

LEARNING FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN: THE TEACHINGS FOR VICTORY

“General Stone Tiger”

Strengthening Our Faith and Forging Our Life—The Great Path of Human Revolution¹

I am not as healthy as others, and in addition, I dwell in this remote mountain forest. This year was especially difficult, with widespread epidemics and famine in spring and summer, which worsened in autumn and winter. My sickness grew worse again, too, but you [Shijo Kingo] gave me various medicines and a quilted robe. Thanks to your remedies, I improved steadily; I have now recovered and feel much better than before. *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* by Bodhisattva Maitreya and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna both state that, if one's illness is caused by fixed karma, even excellent medicine will turn to poison, but that, if one believes in the Lotus Sutra, poison will change into medicine.

Although unworthy, I propagate the Lotus Sutra; hence heavenly devils have competed to deprive me of food. Understanding this, I have no complaint, but I believe that I survived this time only because Shakyamuni Buddha entered your body to help me.

So much for that. I was extremely concerned about your journey home last time, and I am overjoyed to hear that you have arrived safely in Kamakura. Such was my anxiety that I asked everyone who came here from Kamakura about you. One said that he had met you at Yumoto, another that he had encountered you farther on at Kozu, and when a third told me that he had seen you in Kamakura, I felt greatly relieved. From now on, you must not come to visit me in person unless absolutely necessary.

When you have something urgent to tell me, send a messenger. Indeed, I was deeply worried about your last trip. An enemy will try to make you forget the danger so that he can attack. If you should have to travel, do not begrudge the cost of a horse. Make sure that you ride a good horse. Bring along your best men to defend you against a surprise attack, and ride a horse that can easily carry you in your armor.

In the eighth volume of *Great Concentration and Insight* and in the eighth volume of *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* it says, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of

¹ SGI Newsletter 8665.

the gods.” This means that the protection of the gods depends on the strength of one’s faith. The Lotus Sutra is a fine sword, but its might depends on the one who wields it.

Among those who propagate this sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who compares with Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, Wonderful Sound, Manjushri, and Medicine King? Persons of the two vehicles [such as Shariputra] had destroyed all the illusions of thought and desire, thus freeing themselves from the six paths. Bodhisattvas [such as Perceiver of the World’s Sounds] had eradicated forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance and were like the moon on the fourteenth night before it reaches fullness. Nevertheless, Shakyamuni Buddha refused to entrust the mission of propagation to any of these people and gave it instead to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thus these bodhisattvas are the ones who had thoroughly forged their resolve.

The mighty warrior General Li Kuang, whose mother had been devoured by a tiger, shot an arrow at the stone he believed was the tiger. The arrow penetrated the stone all the way up to its feathers. But once he realized it was only a stone, he was unable to pierce it again. Later he came to be known as General Stone Tiger. This story applies to you. Though enemies lurk in wait for you, your resolute faith in the Lotus Sutra has forestalled great dangers before they could begin. Realizing this, you must strengthen your faith more than ever. It is impossible to say all I want to in one letter.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren
(WND-1, 952–53)

Lecture

In June and July of 1957, I was engaged in fierce struggles in both Hokkaido and Kansai. I had rushed to Hokkaido to combat the Yubari Coal Miners Union’s blatant abuse of the right to religious freedom of union members who belonged to the Soka Gakkai. At the time, the union was regarded as all-powerful and no one dared stand up to it. In Yubari, I took the lead in the struggle to protect our members and see that justice was done.

Immediately after my efforts in Yubari, on July 3, I traveled to Osaka, to present myself for questioning at the Osaka Prefectural Police Headquarters in connection with alleged election law violations in an Osaka district by-election (in April that year). I was arrested and jailed later that day on false charges.

These two incidents, one following on so quickly from the other, were both defensive struggles against the insidious nature of power and authority. Back in spring when these two struggles were set in motion, I had engraved in my heart and written down in my diary the Daishonin's lesson about "being able to pierce a stone with an arrow"—referring to the famous ancient Chinese anecdote about General Stone Tiger that appears in this Gosho. It was an expression of my determination to exert myself based on faith in the Mystic Law, the power source for absolute victory and for making the impossible possible. In addition, it was a reflection of my readiness to face every hardship with the dauntless spirit I had forged in the core of my being.

On July 3, on my way from Hokkaido to Osaka, I had a brief stopover at Tokyo's Haneda Airport. Mr. Toda met me there and presented me with a copy of his just published novel *The Human Revolution*, which had previously been serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun* under his pen name, Myo Goku.

How mystic this was! At the crucial moment when I was about to embark on a bitter struggle with the devilish nature of authority, I held in my hand *The Human Revolution*, which recorded my mentor's experience of awakening to his mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth² while in prison for his beliefs during World War II.

Having Absolute Conviction in Faith

In the great struggle to propagate the Mystic Law, it is the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who possess the thoroughly forged resolve never to be defeated, no matter how harsh the storms of adversity that beset them. To win over fear and trepidation and keep pressing forward through all—human revolution is found in this strong, positive pulsing of life.

Mr. Toda taught us that human revolution means being aware of our fundamental purpose in life and having absolute conviction in faith. He also explained that it means transforming our life from a condition dominated by the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness³ to one manifesting the worlds of Bodhisattva and

² Bodhisattvas of the Earth: An innumerable host of bodhisattvas who emerge from beneath the earth and to whom Shakyamuni Buddha entrusts the propagation of the Mystic Law, or the essence of the Lotus Sutra, in the Latter Day of the Law. They are described in the "Emerging from the Earth" (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the first chapter of the sutra's essential teaching (latter 14 chapters). In this chapter, countless bodhisattvas from other worlds ask for permission to propagate the sutra in the saha world after the Buddha's death, but Shakyamuni refuses, saying that bodhisattvas who will carry out that task already exist in the saha world. At this point, the earth trembles and splits open, and from within it emerges a host of bodhisattvas equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers, each with his own retinue of followers. In the "Supernatural Powers" (21st) chapter, Shakyamuni transfers the essence of the Lotus Sutra to these bodhisattvas, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, led by Bodhisattva Superior Practices, entrusting them with the mission of propagating it in the Latter Day of the Law.

³ Three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness: The fundamental evils inherent in life that give rise to human suffering. In Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, the three poisons are regarded as the source of all illusions and earthly desires. The three poisons are so called because they pollute people's lives and work to prevent them from turning their hearts and minds to goodness.

Buddhahood. This is the process of overcoming all devilish functions, and awakening and summoning forth the noble potential inherent in our life. It is building a strong self. That is why we who are engaged in the challenge of human revolution on a daily basis are always able to draw forth from within us the power to break through any deadlock. Even in the face of daunting obstacles that appear impossible to surmount, we have no need to cower, panic, fear, or run away, for we can tap the power of supreme courage and wisdom that resides within.

In this installment, let us study the Daishonin's writing "General Stone Tiger" to learn more about the essence of faith for achieving human revolution.

A Disciple Supporting His Mentor amid Personal Adversity

"General Stone Tiger" was written on October 22, 1278, and sent to Shijo Kingo in Kamakura by the Daishonin, who was residing on Mount Minobu. There are two points concerning its background that I would like to confirm.

First, from the previous year (1277), there had been widespread epidemics and a prolonged drought that had resulted in drastic food shortages. In addition, the Daishonin himself had been suffering from ill-health since the end of that year. In other words, his life on Mount Minobu was quite hard, in terms of both material sustenance (food and shelter) and health.

Second, there had been a dramatic change in Shijo Kingo's circumstances as well. In 1277, Shijo Kingo had become ensnared in a plot by Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple and others on the occasion of the Kuwagayatsu Debate.⁴ This involved some of his fellow samurai making false accusations against him to his lord in an attempt to discredit him. Lord Ema, believing these claims, was angered, and Kingo found himself threatened with the direst fate for a samurai: the loss of his status as a retainer. But, following the advice of the Daishonin, Shijo Kingo continued to faithfully serve Lord Ema, with the result that Lord Ema not only recognized his sincerity but even presented him with three new estates.⁵ At the same time, however, this demonstration of Lord Ema's favor fueled the jealousy of Shijo Kingo's rivals, placing him in even greater danger than before.

⁴ Kuwagayatsu Debate: A debate held in Kuwagayatsu, Kamakura, in 1277, between the Daishonin's disciple Sammi-bo and a priest named Ryuzo-bo, who was under the patronage of Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple. Ryuzo-bo was thoroughly defeated by Sammi-bo. Shijo Kingo merely attended the debate as an observer, and did not utter a word. However, it was alleged to Lord Ema that Shijo Kingo had burst into the debate with a number of confederates with weapons drawn and disrupted the proceedings.

⁵ The Daishonin writes: "You say that your new domains occupy an area three times the size of Tono'oka [in Shinano Province]. There is a man from the province of Sado staying here now who knows that area well. He tells me that, of the three villages, the one called Ikada is best. Although its fields and paddies are few, its profits are immeasurable. Two sites each yield an annual harvest worth one million coins in land tax; another site, three hundred thousand coins. Such, he says, are their merits" (WND-1, 945).

It was against this background that Shijo Kingo sent a letter and offerings from Kamakura to the Daishonin on Mount Minobu. The Daishonin lists the offerings that Shijo Kingo had forwarded from his estate in Shinano Province (present-day Nagano Prefecture). “General Stone Tiger” is a reply to Shijo Kingo’s sincere letter.

In the opening passage of “General Stone Tiger,” prior to the section we will study this time, the Daishonin mentions some of the offerings—three thousand coins, polished rice, rice cakes, sake, dried persimmons, pomegranates, and so forth. Noting that clothes protect one from cold and that food sustains one’s life, the Daishonin writes: “No treasure possessed by human beings is more precious than food and drink, clothing and medicine” (WND-1, 952). This is an expression of the Daishonin’s gratitude to Shijo Kingo for having sent him offerings of these very items.

The Daishonin always conveyed his deepest appreciation to his followers for their support, treated them with the highest respect, and strove side by side with them in the struggle for kosen-rufu. That was his spirit. We can see here that responding to sincerity with sincerity is the heart of the humanistic teaching of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

I am not as healthy as others,⁶ and in addition, I dwell in this remote mountain forest [of Minobu]. This year was especially difficult, with widespread epidemics and famine in spring and summer, which worsened in autumn and winter. My sickness grew worse again, too, but you gave me various medicines and a quilted robe. Thanks to your remedies, I improved steadily; I have now recovered and feel much better than before. *The Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice* by Bodhisattva Maitreya and *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna both state that, if one’s illness is caused by fixed karma, even excellent medicine will turn to poison, but that, if one believes in the Lotus Sutra [the Mystic Law], poison will change into medicine. Although unworthy, I propagate the Lotus Sutra; hence heavenly devils have competed to deprive me of food. Understanding this, I have no complaint, but I believe that I survived this time only because Shakyamuni Buddha entered your body to help me. (WND-1, 952)

⁶ The original Japanese text here can be translated literally as “My situation is distinct from others.” There are differing views as to which situation this refers to. One view is that it refers to the Daishonin’s poor health, while another is that it refers to his being regarded as a dangerous and disruptive influence by the ruling authorities of the day.

Calmly Overcoming the Three Obstacles and the Four Devils

In this section, Nichiren Daishonin further stresses his deep gratitude to his disciple for assisting him, saying that the workings of the Buddha had surely been activated in Shijo Kingo's life to do so. The context for this remark is that kosen-rufu is a constant, unremitting struggle between the forces of the Buddha and devilish functions.

In the Daishonin's own arduous struggle for kosen-rufu—which saw him living in harsh conditions during his two-and-a-half-year exile on Sado Island and then his residence at Mount Minobu—the Daishonin's health was no doubt seriously compromised. This manifested itself from the end of 1277 as illness accompanied by debilitating and chronic diarrhea. It grew worse with the approach of summer in the first half of June 1278, but the medicine sent at that time by Shijo Kingo [who was also a skilled physician] helped relieve the Daishonin's suffering. His health had improved to the degree that he could write to Shijo Kingo: "My complaint has diminished steadily and is now a mere one-hundredth fraction of its former intensity" (WND-1, 920).⁷

Several months later, just before the Daishonin wrote "General Stone Tiger," Shijo Kingo had visited him on Mount Minobu. While probably reporting to the Daishonin on the increase in his estates, Shijo Kingo was also no doubt concerned about his mentor's physical condition as winter approached. The Daishonin expresses his gratitude for Shijo Kingo's judicious care in treating his illness, writing: "I have now recovered and feel much better than before" (WND-1, 952).

While struggling with sickness as an ordinary mortal person, the Daishonin continues to give his entire being to encouraging his disciples. Through his personal example of recovering from illness, he demonstrates the great beneficial power of faith in the Mystic Law, which can "change poison into medicine"⁸ and thus even prolong one's life span, which was regarded as "fixed karma."⁹

The Daishonin also states that his illness is a struggle against "heavenly devils."

⁷ In "The Two Kinds of Illness," the Daishonin writes: "I developed diarrhea on the thirtieth day of the twelfth month of last year [December 30, 1277], and up until the third or fourth day of the sixth month of this year [June 3 or 4, 1278], it grew more frequent by the day and more severe by the month. Just when I was thinking that it must be my immutable [or fixed] karma, you sent me good medicine. Since taking it, my complaint has diminished steadily and is now a mere one-hundredth fraction of its former intensity. I wonder if Shakyamuni Buddha has entered into your body to help me, or perhaps the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have bestowed upon me the good medicine of Myoho-enge-kyo" (WND-1, 920). And in "Reply to Hyoe no Sakan," he reports: "The medicine Saemon [Shijo Kingo] sent me has cured my diarrhea" (WND-2, 754).

⁸ Changing poison into medicine: The principle that earthly desires and suffering can be transformed into benefit and enlightenment by virtue of the power of the Mystic Law. This phrase is found in a passage from Nagarjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, which mentions "a great physician who can change poison into medicine." This phrase is often cited to show that any problem or suffering can be transformed eventually into the greatest happiness and fulfillment in life.

⁹ Fixed karma: Also, immutable karma. The opposite of unfixed karma. Karma that inevitably produces a fixed or set result, whether negative or positive. Fixed karma may also be interpreted as karma whose effects are destined to appear at a fixed time. It was held that one's life span was fixed as retribution for karma.

Because he has engaged in the great struggle to propagate the Mystic Law as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, he asserts, such negative forces are vying to deprive him of his sustenance and rob him of his life.

The fact that the three obstacles and four devils¹⁰ had arisen to assail him because of the efforts he was making for kosen-rufu was just as the sutra taught. And likewise, just as the sutra taught, because his resolve to propagate the Mystic Law remained firm, he was assured of being protected by the Buddhas and heavenly deities—the benevolent forces of the universes. “Understanding this, I have no complaint,” the Daishonin writes, teaching us his dauntless spirit in the face of such obstacles.

The Battle between Devilish Forces and the Forces of the Buddha

In a later writing, “The Proof of the Lotus Sutra,” Nichiren Daishonin offers his youthful disciple Nanjo Tokimitsu guidance on fighting illness caused by devilish functions: “Since you now appear certain to attain Buddhahood, perhaps the heavenly devil and evil spirits¹¹ are using illness to try to intimidate you. Life in this world is limited. Never be even the least bit afraid!” (WND-1, 1109).

“Never be even the least bit afraid!” says the Daishonin, urging his disciple not to be defeated by this obstacle. He tells Tokimitsu that his illness is caused by devilish functions seeking to prevent him from attaining enlightenment through his vigorous efforts for kosen-rufu.

Further, fiercely rebuking these negative functions that are assaulting Tokimitsu, the Daishonin writes: “And you demons, by making this man suffer, are you trying to swallow a sword point first, or embrace a raging fire, or become the archenemy of the Buddhas of the ten directions in the three existences?” (WND-1, 1109).

No one can avoid the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Even when we practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism, we still fall ill and ultimately die one day. But through our Buddhist practice, we can come to regard illness as an inherent part of life¹² and face it from that higher standpoint. The Daishonin set an example for his followers through his own unperturbed conduct and his victory over the three

¹⁰ Three obstacles and four devils: Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. The three obstacles are (1) the obstacle of earthly desires, (2) the obstacle of karma, and (3) the obstacle of retribution. The four devils are (1) the hindrance of the earthly desires, (2) the hindrance of the five components, (3) the hindrance of death, and (4) the hindrance of the devil king.

¹¹ The word for “evil spirits” in the original Japanese passage is *gedo*, which literally means “out of the way” and usually indicates heretics and non-Buddhists. Here, the word means something or someone that brings about disasters. Hence the expression “evil spirits.”

¹² In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin says: “If we look with the eyes of wisdom as they are opened by the “Life Span” (16th) chapter of the essential teaching [of the Lotus Sutra], we will become enlightened to the truth that sickness, pain, and distress are, and have always been, an innate part of life. Such is the wisdom of the Buddha of limitless joy” (OTT, 174).

obstacles and four devils.

Mr. Toda also declared: “With the power of faith in the Gohonzon, I conquered the devils of illness and death that I was compelled to do battle with.” He embodied the life-state of a fearless lion king, exemplified by the words: “What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?” (WND-1, 412).

Kosen-rufu is a battle between the forces of the Buddha and the devilish functions that pervade the universe. Faith in the Mystic Law enables us to vanquish the devils of illness and death. That is why the Daishonin describes the medical care given to him by Shijo Kingo—whose actions served to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra—as the workings of Shakyamuni Buddha, and clarifies the principle for triumphing over all obstacles and negative functions without fail.

So much for that. I was extremely concerned about your journey home last time, and I am overjoyed to hear that you have arrived safely in Kamakura. Such was my anxiety that I asked everyone who came here from Kamakura about you. One said that he had met you at Yumoto, another that he had encountered you farther on at Kozu, and when a third told me that he had seen you in Kamakura, I felt greatly relieved. From now on, you must not come to visit me in person unless absolutely necessary. When you have something urgent to tell me, send a messenger. Indeed, I was deeply worried about your last trip. An enemy will try to make you forget the danger so that he can attack. If you should have to travel, do not begrudge the cost of a horse. Make sure that you ride a good horse. Bring along your best men to defend you against a surprise attack, and ride a horse that can easily carry you in your armor. (WND-1, 952–53)

Concern for Shijo Kingo’s Return to Kamakura

In this letter, the Daishonin expresses his deep concern for Shijo Kingo’s safe return to Kamakura.

At the time, the journey from Minobu to Kamakura was two or three days by horse. The Daishonin seems to have been desperately worried about Shijo Kingo’s safety for several days. Whenever someone arrived at Minobu from the direction of Kamakura, he inquired whether they had met Shijo Kingo en route. People said they had sighted him in Yumoto and Kozu (respectively located in the present-day town of

Hakone and the city of Odawara in Kanagawa Prefecture) and eventually back in Kamakura. Hearing this, the Daishonin was finally reassured of Kingo's safety and could breathe a sigh of relief.

What a wonderful, caring mentor the Daishonin was! But his consideration did not stop there; he goes on to instruct Shijo Kingo not to make the perilous journey to Minobu again unless it is absolutely necessary, adding that if should he have something urgent to convey to him he should send a messenger.

Why was the Daishonin so worried?

In traveling to Kamakura from Minobu, one first followed the trail running alongside the Fuji River¹³ and then traveled east through Suruga Province (part of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture), crossing the mountains of Hakone. Suruga Province was home to many fiefs under the direct control of members of the ruling Hojo clan, the majority of whom, as adherents of the established Buddhist schools, were hostile toward the Daishonin's followers. In addition, there were many other dangers in journeying through mountainous terrain. The Daishonin couldn't help but be concerned for his disciple's safety.

Also, though Lord Ema's attitude had changed dramatically for the better, Shijo Kingo still had to remain constantly vigilant against the envious and resentful samurai who had slandered him to his lord and would take any opportunity that presented itself to do away with him.

It's especially important to be careful on one's return journey: having completed some objective, we're likely to be more relaxed, making it easier to be caught off guard. We're also likely to be more tired than we realize. In the case of Shijo Kingo, even though he was a skilled swordsman, a sudden attack by an enemy at such a moment could well prove fatal.

Vigilance Is the Key to Victory

The Daishonin notes: "An enemy will try to make you forget the danger so that he can attack" (WND-1, 952). We should all take these words deeply to heart. To cross a raging torrent and achieve one's aims, one must exercise the utmost caution.

At the end of our meetings, we urge members to be on guard against traffic accidents and remind them that the meeting doesn't really end until they all get home safe and sound. By making a conscious effort to take care, we can avoid falling victim to the workings of devilish functions.

The Daishonin even gave Shijo Kingo advice about the kind of horse he should ride. In today's terms, this would be advice about method of transportation—car, motorcycle, bicycle, and so forth. When we're out doing SGI activities, traveling from

¹³ A river to the west of Mount Fuji flowing south into Suruga Bay.

one place to another, even if on foot, we need to stay alert.

As members of the SGI, you all possess a noble mission for kosen-rufu. Please don't cut corners as far as safety is concerned, but always remain alert to the slightest forewarnings of danger or mishap. Bring every activity to a safe and successful completion. But if someone should meet with an accident, then please warmly encourage them.

No matter what trials we may encounter, by summoning forth faith in the Mystic Law we can lessen our karmic retribution¹⁴ and change poison into medicine. Of course, having no accidents is best.

My wife and I are always chanting earnestly for the safety and well-being of all our members. Each of you is a precious follower of the Buddha, so remind one another to be careful and vow to keep devilish influences out of your way.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage" (WND-1, 997). I pray that all of you without exception will exert yourselves diligently in your Buddhist practice in accord with this eternal guideline, thereby vanquishing negative functions and leading lives of great victory.

In the eighth volume of [the Great Teacher T'ien-tai's] *Great Concentration and Insight* and in the eighth volume of [the Great Teacher Miao-lo's] *The Annotations on "Great Concentration and Insight"* it says, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods." This means that the protection of the gods depends on the strength of one's faith. The Lotus Sutra is a fine sword, but its might depends on the one who wields it. (WND-1, 953)

The Importance of Strong Faith

The heavenly deities will definitely protect the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, who uphold and propagate the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas will praise such individuals, and the gods of the sun and moon will light their way before and behind.

¹⁴ Lessening one's karmic retribution: This term, which literally means, "transforming the heavy and receiving it lightly," appears in the Nirvana Sutra. "Heavy" indicates negative karma accumulated over countless lifetimes in the past. As a benefit of protecting the correct teaching of Buddhism, we can experience relatively light karmic retribution in this lifetime, thereby expiating heavy karma that ordinarily would adversely affect us not only in this lifetime, but over many lifetimes to come.

But it is the individual's faith that activates these protective functions of the universe. The realization of our prayers depends on our wholehearted effort and earnest determination. This, indeed, is the lesson to be found in the Great Teacher Miao-lo's words, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods" (WND-1, 953). Strong faith, strong resolve, is the key to victory. The power brought forth from the mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra hinges on the faith of the person who wields it.

The Daishonin consistently urged Shijo Kingo to behave and live as a person of wisdom. He cared deeply for Kingo's success, and he offered him detailed advice about areas to watch in his daily life as well as about his attitude toward his lord, and his manner of interacting with the others around him.

In one sense, our aim as practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism is to build and live a life in which nothing can defeat us. Faith in the Mystic Law enables us to establish a life-state of absolute victory—victory of a deeper dimension than the relative victories and defeats we experience in the unfolding of our daily lives. By steadily exerting ourselves in our Buddhist practice and gradually cultivating inner strength day after day, we can develop the powerful conviction in faith that will allow us to wholeheartedly challenge any difficulty when the winds of karma blow, or when the three obstacles and four devils assail us.

"Treasures of the heart" are something that we slowly accumulate over time. Our steady efforts each day to polish our lives and strengthen our faith and resolve are the means by which we can build an unshakable state of life in which we "enjoy ourselves at ease" (cf. LSOC16, 272 [LS16, 230]).

Faith resides in our ongoing human revolution. The purpose of Buddhist practice is to realize our full potential as a human being. That's why the Daishonin urged his beloved disciple Shijo Kingo to live out his life as a person of wisdom and a model for other followers. In addition, he instructed him to overcome the very real problems he encountered in his life through his Buddhist practice.

In "General Stone Tiger," the Daishonin offers Kingo numerous pieces of advice for his future safety and security, and emphasizes that strengthening his faith and forging his resolve are of vital importance. As the Daishonin writes, the protection of the heavenly deities "depends on the strength of one's faith" (WND-1, 953).

"It Is the Heart That Is Important"

As the Daishonin teaches, "It is the heart that is important." It is no exaggeration to say that victory or defeat in life depends upon whether one's heart, one's resolve, is strong and steadfast.

Speaking of individuals with strong resolve, I have engaged in a dialogue with Aurelio Peccei (1908–84), the cofounder and first president of the global think tank,

the Club of Rome. Behind Dr. Peccei's warm smile was a man of indomitable conviction.

Dr. Peccei was a hero of the Italian antifascist resistance. He was arrested by the fascist militia in February 1944 and spent almost a year behind bars. This was, of course, during World War II, at the same time that the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, were imprisoned in Japan. Dr. Peccei was subjected to violent interrogation by his captors, but he did not break.

Dr. Peccei said that his experience in prison had taught him both the weakness and the strength of human beings. He witnessed self-important, arrogant individuals who, at the first sign of pressure, were cowardly and caved in to the authorities. At the same time, others, who may not have made much of an impression in ordinary life, revealed themselves under harsh persecution as true heroes who steadfastly refused to betray their comrades.

Dr. Peccei wrote: "It is perhaps from the experiences of that period [of captivity] that I began to be convinced that lying latent in man is a great force for good."¹⁵ His insight resonates closely with the teachings of Buddhism. We possess a "great force for good" within us that cannot be defeated by any form of oppression or persecution. That indomitable "strong resolve" only appears when we directly encounter hardship. As the saying goes, "Adversity makes a person wise."

In his final years, Dr. Peccei also reached the conclusion that human revolution was vital. He declared: "From now on, everything depends on [modern man's] behavior and his decisions; it is he himself who, inadvertently or consciously, will shape his individual and collective destiny, and even the destiny of his species."¹⁶ He also said: "I have faith in man—and I believe in the human revolution. . . ."¹⁷

Among those who propagate this [Lotus] sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who compares with Shariputra, Mahakashyapa, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Wonderful Sound, Manjushri, and Medicine King? Persons of the two vehicles [such as Shariputra] had destroyed all the illusions of thought and desire, thus freeing themselves from the six paths. Bodhisattvas [such as Perceiver of the World's Sounds] had eradicated forty-one of the forty-two levels of ignorance and were like the moon on the fourteenth night before it reaches fullness. Nevertheless, Shakyamuni Buddha refused to entrust the mission of propagation to any of these people and gave it instead to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Thus these bodhisattvas are the ones who had thoroughly forged their resolve.

¹⁵ Aurelio Peccei, *The Human Quality* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

The mighty warrior General Li Kuang, whose mother had been devoured by a tiger, shot an arrow at the stone he believed was the tiger. The arrow penetrated the stone all the way up to its feathers. But once he realized it was only a stone, he was unable to pierce it again. Later he came to be known as General Stone Tiger. This story applies to you. Though enemies lurk in wait for you, your resolute faith in the Lotus Sutra has forestalled great dangers before they could begin. Realizing this, you must strengthen your faith more than ever. It is impossible to say all I want to in one letter.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren (WND-1, 953)

Bodhisattvas of the Earth—Distinguished by Their Thoroughly Forged Resolve

In this passage the Daishonin inquires to whom the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law has been entrusted.

Shariputra and Mahakashyapa are direct disciples of Shakyamuni and representatives of the practitioners of the two vehicles. Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Wonderful Sound, Manjushri, and Medicine King are bodhisattvas who assembled for the preaching of the Lotus Sutra. Both the Buddha's disciples and the bodhisattvas have extremely impressive credentials.

However, Shakyamuni did not entrust them with the difficult task of propagating the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law; instead, he left it to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The Daishonin describes the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as "ones who had thoroughly forged their resolve" (WND-1, 953). As the Lotus Sutra teaches, persecution and difficulties are unavoidable in propagating the sutra in the Latter Day of the Law: "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?" (LSOC10, 203 [LS10, 164]). The Daishonin repeated this passage often, and applied it to his own life. What is the quality needed to be able to carry out this most difficult of undertakings? A thoroughly forged resolve.

The root meaning of "to forge" is to repeatedly heat and fashion metal until it is strengthened. In another letter to Shijo Kingo illustrating this point, the Daishonin writes: "Untempered iron quickly melts in a blazing fire. . . . But a sword, even when exposed to a great fire, withstands the heat for a while, because it has been well forged" (WND-1, 839).

Deep Determination Can Make the Impossible Possible

At the end of this letter, Nichiren Daishonin encourages Shijo Kingo, who was a member of the Kamakura warrior class, by sharing an anecdote about how the ancient Chinese General Li Kuang received the name “General Stone Tiger.”

General Li Kuang’s mother was killed by a tiger. One day Li Kuang, an excellent archer, sighted the tiger crouching in a clump of grass. Believing it to be the tiger that killed his mother, and determined to avenge her death, he shot an arrow at it, hitting his target. Assuming he had killed the tiger, he ran up to it to discover that it was a stone in a shape resembling a tiger. Even so, his arrow had penetrated the stone up to the arrow’s feather. Although he tried to reproduce this feat, he never could.

Through this famous anecdote, the Daishonin sought to teach Shijo Kingo the importance of basing himself on strong, indestructible faith, and that such faith is certain to move the heavenly deities to protect him. The Daishonin encourages Kingo: “Though enemies lurk in wait for you, your resolute faith in the Lotus Sutra has forestalled great dangers before they could begin. Realizing this, you must strengthen your faith [in the Gohonzon] more than ever” (WND-1, 953).

A year after receiving this encouragement from the Daishonin, in October 1279, an attempt was actually made on Kingo’s life during an ambush, forcing him to cross swords with fellow samurai who bore him enmity. Fortunately, he was successful in repelling his attackers. On receiving a report of this lucky escape, the Daishonin praised Kingo’s faith, saying [in “The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra”]: “It is a matter of rejoicing that your usual prudence and courage, as well as your firm faith in the Lotus Sutra, enabled you to survive unharmed” (WND-1, 1000). He also wrote these words that are an eternal guideline for all who practice his teaching: “Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other” (WND-1, 1001).

The Daishonin’s delight and relief at his disciple’s safety is evident. Shijo Kingo’s victory was actually a victory of faith—of sincerely striving for kosen-rufu with the same commitment as the Daishonin and putting his teachings faithfully into practice. It was also a victory of human revolution.

A Century of the Victory of the People and a Century of Human Revolution

On that July 3, 1957, a women’s division member of Tokyo’s Bunkyo Chapter called out to me at Haneda Airport as I was walking to board my flight to Osaka. She asked me for a message to relay to our members. I replied without a moment’s hesitation: “Dawn has arrived in Japan! Please convey this message to the members!” The undying light of human revolution is found in waging a great spiritual struggle in a time of unprecedented challenge, dispelling the darkness of fear and doubt and

illuminating all with the compassionate light of the sun of absolute confidence and peace of mind. It is found in keeping the bright flame of courage and hope alive in one's heart amid even the most harrowing adversity.

For two weeks from that day, I waged an unceasing struggle while in jail on false charges. Though I was an ordinary young man, I forged my inner strength and fortitude so that my life became as strong as a mighty sword. "Summoning up the courage of a lion king" (cf. WND-1, 997), I stood up for what I knew was right. On July 17, when I was released from jail, the Osaka Rally¹⁸ was held at Nakanoshima Civic Hall amid a torrential downpour. All of us gathered there that night blazed with the determination to ensure that justice would prevail.

I am confident that this event marked the dawn of an age of the people—an age when we would vanquish the fundamental darkness or ignorance at the root of unhappiness and misfortune, defeat all the negative and insidious forces that inflict harm and suffering, and raise our voices in a song of triumph. These efforts represent an unchanging formula.

Our valiant efforts as members of the SGI to make the 21st century a century of the victory of the people and a century of human revolution are now becoming more and more important.

In this corrupt and troubled world rife with the three poisons, we must take action with courage, wisdom, and compassion, wielding the mighty sword of faith in the Mystic Law. Let's press onward with the dauntless confidence and pride of Bodhisattvas of the Earth, firmly establishing the spirit of human revolution in our lives.

¹⁸ Osaka Rally: A Soka Gakkai rally held to protest the unjust detention of President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, by the Osaka District Prosecutor's Office in connection with the Osaka Incident. It was convened at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall in Osaka on July 17, 1957, the day of President Ikeda's release after two weeks of questioning by the authorities.