecting ourselves, I find that we when we separate... I call it avoidance daimoku (laughter). That's right, I've done it, I mean I can look good in front of the Gohonzon, but inside I have left the premises (laughter). When I do that, is it any surprise that I don't get great results?

I'm not taking on this problem at all. I'm running away from it. My experience again is that when I do that...no matter how many activities I do... no matter how much I chant... I can't break through. I cannot breakthrough until I resolve facing it 100% whatever this problem is...I got to be willing to face the reality in my life. Nichiren Daishonin tells us that we must have the courage, the guts, to use our practice for the things we think we can't do, then he says, then one will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff. He says "I, Nichiren have inscribed my life in sumi ink so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart. Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon, then what is there that cannot be achieved?" He tells us this.

The Japanese Lady Experience

This reminds me of an experience, I called this my Japanese lady experience. Because it really reminds me of this point. This lady was born in Japan to a family that already practiced. She practice this Buddhism her whole life. And when she got in her late 70s she developed very painful rudimentary arthritis, so painful that just normal daily routine became exceedingly painful for her. She went to doctors seeking the cure but her journey took her from one doctor to another doctor, to another doctor to another doctor until finally all of the doctors through up their hands and said; "I'm sorry there is nothing we can do for you". And needless to say you've practice your whole life in your late 70s you'd be pretty discouraged to hear that.

But fortunate for her and for us we have this organization so she went to one of her seniors in faith for encouragement. After listening to her, he said you know I think the reason this has not changed for you is because you have “bought” what the doctors have said. You have “bought” that you have an incurable disease. But Nichiren Daishonin says Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is so powerful it can change even that karma you think is unchangeable. So it is okay that medical science doesn't have the solution to your problem because you do. You always have. The issue is how much do you believe Nichiren Daishonin when he tells you how powerful Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is. You must start to believe him, and you've got to start chanting out of that conviction that you already have that solution. And that solution is Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

You've got to start directing Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo into your body, with such intensity, with such belief, with such conviction that you will scrape out this disease with your prayer, with your ichinen. She thanked him. She went home. She called him back 15 days later to thank him because she was pain free. And the reason I love that experience is because I believe no matter how long or how short a period of time we practice every single one on us concedes defeat a multitude of times everyday. We separate ourselves from our environment and we look at it not through the eyes of the Buddha, through the law of causality instead we look at it with separate eyes and we convince ourselves that some how it has nothing to do with me and its telling me I can't do this.

Even though Nichiren Daishonin tells us how powerful Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is, many of us don't ever bother to use faith to challenge our belief systems.

I don't think any of us took faith to do what you could already do through your own human efforts. And yet we practice that way. We take faith to enable ourselves to go way beyond our human effort. But we can't possible make the impossible possible unless we have the courage and the guts to go for it. So let me share one of my own experiences because now I want to talk about not only seeing myself through the eyes of the Buddha, through the law of causality but my ability to see the same in other people.

Transforming Our Relationships

A few years ago, I had an immediate Women's division leader that I judged terribly. I thought she did things to hurt the members and given that I am a lawyer and I live in a world of facts and persuasively arguing my facts. I convince myself I was right. She did do things to hurt other people and because I was her clean up lady and I had to go behind her after she talked to somebody and fix it.

After she got done... I mean I just judged her... I was so mad at the stuff she did. I got self-righteous because of course I was right. I could prove it (laughter). What happened was my life went into pain from my judgment of her. It was this dull pain that went with me every single day. And I got to tell you I chanted and couldn't change the pain. I did activities like a fiend. I couldn't change the pain. That pain went with me every single day and if that woman walked in a room, it was like she had the remote control to judgment. She walked into the room and all this stuff would involuntarily come out of my life and I couldn't control myself to save my life (laughter). You know what I mean? All this anger, and all this judgment would come out. I suffered... I suffered for 2 years with this. I couldn't change it to save my life. And it's the best lesson... one of the best lessons I have ever had because I have a highly evolve judgment nature (laughter).

And when I'm judging somebody it goes something like this... “You're not during your best because if you were you wouldn't be like this.” What I had to understand was that view was a very superficial understanding of karma. It's much deeper than that. I had to learn through suffering with pain for two years that it's not that simple. You can do your best and still because of the depth of your karma in that area it will take a while of fighting back everyday that human revolution in order to fundamentally change it. And the problem is none of us can see how deep our karma is. Maybe it is going to take another year. Maybe it's going to take another day. Maybe it's going to take fifteen but the promise of Nichiren Daishonin is that we can change any KARMA in this lifetime. So finally, after I had suffered enough, I decided maybe I should apply some guidance I had gotten in 1996, which I believe - and if you have been around me you have heard me say before - and I will use until I die.

I now realize that this is the sort of guidance that can change any relationship problem that you will ever have. This guidance was given to me by Vice President Hasagawa, one of President Ikeda's personal secretaries, when Sensei was last in the United States. This in fact was guidance that President Toda gave Sensei.

When Sensei went to President Toda because he was completely frustrated by the behavior of some leaders in the organization. President Toda was very strict with Sensei and told him that he needed to take the responsibility to create the kind of organization he wanted it to be. And then he said every pain, every hurt, every frustration you ever feel on account of another human being engrave it in your heart. Never ever forget it. Then make sure you never do that to a single human being. We say we want to grow but the point we most often miss is that some people's mission in our life is to teach us how to be a better human being through negative example. But they are as powerful a teacher as the person who is the greatest example of how to be.

Let me say that again: Some people's mission in our life is to teach us through negative example, how not to be. But they are as powerful a teacher as the ones whose mission it is to teach us how to be through great example. The issue is do we get the lesson or do we instead turn around and do the same thing to other people that we accuse others of doing to us.

He didn't stop there, President Toda went on and he said we must understand that the reason we are here in this moment, experiencing this problem, is because it is our mission and our mission alone to find the solution to the problem.

The solution to the problem is never ever, ever, ever, ever waiting for the other person to change. Because every time we wait for the other person to change we have missed our own opportunity to do human revolution.

Again, it's everything we talked about this morning. I got to see the cause and effect connection with my life and my environment. There was a causal reason my leader was in my life pulling out all my judgmental negativity.

You know. And so I really started chanting that way, OKAY IT'S MY MISSION, I GOT TO FIND THE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM. Because it was clear waiting for her was not the answer, it had been two years, so I was sure about it. I really sincerely started chanting for the wisdom to see what it is that I needed to do to change this. And what happened was it put me on a journey serious self-reflection. What I saw was this: That even though I do my best, I'm not always proud of myself every day when I return home, in terms of the way I handle certain situations in my life.

I also had to realize that I had been doing my best and for two years I had not been able to win over my judgment and negativity towards this woman. When I could get that real I said "then what makes me think that I have the right to hold another being to a higher standard than to which I cannot. I started to see that what I was seeing in her was nothing other than another human being who just like me was battling her own weaknesses. And who just like me had not yet been able to win over them because it is a process.

The moment I understood that... really understood that, not intellectually understanding it but with my life. A prayer came out of my life that I had never prayed before. That prayer was this... I decided that I would take total responsibility for her to have a victory over her weakness (applause). And it meant that I was going to start sending daimoku to her life with the determination that through my daimoku alone I was going to start battling that negativity.

That weakness that I was judging so unmercifully. I was going to send daimoku and I was going to battle within her life with my daimoku. With the determination that through my daimoku alone I would ensure that she had a breakthrough in her life. The minute I was able to chant that way, my relationship change just like that. What I realize is it was not her that changed it was me.

I chanted from a person of judgment, to a person of compassion for another human being's life. When I judged her, that became my prayer and my expectation towards her and she was my big movie screen that gave back to me exactly what I expected. When I was able to take the responsibility to help her have a victory over her weakness, could have true compassion for her.

My prayer and expectation towards her life was profoundly different. So I connected to another part of her. I was able to open up to her. I now discovered that that prayer is a prayer that will allow us to speed up our human revolution. What I came to understand is that because there is no separation between myself and my environment, the weakness that I experience is in other people - the people who get on your last nerve (laughter).

The Soka Spirit

Those people have a causal connection with my life. There is a reason they are in my life and I am experiencing this problem. When I can take it on from the standpoint of "I am going to battle the manifestation of negativity that is manifesting in their life and affecting me". Because it is my karma manifesting itself in the environment, and when I can take it on with the determination that through my daimoku I am going to battle that negativity. I'm going to battle that fundamental darkness. I'm going to battle that weakness that I see in that other person with the determination that I will ensure through sending their life daimoku that they have a victory.

This is Soka Spirit. When you fight the evil without or outside of you, it will change the evil that concurrently exist within you. The point is when you fight the evil or negativity that exist outside of you with the determination to help another human being win over it, that is just the environmental manifestation of our same negativity. And when we take it on outside helping another human being winning over it, simultaneously it's a great cause to change the same thing that exists inside of me. And it exists inside of me or I wouldn't be experiencing it.

This is one of the greatest causes I can make to change my life. It also enables me to practice this Buddhism correctly. Because it enables me to use my life to help another human being win. And when ever I can help another human being win I never sacrifice myself.

Instead what I get back is quadrupled. It is one of the fastest ways to change my own karma. Let me explain it in another way.

I gave guidance to a woman last month, who came to me... she was frustrated because she was married and she has two sons. Both of her sons are addicted to drugs and alcohol. She proceeded to then tell me about her husband's background.

She told me how her husband grew up in an alcoholic family and it was an abusive family. She proceeded to weave the story, explaining to me how the problems they were having with their sons was because of her husband and his record. I looked at her and I said okay let's talk about your background (laughter). In asking her questions what I found out is that she grew up in a verbally and physically abusive home. Her Dad too had problems with alcohol. The abuse became so great that her mother finally left her Dad.

After listening to this I look at her and I said forgot your husband and your husband's background. I want you to understand how the problems you are experiencing with your sons is nothing over than a manifestation of your family destination. Are you following me?

Because she grew up in an alcoholic and an abusive family both physically and verbally she was now in a marriage where her husband verbally abuse her and the children. And her children were manifesting that addictive karma by both of them being addictive to drugs and alcoholic.

[The tape ended here.]

I said to her, "We could have married you to the prince of Japan and you would still have a marriage like you have now with your two children". Do you follow what I am saying? It 's this level of karma. But the greatness about this practice is that Nichiren Daishonin has given us the tools by which we can transform anything.

We've got to realize we have that tool which is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and we've got to start using it. When we learn how to use Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to respond properly to every obstacle that arises we're able to turn everything into something of value and growth for our life. Such that during the process of changing the karma on a fundamental level (which may take years) we can have joyful days during the process.

There is a book called "The Flow" by a Professor at the University of Chicago. The book's been out for a long, long time and is in paperback now. In essence this professor over many, many years studied one thing and that one thing that is common to all us as human beings when we are in the state of true joy?

What is that common denominator when we experience true joy? And his conclusion was this; we always experience true joy whenever we are challenging our limitations. And I think that that's exactly consistent with Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. If you think about it. Many times we think joy means absence of problems.

But in truth when you are runner, and you're running that 25 mile marathon and you're on the last quarter mile stretch of that run, you are not experiencing lack of problems at the moment. Your lungs feel like they are about to explode, your feet probably belong somewhere else and are pounding and your brain is screaming at you are you stupid, STOP. But still if you keep going in spite of all the stuff going on inside of you at the same time. The moment you cross that finish line, that a feeling that you did it against all odds. Isn't that joy, isn't that a feeling that nobody else can ever give you. But you always experience, whenever you challenge your limitations and you win over them rather than having them win over you

Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism is the study of life, and it is the study of learning how to master problems. When we learn how to master problems, problems are no longer a problem. We view them as opportunities for growth, as signs we are doing something right, we now have another opportunity to grow more to experience more, to have greater capacity as a human being.

That very moment provides us with that opportunity. When it comes to the art of listening with the eyes of the Buddha, we have to start to see that the other people in our life in listening to them, in seeing them, we must see that whether they chant or not their life just like ours is the product of constant internal battle with one's fundamental darkness. And when we are caught up in our weakness it is almost like we are possessed.

When I was caught up in my judgment of this woman it was like I was possessed by it. And intellectually I could know it was not a good thing to do, I knew I shouldn't be doing this but I couldn't stop myself anyhow. It just played out. That's what it is like when we are battling our weaknesses.

You can intellectually know, "I should shut up right now because I am not creating value in the middle of this argument". And yet you can't stop yourself, yourself to save your life (laughter).

My point is this; whether that person is your parent, your lover, your boss, whoever, while I am not justifying their behavior, we must come to see that through the eyes of the Buddha, that what we are experiencing is that person battling their own darkness. And right now they are unable to win over it. They are possessed by it. And therefore, the reason they are in our life is that they are an environmental mirror of our karma.

The Key to Unlocking our Potential

Please understand our karma is both positive and negative. We need to own all the positive stuff and embrace ourselves for that too. At least we don't suffer from that stuff.

Understanding there is a causal thread between us and everything that we experience. In other words, each one of us has the most fortune in the world because we have been given the greatest gift by Nichiren Daishonin.

That gift is the key to unlock our potential to tap this Mystic Law that exists inside of us and outside of us everywhere. And by unlocking it we can direct it any where in the universe. We can through using it with the conviction and the belief that it has limitless power and it can enable us to do anything.

So with those people in our life that causes us pain and suffering, that they are the gifts to allow us to fundamentally transform our destiny.

If, only we can have the compassion to send their lives daimoku with the determination that through our daimoku, through our life we're going to battle their weakness that they are unable to win over at this moment, because they are in my life to provide me with that opportunity to battle it in another person.

And through battling the manifestation in another person I simultaneously change it in myself. All of the people in our life that bring us suffering are our greatest gift. They are the ones that provide us with the opportunity to change our life on a fundamental way.

At the same time, we must also hear ourselves with the eyes of the Buddha.

Meaning instead of seeing everything as separate from skin out we've got to chant to see cause and effect in our life. How there's a causal connection between me and everything I experience: thought, words and action. When we get that point it is empowering. When we get that there is a causal connection it means I have the ability then to change it. When we separate the environment from ourselves we're powerless.

But when we perceive, although we cannot see it with our eyes that inner connectiveness between ourselves and everything else. We have to keep challenging all of these little things that happen. Believe that no matter what it is we pray for, whatever happens during the day, every little challenge that comes up is the answer to our prayer.

Because each challenge is there to get us to take on that weakness in our life that holds us back. And it is by taking it on and winning that we then make the causes to move our life forward.

Life is this journey of discovering after many, many, many years of practice, that what we have always been in search of all our lives we always had. It's always been inside of us.

With Nam-myoho-renge-kyo there is no limit to what we can achieve...what we can be...and what we can do. Our experience of growth can be limitless. If we have but the guts and the courage to use the mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra.

The strategy of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo first rather than head first.

If we can use the strategy of understanding no matter what the problem, fundamentally I always have the solution. And chanting with that conviction that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will awaken the wisdom in me to see life correctly, so that I can make the causes to change my life.

That joy, that new sense of joy we've been talking about is the direct affect of the willingness to take on our greatest and deepest insecurities, fears and doubts. On the other side of that is everything we've always been waiting for, always been wanting, but we can only get to the other side by walking through the present reality. There is no way to get to the other side by walking around it.

Thank you.