

# THE BRIDGE

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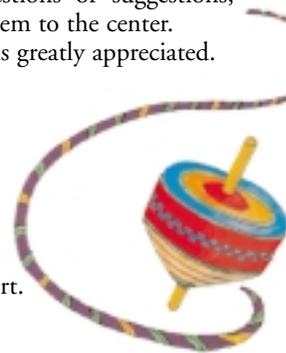
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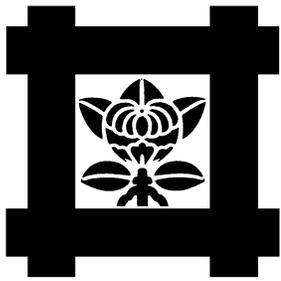
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**Archbishop Nichiyu Iwama,  
former Chief Abbot of  
Minobusan Kuonji**

In the winter of 1950, forty-six swans landed at Lake Hyoko in Suibara-cho, Kitakanbara-gun, Niigata-ken. The whole town saw the crowd of pure-white-swans with surprise and joy. Everyone wanted to find some way to get those swans to come to the lake every year. The most eager person was Juzaburo Yoshikawa who lived at the lakeside.

He tried to protect them from people who might harm them. Fortunately, those swans came there the next year and the following year as well. The whole town welcomed them with joy. However, the swans did not approach the food he offered them in spite of his attempts. Yet, he continued his research and endeavors, wearing a black jackets, brown riding breeches, and a cream-colored hunting cap every time. After three years, as if they had at last understood his affections, several swans approached the food. Then the number began to increase gradually. People had heard that feeding wild swans would not work so they were surprised by this. The

## Swan Lake

reason he never changed his clothes was so that those swans could easily remember him. From this, we can see his meticulous care and affection.

Every winter, the number of swans gradually increased. Finally, in 1954, the government designated Lake Hyoko a natural monument, and the lake was given another name: "Swan Lake". The strong attachment of the people for the swans was rising.

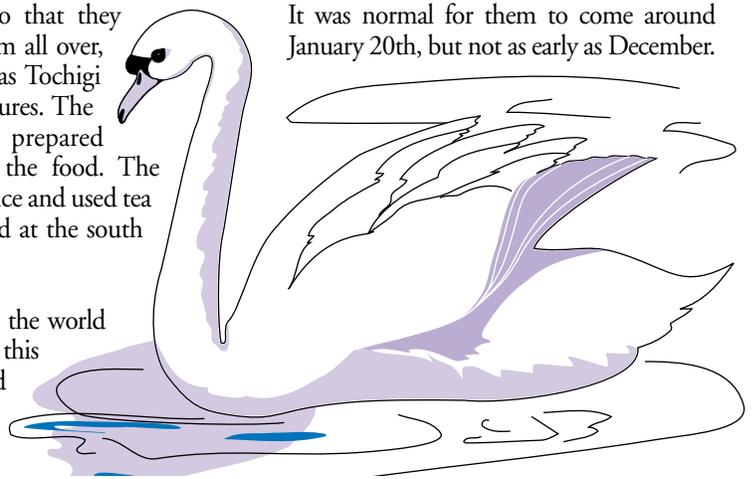
In the early morning, Juzaburo patrolled around the lake and scattered the first food at eight o'clock in the morning, the second time at eleven, and a third time at three o'clock in the afternoon. He always fixed his eyes on them as if he were taking care of his children. At ten o'clock in the evening, he made a final patrol, carefully recorded a "Swan Diary", and went to bed past eleven o'clock. He kept on doing this for ten years. Eager assistants such as Takeshi Murakami in a village office, Doctor Saburo Ieda, a pickle shop owner, Matsuzaburo Ikeda, and a watchman, Sukekichi Okei, were appearing one after another. The swans loved dried used tea leaves, so that they were delivered from all over, some as far away as Tochigi and Tokyo Prefectures. The village office prepared 250,000 yen for the food. The food of unhulled rice and used tea leaves was scattered at the south of the lake.

People throughout the world were amazed by this unprecedented feeding. As soon as Juzaburo called

them, those swans approached by twos and threes, holding up their necks straight as if replying to him. A few swans flew over as if they couldn't wait for the food from 200 yards away. He welcomed those swans with a kind and gentle gaze as they approached with a sense of relief at finding food like domesticated ducks. But if somebody was next to Juzaburo, they found out and flew away.

At 7:00 a.m. of December 25th, 1959, Juzaburo who had devoted himself to the swans fell into a coma due to a cerebral hemorrhage. His family, including his older son, Shigeo, 38 years old, gathered at his bedside and deeply wished they could show him the swans one last time. At that time, they heard shouting, "Swans are flying down", and neighboring children ran in, breathing hard. Shigeo, who stood up involuntarily, ran out to the lake. Eight swans calmly revolved round a blue sky above the lake, and turned around his house. They crowed as saying good-bye, then they flew away without flying down to the lake.

It was normal for them to come around January 20th, but not as early as December.

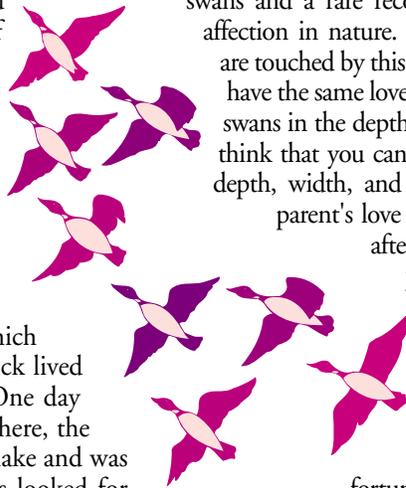


Nevertheless, on December 25th, they arrived at the lake. Shigeo ran into his house, and said to Juzaburo, "Dad, the swans came." Upon hearing it, Juzaburo nodded a little bit and expelled his last breath. It was at 8:35 a.m. when he passed away at the age of 64. On the 26th at his funeral, swans circled over his house again. On the seventh day service, six swans among eight flew down to the lake. That was the unusual sign of an early arrival. "He must have passed away, attended by a swan, because he always used to say that he would become a swan if he died," said his wife, Toshi, who was 55 years old.

It is said that feeding swans was not possible if it were not with his enthusiasm and affection. Furthermore, it seemed to be no accident that swans came out of season at the time of his death and on the seventh day after his death.

This big article was reported on Mainichi News of February 24th. Shigeo has stood at the lake side replacing his father since the six swans flew down at the seventh day service. Since then, it is said that 271 swans eat his food just like before.

Last March, three swans which were father, mother, and chick lived affectionately on the lake. One day when the parents were not there, the chick wandered around the lake and was killed by a dog. The parents looked for the chick, were exhausted, sank down at a place ten yards away from the lake, and then did not move, hanging down their heads sadly. They did not try to stand or eat even if Shigeo threw out feed. They looked pitiful. Occasionally, they looked up the sky, hanging up their long necks as if they were trying to find their chick, and then hung their heads down with despair. Although several days passed,



they did not move from there and became low-spirited. The town worried about the birds, but there was nothing to do. Eighteen days passed.

March 20th was the day when the swans were about go back to Siberia. The last eight swans flew away at 8:30 in the morning. The parent birds also flew up uncertainly. Yet, after the mother flew for four or five hundred yards, she was suddenly separated from the group and fell headfirst into a rice field. When the people hurried to her, she had already died. After five days, the father flew back to the lake by himself. He seemed to be looking for his family. Yet, he sadly flew away toward the north. The stuffed unlucky mother swan is an ornament in the Suibara town office now.

This is an impressive story about the swans and a rare record of love and affection in nature. The reason you are touched by this story is that you have the same love and affection as swans in the depth of your heart. I think that you can understand the depth, width, and generosity of a parent's love toward children after you lose your parent. Those who appreciate their parents' honor and kindness while they live are fortunate.

Whenever I see a world which is filled with struggling and selfishness, I heartily recall the honor of my parent's love and affection and give thanks to them. Let us try to thank to our parents and become good parents ourselves so as to be thanked by our children. (Written in July, 1960) (Translated by R. Matsuda)

# Faithful Life

**Hilo Nichiren Mission  
Rev. Gakugyo Matsumoto**

We may have a chance to recognize the Buddha's world or the existence of the Buddha in our daily life. At a difficult situation or when we get into danger, sometimes we feel that we were protected by something spiritual and invisible. We are grateful to the Buddha, because it makes our faith grow stronger on such occasions.

To know this, is to be inspired by the world of the Buddha which is invisible or to be inspired by the existence of the Buddha which is untouchable. This is a yardstick which confirms that our faith has reached a certain level. There may be someone who also has these experiences in their religious life. If you have a chance, you may be able to talk with those around you about experiences of the religious life. You may share the experience and may meet your best friends who can chant the O-daimoku together with you and make your chanting of the O-daimoku louder and louder. This special religious experience can be known only through your solid and strong faith, and it is also necessary to keep your faith as pure as you can. That is unconditional belief. The knowledge of doctrine is the way to make your religious life deeper; however, earnest belief is much more valuable for your religious life. It means that the knowledge of doctrine without faith will never enable you to acquire the valuable religious life.

The Lotus Sutra and the temple bell are the same, because the interpretation of the Lotus Sutra may be different by the difference of each reader's ability and capacity to understand as the temple bell may sound differently according to the

**Ven. Nichiyu Iwama**, former Archbishop of the Nichiren Shu Order, passed away on September 17, 2001, at the age of 94. He was the 90th Chief Abbot of the Minobusan Kuonji Temple. We appreciate his dedication to spread the Odaimoku all over the world.

difference in size or striking power of the hammer. It is common knowledge that the Lotus Sutra is one of the most famous teachings of Buddhism. Most of the Buddhist sect's founders, many of the Buddhist priests, adults, youngsters, males, and females read the Lotus Sutra. And it is also common knowledge that the Lotus Sutra is the one which contains the highest truth of Buddhism. However, there were not many theoretical investigations like other Buddhist teachings for their reputation and distinction. At the stage of moralization of the Lotus Sutra, there were no chances to debate the theory, because these are the teachings for the ones who promised Sakyamuni Buddha by accepting His words just as it is in Chapter 2 of the "Expedients," and this is exactly what His awakened ideas are.

*Ishin-Tokunyu* is the word explaining that faith is the only way of getting to the Lotus Sutra's world. *Ichinen-Shinge* is the word explaining that those who just accept and believe this Sutra wholeheartedly have already understood the teachings.

These words never tell us: "If you can understand, you have to believe it." In response someone would say: "I do believe it only if I understand the doctrines, but I do not believe it if I do not." This is the idea of those who never understood the teachings which is named the Wonderful Dharma (Myoho). It is through belief and practice (or experience) that one understands it.

The study of astronomy is evolving day by day. However, we still do not know everything even in our solar system. In this new century, human technology may be sending a lot of space probes to the outer planets and learning more from them. It is the fruit of human wisdom, but never will we understand everything in space. Although we do not understand everything, we can follow the providence

of infinite space and continue the endless life and death here.

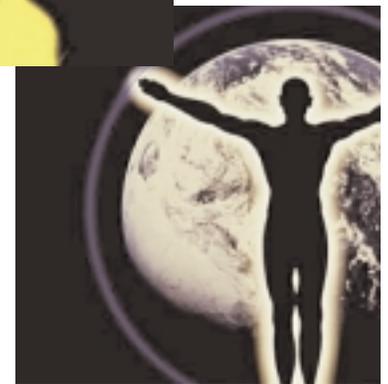
The highly developed transport facilities have made the world small, and we can arrive at almost anywhere in a day. The earth science elucidates almost all phenomena on earth from the top of a mountain to the bottom of the sea. However, we can not control a natural disaster. Although we do understand the logic, we have to follow the providence of mother nature and have to live as a member of living beings.

People who need proof of the doctrine to believe it, are like those who want to live in a place where we are never exposed to the natural disaster on the earth. Is there someplace like that? The answer is no. Likewise, we have to make our mind pure enough to believe the teachings as it is, and when we do, we will have been naturally saved from the sufferings and sadness. At the moment when all humans have a pure enough mind to believe in the Lotus Sutra as it is, this world's hardships, sufferings and pains will be all gone, and this world will turn into Buddha's pure land in a moment. This is not a dream story, but it is the ultimate goal of the Lotus Sutra and its soul. So, do you believe it or do you still need a logical proof to believe it? You should keep your faith strong and pure to reach your answer.

To keep your faith strong and pure, I suggest finding your best phrase in the Lotus Sutra, and trying to keep it in your heart as a compass in your daily life. Nichiren Shonin said in his "Letter to

Myoho Ama Gozen": "The Lotus sutra explains our physical body is the universal body of a Buddha, our mind is the ideal body of a Buddha, and our behavior is the historical body of a Buddha, so you have already received their benefits if you keep and believe a sentence or a single word of the Lotus Sutra."

The best way to enter the wonderful religious life is not to learn or grasp just knowledge from the textbooks but to find your best phrase of the Lotus Sutra, and just acquire and keep it in your daily life.



I do believe...

# Master of Mind

**Seattle Nichiren Buddhist Church**  
**Rev. Taiga Ichikawa**

Is there anyone who can describe or explain what mind is? Before we find the answer, let me speak about mind as I please. Mind is hard to catch by hand and difficult to understand. Some say that mind is in our brain and others say that mind cannot be, physically or chemically, located in our body. Through the centuries, we have been looking for the explanation about where and what our mind is. However, we become aware that there is something running through in our mind when we live or there is something that makes us act physically. We shed tears when in pain or feel sad and when we mourn, we may cry. That is the emotional feeling; how we see things or how we do things. Thus we are feeling something.

Generally, we use some senses for realizing the thing that is happening in front of us. Seeing, smelling, hearing (listening), tasting and feeling are the senses we use. For instance, when we watch a comedy on a channel, we have fun. Maybe we are laughing because we are enjoying the humor. It means that we are getting information by seeing pictures on TV and we react to it. Therefore, we can say that our senses are directly connected to our body.

Traditionally, body and mind are considered as one unit in Mahayana Buddhism. We believe the body is affected by our mental status. Also our mind is affected by our body. It can be phrased that mental function activates physical function, and vice versa. For instance, when we feel sick, our body is weakened. Later our mind is also weakened as well. We worry if our sickness becomes worse and our mind becomes weak. It only creates fear and confusion. In a sense, our body and mind may not be as strong as we think they are. As basic teaching shows we have four main sufferings: birth, getting old, sickness and death. We have to be strong enough to deal with them. But how? This is the most difficult part. When we think of our social communication, the question becomes tougher and more critical. We may work with someone who is hard on us in our office or we may see our beloved one going far away. When we see someone who is not comfortable to be with, we may be stressed, or if we cry a lot, we may be exhausted. Either way, our body and mind are functioning. It looks like events are flooding in our life and keep coming and going back and forth like the ocean tide. Considering our life, it seems that we keep receiving information or signals and responding to them. An event occurs and an action is taken. This is the stream of life. There are sufferings in life and there must be solutions as well. We are thinking of MIND from the beginning; finding the balance of body and mind may guide us to better comprehension.

We have been experiencing and seeking a new life style compared to a century ago. When we study human history, we learn that in this world there have been a lot of events happening. Recently, we have witnessed the development of technology in many fields. A disease can be cured because of new medicine and travel can be shortened because of airplanes.

Surprisingly, even life itself, which has been studied, can be created nowadays. Those new technologies introduce quicker and easier style in our lives. We are able to realize that living is getting more organized. For instance, a computer with internet can provide us with almost any basic information that we wish. We can search a particular subject like news, stock market and airplane schedule. Convenient is the word to explain recent living. However, there is danger behind this handy life style. Because there is a flood of information, sometimes it is difficult to define whether it is correct or not.

As a matter of fact, it can be told or addressed in many perspectives. It really depends upon who is going to broadcast and how it is going to be prepared with editing. It could be exaggerated or twisted. Therefore, if we are possessed with an idea which is not promised, we are going to determine our impression from reliability. We need to know that we hold not only the right of receiving information freely but also the right of judging information properly. In addition, we are responsible for choosing what is true enough to make us believe. It seems finding the truth is the important matter of recent life.

Browsing for information is the nature of human beings, although authenticity may not be thoroughly considered. For instance,

when we welcome a new person to our office, we wonder what kind of personality he or she has. Then we hear an unpleasant rumor which we tend to believe and decide our attitude. Later on, as we work with our colleague, we may have to change our impression and attitude because of his or her ability and character. Thus a piece of information could change our impression and action. In other words, the information affects our mind which gives us more than thinking. Whatever we heard, saw, tasted, smelled and touched is the fact and through these senses we are earning impression, information and determination. It looks like receiving them may not be all bad, but according to the teaching of Buddhism, our goal, gaining enlightenment, is directed when we realize the work of our mind. Mind is always wandering. Controlling our swaying mind is the key to enlightenment. The "Sutra Opening Verse (Kaikyo-ge)" states: "The most excel-

lent teaching of the Great Vehicle is very difficult for us to understand. We shall approach enlightenment when we see, hear, or touch this sutra." As we reach the fact by those senses, we are able to accomplish the idea that is the guide to our mind. Seeking the location and the description of mind is not ultimately important. Knowing the relationship between mind and body must be priority. Mind is like a pond. If we drop some ink, the water gets impure, but it is too clean and pure, life cannot exist. The pond must purify itself by circulation of water. Raining and evaporation are ways of nature.

When it comes to mind, this pond can be our mind with plenty of thoughts. If we create evil desire and attitude by sensing information, our mind gets muddy and our action may be inappropriate. However, if we care to purify our mind by sensing and choosing information, our mind will be healthy and clean, and so will be our body.

Mind and body are two sides of a coin and are indispensable for life. To become the master of the mind is the teaching showing us the way of life. To have faith in the Lotus Sutra and Sakyamuni Buddha is for us to know the function of the mind correctly. This will be accomplished by a good deed. Doing a good deed strengthens our faith. This is repeatedly preached in the Lotus Sutra.

