

Guidance by Dr. Tetsugai Obo

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This meeting consists of doctors, nurses, and medical staff of the medical field that took place at Atsugi Peace Center.

How do you do!

This is the first time I came here. For all people in Kanagawa I gave this seminar in Kanagawa Culture Centre. Probably, for the majority of the people here, this is the first time we have met. So, please be kind to me. (Introduction from the chairman was not translated.)

A few years ago, around February, I went to give a seminar in Kashiwazaki where you can see Sado Island. This is also close to President Makiguchi's birth home and Makiguchi Memorial Hall, It was Saturday. I saw my patients in the morning and took a bullet train in the afternoon in order to give a seminar in the evening. It was 10:30 pm. by the time the seminar was over. Since I was already there, I wanted to go see President Makiguchi's birth house. I asked the YMD to take me there. There is only an empty lot as the house no longer exists. Approximately 100 feet away is Arahama shore. It was very windy. Even though it was snowing there was no snow accumulation. The reason I am speaking about Arahama is the mystical connection of the time and place of the birth of President Makiguchi. From Arahama Shore you can see Sado Island to your right. When Nichiren Daishonin was exiled to Sado, he traveled from Kamakura north to Teradamari and from Teradamori to Sado. Two and a half years later he traveled back from Sado south to Bangin Cape in Kashiwazaki. This route represents an alphabetical character U shape. President Makiguchi was born directly at the bottom of this U, which is the half point of Nichiren Daishonin's travel route. He was born in 1871 that is exactly 600 years after the Daishonin was exiled in 1271. How mystical the time and place! I had an impression that there should be something more to this. After thinking about it, I could see more.

In Japan there are two different cultures: one is the culture of the village; and the other, the culture of the ocean. The mentality of the village culture is to go with the flow. This means that the people of the village culture are particularly concerned with what everyone else thinks about them. In essence, public opinion equals the village. Therefore, when we Japanese leave the village, we have a tendency to act much more differently than we do at home. After all, there is no one

that we know who is watching our actions. A good example is during World War II. Japanese soldiers raped women and massacred children in China. Since those soldiers were outside of their country (village), they had no problem with acting savagely. The lack of morals that the Japanese soldiers exhibited was the characteristic of the Japanese people. For the Japanese, the public means village. What the villagers think of you becomes most important. This is similar to the disorder of agoraphobia. For people with agoraphobia meeting people who are familiar to them is most challenging to them. Instead, meeting strangers is less problematic. Thus, this is a disorder caused by the fear of the public immediately surrounding the individual. Strangers are not part of the public (village) therefore they are non-threatening. For many Japanese, the village-like mentality deeply lies in their consciousness. To be aware of people's eyes means to be aware of the eyes of familiar people. In this culture, people are taught not to view things as black and white, not to take a position either way, not to be arrogant, or audacious, or meddling.

This year, I have been thinking about this. I see many psychiatric patients, patients with asthma, patients with sinus infection, patients with eczema, and patients with severe allergy. I have seen more than 10,000 patients so far in my practice. What I found in common with all these patients was their conformity. I hardly see non-conforming people. Imagine that out of 10,000 people the vast majority of them are conformists! How interesting! I can't help thinking that conformists are more susceptible to having an illness. The word conformist, in Japanese, *majime*, has changed its meaning over the past decades. It used to mean Serious or sincere, but now it means to go with the flow of custom or culture. Above all, Japanese culture is troublesome. It is a culture that promotes sickness.

Thus, modesty, the virtue of humbleness, being refined, males should say little, females should be one step behind, being considerate, being harmonious, suppressing yourself, not being audacious, not being over confident, and not being arrogant one word to kill yourself is Japanese culture. Therefore, the more conforming you are, the more devastated you will become. In general, conformists lack individuality and are passive. Leaders in society, such as presidents of companies, tend to be arrogant and aggressive and powerful. They also lack common sense and are authoritative in nature.

In this society, from the standpoint of Japanese culture, I have observed that bad people have more energy. Good people are not energetic and sickly after all. From a Buddhist viewpoint, one who is shining the true self of the entity of Myoho (mystic law) is in a sense audacious. Audacious people live according to the Mystic Law. On the other hand, conformists who suppress themselves actually kill the entity of Myoho. This is a slander.

The best example is the congressmen of the Japanese Democratic Party. After the elections they were interviewed and their attitude was only that of self-absorption.

It makes you wonder why they get elected but these people are truly energetic, powerful and have a lot of fortune.

On the other hand, conforming and serious people lack fortune. President Ikeda often says, "Be audacious, bold and tough. Be confident and persuasive. After all, this is the correct way. The problem is not that bad people run the world but that good people are killing themselves.

If serious people, kindhearted people, good people, and warmhearted people speak up and stand up for justice and create momentum, selfish people will automatically feel uncomfortable and eventually vanish. President Makiguchi once said, only if we create this can we have the era of humanistic competition. In fact, this Japanese culture of being conforming and serious is the culture of the village. If you act differently you will become an outcast of the village. The village people do not like those people who speak clearly of black and white.

The Murayama administration was a good example of village culture. During that time, the great Kobe earthquake occurred. Many Japanese people felt frustrated over how the government handled the disaster. Many showed anger and questioned the administration why it didn't help the victims right away. The spokesperson responded by saying there is nothing we can do about it. We have to follow the rules. We can offer help to the masses but not to individuals. This incident showed the lack of compassion by the government. Village culture is unmerciful because it prioritized the institution over the people. In other words, the village culture is a culture that oppresses people. This kind of culture is what is a fundamental base of the Japanese culture.

Another Japanese culture is called the culture of the ocean. Do you remember when the Japanese pitcher Nomo came to play for the Los Angeles Dodgers? At that time the major league was on strike. Many wondered what was going to happen to Nomo and questioned if he would make it in the major leagues. Many Japanese people and the mass media wrote bashing articles against Nomo. People asked him why are you going overseas. Yet, Nomo came to America without any hesitations. Before you knew it he was in the All-Star game as a rookie. Suddenly Japanese paparazzi were on his side and praising him. They wanted Nomo to say, "I will do my best for Japan." However, he refused to say it. Instead he said, "I enjoy pitching." We all thought Nomo must have been fluent in English but he could hardly speak English. In an interview after winning the game, Nomo had a translator with him. I was wondering if he was scared. By just looking at Nomo I felt that he doesn't have a typical Japanese attitude. Later I found that he was born in Osaka but his parents were originally from an island off the coast of Japan.

During the Muromachi period these islands were where pirates lived. These people started Japanese villages in Southeast Asia. These islands are still islands of many fishermen. Nomo's parents had the culture of the ocean people. The ocean culture is very independent, energetic, and open.

On the other hand, village culture is very concerned with the opinion of the public, it is conservative and has a pattern of having two different sides: smiling on the surface but disagreeing inside. As I mentioned before there are two types of culture within Japanese society. It's fun to talk about these cultures when I travel from place to place. On the ocean side of Japan there is a strong tendency for ocean culture and on the mountain side there is the village culture. If you visit a region which shares both of these cultures the leaders of the Soka Gakkai ask why is it so different even in the same organization? After I explained the village and ocean culture they could understand the differences. Many Japanese religions and philosophies are based on the village culture. Do you know the only religion based on the ocean culture? Yes, it's the Daishonin's Buddhism! Nichiren Daishonin called himself the son of the sendala, in other words the son of a fisherman. It is the ocean culture. In a time of strict class systems, the Daishonin called himself the son of the sendala, and the sendala means "chandala" in Sanskrit. It is the lowest of the caste system. It means the son of an untouchable, and he was proud of that. It was the time that you could do anything you wanted if you were born in a higher caste. The Daishonin placed himself within the lowest class of his time.

The Daishonin fought against the highest authority of the nation. The Daishonin fought the authority head on without any support. I think that showed a great contrast between the Daishonin who had no class or authority and the other with all power. As they clashed the Daishonin called authorities "The ruler of this little island country." For people of the village culture this was inconceivable. Only the Daishonin, who truly was a man of the ocean culture, was capable of making such a bold statement. The Daishonin's Buddhism is a philosophy of the ocean culture. That's why it's very independent, open, progressive and energetic.

Nevertheless, the Daishonin's Buddhism eventually became influenced heavily by the village culture after his death. The Daishonin's Buddhism became corrupted. As a result the high priest became absolute. Eventually lay followers were considered too unworthy to see the high priest. Another characteristic of the village culture was the class system. Old time villages consisted of landlords and tenants. Tenants had to crawl in the presence of landlords.

Japan is an anachronistic country. If you were from a higher class you could build a gate for your house. If you were not, then you could not. In Japan, even what you wore depended on your status in society. This was the village culture but in the ocean culture the majority of

the people were poor. There was little difference among them. Even the Daishoni's Buddhism, which is of the ocean culture, became corrupted by the village culture.

Seven hundred years passed and President Makiguchi was born as a son of a fisherman in Arahama. He was raised in the ocean culture, so despite the time period, he did not have a village mentality. President Toda was raised in Atsuta and born in Ishikawa prefecture. He also was the son of a fisherman. One of his ancestors was captain of a fishing boat. He truly was a man of the ocean. President Ikeda was a son of a seaweed maker. When looking at this, the Soka Gakkai entirely consists of the ocean culture. It is directly connected to the Daishonin except some areas that became village-like in the last 700 years.

Interestingly, my senior, Professor Miyata at Soka University, is doing a research on President Makiguchi. He suggested that if he ever directly encountered the priests from the Head Temple he wouldn't have joined the Nichiren Shoshu sect. President Makiguchi was in search of a religion that could be the basis of his Soka educational system. In one word, Soka education means to open up a person's possibilities, to view every student with a warm heart to help the student be independent and logical. He was searching for a religion that would lay a foundation for his educational system. Then he encountered Nichiren Shoshu. Priest Horigome had founded a temporary branch office in Nakano. Priest Horigome was studying a philosophy at Waseda University. He concluded that Buddhism can no longer contribute to society as long as it remained in the temple. He thought they needed to start a religious movement in which lay believers could play an active role. That's why he founded that temporary branch. When Priest Horigome, who believed in the Buddhist movement of lay believers, and President Makiguchi, who believed in the Soka educational system met, a religious movement based on humanism started. Ironically, there was no such tradition within Nichiren Shoshu. Because of that, from the very beginning the priesthood thought that the Soka Gakkai was arrogant, and they also claimed that the lay believers shouldn't be audacious. This is a good example of the confrontation between village culture and ocean culture. In the past there was the Tanuki festival incident and many other incidents that involved the priesthood and they all originated from the difference between those two cultures, village and ocean. I think that these differences became more evident in situations such as the current priesthood issues and the Soka Gakkai. Therefore, this situation could not have been avoided.

This is a prelude to what I really wanted to discuss. Let's go back to the prime point and look at ourselves.

How many points could you give yourself out of 100 when looking at yourselves right now? Please raise your hand if you think you fall within the range of 0 to 60 points. Thank you very much. Now raise your hand if you think you fall between 61 to 99 points. Usually only a

few people raise their hands here. Most people raised their hands with points 0 to 60. Oh, the doctors division is different because most of you raised your hands within the higher group. How about 100 points? Oh, two people raised their hands. Thank you very much. Except these two, the rest of you are not practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Can you believe it?

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the religion that teaches us that we are 100 points. As noted previously, the Daishonin's Buddhism emphasizes living audaciously, boldly, and tough. It is hard to understand this. In Chinese characters shinjin (faith) means "Believe from the heart." Then what is it you are going to believe in? It is the Gohonzon and also the Lotus Sutra. What does it mean to believe in the Lotus Sutra? It means to believe that oneself is the entity of the Mystic Law. The head is Myo, the throat is Ho, the chest is Ren, Ge is the stomach, and the legs are Kyo. We were taught that faith means to believe that your life itself is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and the entity of the Mystic Law. Do you remember this? Would you rate Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Buddha at 60 points?

Last November, I was invited to a district meeting to give a Goshō lecture. There were six French members from Southern France who owned vineyards. SGI-France is considered a cult by the government and treated unlawfully. Everybody in France practices very seriously. At this meeting we studied "On Attaining Buddhahood in this Lifetime." President Ikeda gave this Goshō in France. In the Goshō "...when you chant Myoho and recite Renge, you must summon up deep faith that Myoho-enge-kyo is your life itself" (WND page 3). When you chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo you name that your life is Myoho-enge-kyo. Deepen your faith as you declare your name Myoho-enge-kyo. When studying I asked the French members, "Who can believe that you are Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Buddha in here?" All six of them raised their hands by saying, YES! Three out of forty Japanese members raised their hands. Actually, Gakkai members live by the village culture. The Daishonin's Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai should be a religion of the ocean culture. But it has become a religion of the village culture. Well, it's hard to understand, I'd like to make a comparison. I have written an article titled, "A Strange Principle" for the health section of the Seikyo Shimbun. In observation of many people, conformists, hard working, responsible, caring and altruistic people, mysteriously enough come to a deadlock. Those conforming to others while working hard cannot break through. These altruistic people often face rejection, refusal, being made fun of, and in extreme cases are despised. Have you seen these people? Serious conformists can't advance.

On the contrary, irresponsible, arrogant, and shrewd people are successful in every attempt. Since everything goes well and they are targeted for flattery they become even more successful. This is a very popular phenomenon. While I have encountered various types of people and their lives, I have witnessed many of these cases. What is this all

about? Earnest people are fooled and the villains get fattened up. I have pondered Why?-for a long time but I didn't get an answer. I had an opportunity to research while still contemplating this issue. I began to see the mechanism of the strange principle little by little. Hesitantly, I wrote about it in the Seikyo Shimbun. I was afraid that it would be too controversial or that it would be cut, but I had to write it anyway because I thought there must have been some people bothered by the same thoughts. Luckily, the article made it to the final print, and some have responded.

One of the responses reads, as you have written I have done my best to do shakubuku up until last year, to promote the Seikyo Shimbun, did lots of zaimu, and fought with all my strength. But this year I am fighting illness and I'm on welfare. Why, despite my hard work are all of these things happening to me. I don't understand. Even though it is written so, it lacks thorough explanation and I still don't understand what you mean" Immediately I answered his questions via letter and he was really happy. Actually, there is another principle that causes such phenomena. I selfishly named the principle that lies beyond such superficial phenomena as "Strange principle"

The principle means that, even if they are fighting for others in need, their families, SGI activities, Kosen - Rufu, world peace and injustices in the world, those who kill themselves and who neglect themselves will eventually lose fortune. Therefore, this is a principle that as long as you neglect your own life, then others will neglect you. People say, as long as I persevere and endure someday my hardship will eventually pay off. Until then I must be patient. "Where there is unseen virtue, there will be visible reward" (WND page 907) The harder you endure the worse off you become. One after another you go through even more hardships. Thus you are not making any "unseen virtue". Why? Because you are killing your life which is the entity of the Mystic Law. You accumulate fortune when you rejoice and enjoy whatever you do and when you allow your life to shine as it is. It will become your good fortune. Automatically, others will value your existence.

This month in the SGI Graphic President Ikeda talked about his wife and her smile. Mrs. Ikeda is always smiling. President Ikeda said, having a smile should not be a result of your happiness. Smiling becomes the cause to be happy. Smiling when you are happy or smiling as a result of your happiness is not the right way. No matter how hard your life is, you keep smiling. Within your life fortune will accumulate. This is what I mean by a "Strange principle"

For instance, some say "You can overcome your problems if you do shakubuku, if you promote Seikyo Shimbun you can be happy; you can be happy if you try to do more zaimu." This is a life condition of hunger. You are always expecting something in return so if you don't overcome your problem you would resent it. It is different from the life condition of Bodhisattva. The Daishonin states, "Self and others

rejoice together.”; That’s why there is a famous allegory of Tokusho Doji. He wanted to donate something to the Buddha because of watching others make their contributions. Since he didn’t have anything to give he made a mud pie. If he thought he could get something in return by giving the mud pie, such as getting a benefit later or being reborn as King Ashoka, if he did it as if he were trading using the mud pie, he would not have gained any benefit. One’s life gains benefit when one is delighted to do so. It is not “Give and take.” Neither is it the spirit of self-sacrifice. It is wrong to think, “As long as I do my best and work hard selflessly, I will somehow get benefits.” Which category do you think President Ikeda will fall into: a way to shine as you live, or to endure everything? Obviously, the first is the answer. President Ikeda is rejoicing, otherwise he cannot possibly write such poems! If he is suffering he cannot take photographs like that. (Pointing at a photograph, taken by President Ikeda, of a field of flowers on the wall in the center)

Please look at the photograph taken by President Ikeda! Every time I look at his photographs I feel that it is like either YWD or Women’s Division are calling out for Sensei. Do you agree? If we attempt to take a picture of those flowers, it won’t always turn out like that. The flowers would look like they are just blooming there. But President Ikeda’s photographs seem to be communicating with you. I was really wondering why, then I realized that the Lotus sutra is a sutra of delight. President Ikeda is delightful and nature is responding to his joyous life. He takes a photo of nature in delight. That’s why he named his exhibit “ Dialogue with Nature.” The other day, I told this story to a member of the culture division. He said when he had dinner with him, President Ikeda said, “Although not everyone can comprehend, I can communicate with nature. The outcome of the dialogues are my photographs.”

It surely is true. This is the “Strange Principle.” Strange means Myo and principle is Ho. Thus, people who neglect the entity of the Mystic Law lose fortune. People who shine their entity of the Mystic Law multiply fortune. The question is which way you are. Simply, it is either way. It is whether you shine in your life, and the direction in which you enjoy living, or a direction in which you disrespect yourself. The most important thing is which way the basis of your life is facing.

I would like to ask again, who would give themselves 100 points in this audience? There are a lot of honest people. Sorry for side tracking and making little sense.

We do Gongyo every morning and evening. Do you remember the second silent prayer? Yes, it is appreciation for the Gohonzon, ? offer my deepest praise and most sincere gratitude to the Dai-Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws, which was bestowed upon the entire world./div> Appreciation for the Gohonzon in the second prayer, do you all show

appreciation to the Gohonzon and realize that it is also your life? Do you all think that the Gohonzon is just placed in your shrine? The Daishonin wrote to people like you, "If you think the Law is outside yourself, you are not embracing the Mystic Law."

Accordingly, it's not the Lotus Sutra. In another Goshō passage, "ever seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō. (WND page 832) Within your heart, within your life itself, "The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people." We have studied this. Do you remember studying that? When we chant to the Gohonzon we actually put it outside ourselves. That's strange. What we learn and what we do are completely different.

Why is this so? In fact we are all poisoned by the village culture previously mentioned and also by the Japanese culture. The village culture equals the Nembutsu culture. In the Nembutsu culture the Gohonzon is absolute and the Daishonin is absolute. While having no fortune, having a low life condition, and having no strength some of us need to appeal to the Gohonzon for mercy and for the Gohonzon to share benefit and wisdom with us. That is the Nembutsu culture. If you switch the Gohonzon with Amida Buddha, it makes sense. The mechanism is that we are so miserable let's ask the Amida Buddha for its mercy.

The Lotus Sutra is different. President Ikeda over the period of four and a half years has taught us the Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. In the Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra he mentioned the most directly. The word Ken means to view, hotou means the Treasure Tower. This means to view the Treasure Tower. This Treasure Tower appears in the Lotus Sutra. The height of the Treasure Tower is a 500-yōjun. If calculated, it would be more than 500 times the height of the Himalayas. Mount Fuji is pretty high but the Himalayas are twice the size of Mount Fuji. The Treasure Tower is more than 500 times that size. Well, that's magnificent. Nevertheless, it's not a mountain of scraps but it's a tower of treasures. It is very majestic, splendid, and universal. This grand Treasure Tower actually symbolises the greatness of our lives. In other words, to realise that our life and existence is universal, splendid, magnificent, and eternal is called Kenhotou. The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon using the ceremony of the Treasure Tower. Thus, the Daishonin clearly explained that the Gohonzon is the clear mirror used to view our bodies as the greatest Treasure Tower.

However, even if we study so, we worship the mirror and we find ourselves reflected in the mirror as unworthy. It shows us how poisoned we have been by the Nembutsu culture. That's why as mentioned earlier in the strange principle, we tend to go to the direction, "As long as I endure." We rejoice only in good times but we cannot rejoice or enjoy when we are down. We begin to say, "I'm not worthy."

The Lotus Sutra is a sutra that teaches us that even when our life condition is the worst, "I'm still great." Did you know that? There is a difference between the Lotus Sutra and provisional teachings. It is called the Five - Fold comparison. The reason why the Lotus Sutra is superior to the provisional teachings is because theoretically, the Lotus Sutra preaches the attainment of enlightenment for the people of the two vehicles, evil people, and women. At that time, the public neglected those people. Therefore, the provisional teachings did not help them.

On the contrary, the Lotus Sutra taught that those people, who were discriminated against and neglected by the public, were truly great. This philosophy was revolutionary. It was truly humanistic. From the standpoint of life philosophy, people of the two vehicles, evil people, and women are in fact the life condition of yourselves when you are down. It is the most miserable self. In comparison with others you can't help thinking that you are inferior, and within yourself, in such miserable circumstances, you need to believe that you are the entity of the Mystic Law; that is the true meaning of embracing the Lotus Sutra.

It is why it is difficult to believe and difficult to understand. (nanshin nange). It is not difficult to see yourself as great if you are healthy, in rhythm, and admired. Yet it is difficult to believe, and understand yourself as great when you face the biggest failure, face being ridiculed, and face depression. Believing yourself as great is the true meaning of embracing the Lotus Sutra.

We are called "Compassionate Doctors Division." I was unable to understand the meaning of compassion (jihi). Although the Doctors Division was often called compassionate, the more I pondered, the less I comprehended. In Japanese ji means benevolence, which I understood, yet I could not understand the word hi which means sad. Some say jihi means to share suffering with others, another is to eliminate pain and give joy. Yet I still didn't understand. At that time I read a passage in President Ikeda's essay, "When your soul is victorious, your sadness becomes hi of the word jihi." When I read that I had a revelation. I was reading jihi as a meaning to be benevolent and sad, which made me more confused. If read by the Chinese character, it reads to be benevolent in times of sadness. Thus, it means to embrace yourself with a warm heart - when you are at your lowest point, when you are in the midst of the worst suffering, or in the depths of your anxiety. Here lies the aspect of a victorious life. For those who are able to embrace themselves in the midst of suffering, their sadness is no longer sadness. Such sadness itself will be transformed into courage when embraced by one's own compassionate heart. Despair will evolve into hope. The true meaning of an indestructible life lies only this way. Only those who embrace themselves can truly cherish others who are suffering as if it were their own. For example, when you are low you don't like yourself. Later when you are feeling better and seeing others in the same situation you may say, "That a pity!" Yet, deep

within yourself you judge them by thinking. "How weak, he is a failure after all" The way you judge yourself is exactly how you judge others. Only when embracing and respecting your lowest self with a compassionate heart like "I love me" or "I'm truly great" can you respect other people.

Gohonzon means the object of fundamental respect. President Ikeda's guidance said, "What do we fundamentally respect? It is one's life. Our life has the highest value. It is the foundation of respect. The respect of one's life therefore, can not be based on whether one succeeds or fails. No matter what happens, we must start from respect. This is the meaning of embracing the Gohonzon."

This is the guidance of twenty or thirty years ago. This is Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. So now, who is going to give 100 points to yourself? (laughter) Thank you very much. There are so many obedient people.

There are still a few people who could not raise their hand. I want to make one more point. In the Gosho, "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" (WND page 216), it quotes Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, the Lotus Sutra that leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from one another. To chant Myoho-enge-kyo with this realisation is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death. This is a matter of the utmost importance for Nichiren's disciples and lay supporters, and this is what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra. This is the foundation of the Daishonin's Buddhism. This is what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra. This is the most important sentence of the Gosho. In this Gosho, "Shakyamuni Buddha who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago" is Nichiren Daishonin. "The Lotus Sutra that leads all people to Buddhahood" is the Gohonzon. "We ordinary human beings" means oneself. Nichiren Daishonin, the Gohonzon, and oneself are in no way different or separate from one another. To chant Myoho-enge-kyo with this realisation is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death.

Because of that, when we grade ourselves with 60 points we are grading Gohonzon 60 points and Nichiren Daishonin 60 points. Aren't we? They are "In no way different or separate from one another." Don't we call this "Slander"? The person who said I grade the Gohonzon and the Daishonin 100 points but I grade myself 60 points doesn't believe "No way different or separate from one another. We call this "disbelief". People who do not grade themselves with 100 points, we call Slanderers and disbelievers.

In the same Gosho (page 217), it says, "Those who disbelieve and slander the Lotus Sutra will immediately destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world. Because they cut themselves off from the

potential to attain enlightenment, they do not share the heritage of the ultimate law of life and death.” Those who disbelieve and slander the Lotus Sutra, those who cannot believe oneself 100 points “Will immediately destroy all the seeds for becoming a Buddha in this world.” Concerning one who disbelieves the Lotus Sutra, because the sutra states, “When his life comes to an end he will enter the Avichi hell, the wardens of hell will surely come for one and take one away by the hand.” At the end of one’s life the warden will come and take your hand.

“For one who summons up one’s faith and chants Nam-myoho-rengy-kyo with the profound insight that “Now is the last moment of one’s life” the sutra proclaims, “When the lives of these persons come to an end, they will be received into the hands of a thousand Buddhas, who will free them from all fear and keep them from falling into the evil paths of existence.” How can we possibly hold back our tears at the inexpressible joy of knowing that not just one or two, not just one hundred or two hundred, but as many as a thousand Buddhas will come to greet us with open arms!”

Those who grade themselves a Buddha of 100 points, those who believe and enjoy it, live with the life condition of great security and are received and supported by a thousand Buddhas when they come to the end of their life.

“How can we possibly hold back our tears.” Which one would you like? The warden of hell or a thousand Buddhas? If you can not raise your hand here, you will never be able to raise your hand. I will ask you once again.

I am not threatening you. This is what the Daishonin says.

This is the last time I will ask you. Do you grade yourself 100 points?
(Big laughter) Thank you very much.

First you have to decide “I great Buddha is sitting.” Making this decision requires courage. This is, we call, courage of faith. You have to recognise from the bottom of your heart “I am the truly great Buddha.” This means “Nam-myoho-rengy-kyo is the greatest joy among joys.” (from Ongi Kuden)

After this meeting, when you’re going home, please think, “The great Buddha is walking.” “Great Buddha is looking at a mirror, reflecting a life and praising this life.” This is the true meaning of doing Gongyo and Daimoku. Probably, if I say this, some people will argue that this is arrogant. I have a concern that this is going back to the village culture. So, I want to talk about arrogance. Arrogance is the mind of oneself being superior to others. It means that arrogant people are always comparing themselves to others; I am doing more, I am fighting more. I am a bigger leader, I am richer, etc. Arrogant people feel secure by confirming their superiority. This function of life is called “Arrogance.”

The reason people feel more secure when they compare themselves with others is because they have anxiety in the depths of their lives. They have disbelief and inferiority thus they become anxious after short

periods of relief. Later on, they catch others and need to be reassured that, "I'm more impressive, I'm greater!" These kinds of people, who continue to show off, are called arrogant. Deep within their arrogant heart they have inferiority and self-doubt. The best example is Nikken. He is a mass of inferiority. He can't even say "Thank you for your hard work" to President Ikeda after being informed of President Ikeda's contribution to the world. Why? Because Nikken feels inferior, he needs to be reminded that he is greater. Such a person cannot say words of appreciation.

On the other hand, the world's greatest people, as an old Japanese proverb says "The riper the rice grain, the lower it hangs," the greater the person the more humble he is. They respect other people because they have confidence and pride in themselves. Such confidence and pride does not come from the recognition of others. The world's greatest people did not become the best because of recognition. The public recognises these people because they are the forerunners of the fields in which others paid no attention. Fundamentally the greatest way of living is to have confidence and pride in oneself. At a glance, to view yourself as I am a great Buddha, I rate myself a perfect 100 points seems arrogant. Actually, it equals the greatest way of living. Since it is similar to having an arrogant attitude, it is called "The arrogance of the Lotus Sutra." The arrogance of the Lotus Sutra is the correct way because its meaning is fundamentally different from arrogance in attitude.

President Ikeda repeatedly says, "You are Buddhas, Don't be deceived. Please believe that you are all Buddhas." I bet we don't really believe what our mentor says, do we? We think President Ikeda is just saying that to encourage us. We think he is saying "You are Buddhas" to encourage us, but the truth is different. We take our mentor's words as encouragement, but we don't really believe it. Such an attitude is arrogant.

It's okay that we seem like we are arrogant, or audacious or bold although people might not like it. Yet, if we change our attitude this way, everything strangely starts to open up. I often realize that when I see such cases and people. Conformists are now deadlocked. The fundamental cause is Nembutsu mentality or "Village culture" The world will not take Japan seriously if Japanese people remain in the village culture. Finally, the time has come to spread the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra that possesses the independence of the ocean culture to the world. In a sense, the time has come for the Soka Gakkai to take the lead. It's not a good idea that the Soka Gakkai remains like the village culture.

When you go to bed, think " ..great Buddha is going to sleep now" In the morning, as you wake up, no matter how you feel, think " great Buddha is waking up" When you change clothes, when going to the bathroom, when washing your face, and making miso soup, think "This miso soup is

made by a great Buddha. This is a great bowl of miso soup.” Live your life by praising your own life, enjoy whatever you do, and taste every bit of it.

Each morning wake up with the Buddha, and each evening go to sleep with the Buddha. (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) Live life with joy every moment - this is the true meaning of the practice of reading the Lotus Sutra with your life. We chant three times at the end of this meeting. Let's chant three times while remembering that This chanting praises our lives.

Thank you very much for today!