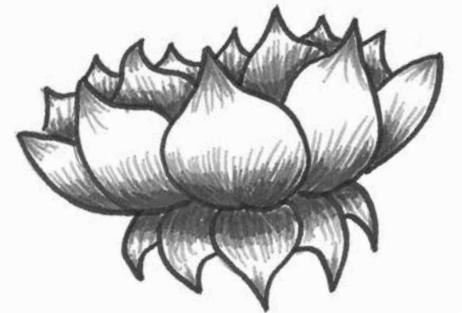


MASAHISA GOI

HOW TO DEVELOP
your spirituality

Volume 1



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DEVELOPING YOUR SPIRITUALITY

To be truly free from all trouble and pain, human beings must inevitably develop what is called their ‘spirituality.’ There is no other way for human beings to attain true peace. No matter how much people may talk about peace and clamor for the establishment of a unified world, their cries will have no effect if they have not developed their spirituality. That kind of talk will never bring about world peace, nor will it hasten the birth of a unified world.

I say this because, as human beings, our original nature is our spiritual being, and not our physical body. Those who think that we are simply physical bodies and nothing more live in a way that makes it impossible for them to walk along their own true path.

Why, then, does our true nature consist of our spirituality, and not our physical body? In Japanese, the word for spirit is *rei* (霊), and the word *rei* can also mean ‘zero’. Both

‘spirit’ and ‘zero’ refer to the aspect of something before it appears on the surface as ‘one.’ If we say that what appears on the surface as ‘one,’ ‘two,’ or ‘three’ belongs to the phenomenal, or tangible, world (in other words, material manifestations including the physical body) then we can think of that which is not perceived by the five senses, as ‘spirit,’ or ‘zero.’

If this is so, then which category does life belong to? Life itself cannot be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived by the five senses. Life can only be grasped in terms of its activity.

The heart, lungs, stomach, and intestines continue to function while life is active in the physical body. But once life leaves the physical body, our organs immediately stop their work. They still exist in the physical body, and the body itself also exists, but it ceases to perform any function.

This means that without the thing called ‘life,’ which is not seen by the eyes or felt by the hands, the existence of the physical body and internal organs, which can be seen by the eyes and felt by the hands, turns into something completely inactive and meaningless.

When we think along these lines, it follows that the material objects that are tangible to our five senses are like tools, or containers, belonging to a particular time and place, and that the thing called ‘life’ is the real essence of a human being.

This plain truth is something that no one is able to deny. Even so, the vast majority of people today consider only the material aspects of a human being—those

that are perceived by the five senses. They think of ‘life,’ which animates and controls the physical body, as if it were merely an internal existence within the physical body, and that the physical body itself is the main thing. This idea is humankind’s greatest error. For as long as humanity keeps basing all its thoughts and actions on this idea, it will be forever unable to manifest its own intrinsic truth.

Until people start thinking about this world and human society on the basis of the thing called ‘life,’ not only will humankind go on living from moment to moment and place to place in mutual selfishness, and not only will we be unable to realize our ideal of making evolutionary progress, but we will continue moving closer and closer to the abyss of destruction.

The source of human faculties

If you take the standpoint that human life exists only as an attribute of each individual physical body, then you will naturally think that when a person’s physical body perishes, that person has vanished forever and become nonexistent. You will think that the person’s way of living and way of thinking have simply disappeared. But in truth, this is not the case.

It often happens that a person’s will is carried on by others who try to fulfill the work that he or she began. Naturally, if a person’s work concerns the greater good, a larger portion of it is likely to be carried on by other people. What this suggests is that the essence of the thing called ‘life,’ which activates the physical body, is

something that wishes to be of help to other lives. In other words, though life appears to be contained within separate physical embodiments, it actually works in connection with other lives.

Thus, it naturally follows that the will of someone who lived too individualistically is seldom carried on by others. On the other hand, the sort of work and ideals that come from humanitarian or socially-oriented motives are taken up by large numbers of people.

This is consistent with the view that while life works within each physical body, it is at the same time connected with many other lives. The sum total of all those lives can be called the Great Life. The Great Life functions in each physical body as a small, individual life. Without showing itself, it activates the various physical organs and serves as the motive power for our ability to think. Could this life-power be something material, something devoid of wisdom or perception? We can readily answer *No*. Why do we answer *No*? It is because as human beings, we are able to function thanks to the power of life, and this functioning is always rooted in wisdom and perception. Consequently, we can only conclude that wisdom and perception are contained within life itself.

In terms of its function, life is clearly discernible through the workings of the various physical organs. However, the substance of life is not something we can see or touch. It is a thing without shape—a spirit. The composite of all individual lives, known as the Great Life, can therefore be called the ‘Great Spirit.’

To explain it systematically, the source of each life

radiates from the Great Spirit. Each individual life is thus a division, or branch, of the Great Spirit. Through these divisions, or branches, the Great Spirit acts directly in this world. Each human being is one of the individual spirits branching out from the Great Spirit.

According to this principle, it is very clear that all human faculties come from the Great Spirit. Yet, for people who are convinced that a human being is nothing more than a material body, this simple truth is very difficult to understand.

The law of karma

What prevents people from understanding this principle is karmic thinking (we could also call it karma, darkness, or illusion). The further people distance themselves from their spirituality, the more extensive this karma (disorder and corruption) becomes. However, since karmic thoughts and activities are not part of our original nature, once they accumulate to a certain point they have to extinguish themselves. They collide with other karmic vibrations, crumble apart, and vanish. This disintegration process causes various misfortunes, such as strife and warfare, injury and illness, failure, and natural disasters, to appear.

When they do not know this principle, human beings try to pull back to themselves the karma that is being manifested and extinguished in the form of various misfortunes. They do this by emitting karmic thoughts such as dissatisfaction, fear, anger, jealousy, and resentment.

The reason why these thoughts have the effect of pulling back the karma that is meant to vanish is that they are composed of the same kinds of vibrations. The disintegrating karma is also made up of thoughts of uneasiness, discontent, fear, anger, and so on. When people's newly generated thoughts have the same wavelength as that of the disappearing karma, they intermingle with those karmic waves and bond together with them. As a result, though the earlier karma has begun to fade away, it cannot vanish entirely, and becomes lodged within the karmic waves that were generated later.

The Great Spirit (the divine mind, or God) is, indeed, the origin of all power. It is harmony itself. It is what links all things together. In order for great harmony to take shape and manifest in this world, humanity's karmic thoughts must crumble and vanish away. When this occurs, our role is to direct our attention to the divine principles that are about to manifest themselves. Instead, however, people are focusing their attention on the karmic side, giving rise to new thoughts of anxiety, discontent, fear, resentment, and so on.

Worrisome and unsatisfactory conditions come back to people who have thoughts of uneasiness and discontent. Resentment comes back to people who resent others. All the things that a person sends out come back to that person. This is the law of karma. This thing called karma is not something that appeared because there is no God. Karma is also moved, indirectly, by divine power. It disintegrates and vanishes at the time when the divine will deems it to be unnecessary.

The relationship between God and the movements of karma

Now, this is a very important point. If the movements of karma were to be independent of any relationship with God, then God and karma would be relative to each other. They would stand in opposition to one another and fight against one another. Ancient religious leaders made God and Satan (karma) into two entities, and taught that Satan (karma) is an independent existence. Indeed, when we look at the condition of the world today, we might be inclined to think that way. Yet if this were the case, the struggles of this world would have to continue forever. People would simply want to follow the side with the greater chances of winning. Under these circumstances, we would not be able to firmly assert that God is the one and only, absolute existence.

If it were not possible to freely extinguish any karma solely through the divine will, then the principle of God's absoluteness, infiniteness, and omnipotence would not hold true. Human beings would not be able to find peace and security in knowing that they are children of God.

It is because we human beings are children of God, and are spiritual in nature, that we have the means of overcoming karma. When we clearly bring out our spirituality, letting life express itself within us just as it is, a way of living based solely on our divine nature will open up for us, and all darkness will eventually vanish away. If this were not a true principle, spiritual faith would have no purpose.

Why was karma born?

What does it mean to say that karma moves when divine power acts upon it indirectly? To give a broad outline, karma itself was born when divine life began to work on earth in the form of physical human beings. Prior to the birth of physical human beings in the earthly world, karma did not exist there.

Just as there is no darkness in a world made up entirely of light, without the existence of light, darkness does not recognize itself as darkness. But once light begins to penetrate the darkness, the distinction between light and darkness becomes clear. Then, as the light advances, the figure of darkness is eliminated proportionately. Its form is chipped away and removed, bit by bit. If we say that God is light, then since the time when God's light began to work on earth as human life, the darkness, or backwardness, on earth has been gradually and proportionately undergoing development.

In order for the divine light rays to be put to work in the earthly world, it was essential for them to have material bodies made up of the same substance as the earthly world itself. This is how the existence of individual physical human beings came about. Since the physical human body is a material body, belonging to the earthly world, it has an earthly nature. Consequently, as the divine light keeps advancing in the earthly world, and its undeveloped condition undergoes development, various kinds of tremblings, shakings, and transformations occur. When physical human beings first experienced these tremblings

and changes, they thought of them in the opposite sense. They mistakenly identified themselves with darkness instead of identifying themselves with light. They viewed the collapsing shapes of darkness as the collapsing shapes of themselves. They then emitted thoughts of unrest and fear. This way of thinking, which is removed from divine light, or from spirituality, is darkness. This is the cause of the birth of karma. In Christian terms, this would be called the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve.

In this way, humanity forgot its original identity. People forgot that they are divine light itself. They mistakenly thought that they were a product of darkness. They mistakenly thought of themselves as earthbound, physical existences. This is the major cause of what is referred to as 'sin.'

Knowing the oneness of life

If you think that a human being is merely a physical existence it is only natural for you to see yourself and others as being totally separate from one another. For as long as you think this way, you cannot see yourself and others as being different manifestations of one divine life that takes individual forms in order to reveal a variety of divine concepts and ideas here in the earthly world.

The only people who can say that human beings share one and the same life are people who believe in the existence of God. These words cannot be said by materially-minded people, or by people who think that a human being is simply flesh and bone. If a person knows that all

human beings share the same life, how could that person be so keen on outranking others and securing happiness for themselves alone, or for their own group or country, that they would go so far as to harm other human beings?

When I observe the way individuals and nations are living today, I cannot help being surprised at how few of them live with a view of the true oneness of life. It is unmistakably true that this occurs because earthly humanity has not clearly developed its spirituality. When we are aware of our own spirituality and the spirituality of others, and know that our physical body, like the physical bodies of others, is a container and a workplace for the spirit, there can be no reason for us to beat others down in order to protect our own body, or to be downtrodden by physical illness or misfortune.

For as long as humanity keeps on its present course, without trying to know that they are not flesh but spirit, and are beings whose natural purpose is to give expression to the ideas of God, they have no choice but to go on experiencing lifetime after lifetime in this karmic world, never finding relief and never seeing the light.

The way things are at present, the authority for day-to-day decision making is held by political figures and members of the higher echelons of society, who generally do not know of the connection between the divine—the Great Spirit and all-encompassing life—and human beings, who are individual spirits, or divine offspring. Unless this condition reverses itself completely, and the world begins to move forward under the guidance of people who clearly know the harmonious spirit of God, no

policies—whether of threat, compromise, or peacemaking—will be able to rescue the population of earth.

How to develop your spirituality

What should you do, then, in order to develop your spirituality?

In a nutshell, the key is not to think of anything except divinity. Up to now, spiritual leaders have taught of God, but at the same time, behind these words they have often criticized the actions of their adherents, and have advised them to overcome karmic thinking with their own individual power. But I do not adopt this method. I recommend that people think only of divinity, from beginning to end, thoroughly and completely.

My method is to cast aside the various thoughts that come to mind of injuring yourself and others, recognizing those thoughts as vanishing traces of a past consciousness that are pushing themselves out onto the surface in order to fade away and disappear forever. As you do this, I also recommend that you continuously and intently call the name of God in your heart. To practice a teaching which makes people preoccupy themselves with every little detail of the karmic thoughts that appear is like putting the branch in place of the root, and it enslaves your mind to the karmic thoughts and actions of yourself and others, seriously retarding the development of your divine nature.

If they know that God is all of everything, why do spiritual leaders not ask their believers to think only of God? Why do they instead give teachings that stir up more

and more karmic thinking, reinforcing and perpetuating the mistakes people made in the past with their physical consciousness?

To say such things as, “In your heart you are harboring this defect or that vice,” or “human beings are born of sin,” and so forth, may sound like very religious teachings. In reality, though, this is quite different from true religion.

True religion is what wakens the awareness that human beings come from God and are none other than light itself—none other than truth, goodness, and beauty. The teaching that human beings are ‘born of sin’ is something that refers to physical human beings, and it has nothing to do with our essential nature, which is our spirituality. Words like ‘born of sin’ are said in order to emphasize the helplessness of the physical self. They are not what we ought to say to people who are wholeheartedly trying to entrust themselves to God.

This is why I say that in order to guide people along the road to true deliverance, the most important thing is the development of their spirituality.

In olden times, people used to become monks or ascetics and seclude themselves in the mountains or meditate under waterfalls in order to develop their spirituality. However, we cannot thoroughly and continuously practice such disciplines if we also carry the responsibility of a spouse and family. Consequently, the general population can hardly be expected to engage in such practices, and thus they are not practical training methods for modern day society.

The first ones to take note of this were Hōnen, Shinran,

and other advocates of the Pure Land school of teachings during Japan’s Kamakura period. To wholeheartedly recite the *Nembutsu* (see chapter 3) was to think deeply and single-mindedly of God, and this was equivalent to putting all your effort into flinging all your thoughts and actions into God. This method was an easy way for people to develop their spirituality without disrupting their normal daily life, and it allowed them to firmly connect themselves with the divine world.

Among the people who misunderstand the development of spirituality, there seem to be some who simply think that spirituality means perceiving things that are outside the realm of our five senses. However, this is a very dangerous idea. What is meant by developed spirituality is that a person’s thoughts and actions can always reflect the mind of God, which is love, truth, goodness and beauty. It does not simply mean being able to sense things which the average person cannot.

This is a crucial point in the development of spirituality. If you try to develop your spirituality for purposes of personal gain or short-term advantage, and if you are satisfied with being able to see, hear, feel, and do things which others cannot, feeling a sense of superiority over others, having this sort of attitude in your heart means that you are heading in an entirely different direction from the development of spirituality. I say this because when a person feels superior to others, or practices ascetic discipline for worldly benefits, that in itself means that he or she has already stepped outside the principle that human beings are one unified, divine life.

Practically speaking, though, this self-centered way of thinking is a very difficult thing to get rid of, and it is how the vast majority of people continue to think and act. This is what makes the development of spirituality all the more necessary.

Prayer for world peace

Now more than ever, it is vitally necessary for all human beings to develop their spirituality and manifest their true identity here in this earthly world. The true identity of a human being is, in other words, the image of a child of God.

For this reason, spiritual leaders who simply preach religious dogmas or offer worldly gains have become unnecessary in this day and age. What we need are spiritual leaders who will teach the true development of spirituality in a way that the average person will be able to put into practice.

Spiritually awakened leaders are also needed, to explain how nations and humanity as a whole can call forth and give expression to their inherent divine nature. Among these awakened individuals there might be religious leaders, scientists, or statesmen. Whatever their field might be, I do not think they can effectively carry out their work unless, from the start, they understand that the spiritual development of all humanity is the fundamental goal to be aimed for.

For this reason, I have been given the mission, first of all, of assisting the general population in developing

their spirituality. Consequently, I have put into modern language the Easy Path that has continued since the days of Hōnen and Shinran, and I have been letting many people know about it. It is a method based in prayer for world peace.

When we mention the development of spirituality, people who know even a little about spiritual methods might immediately envision disciplines such as sitting meditation, meditating under waterfalls, fasting, and so on. Although these disciplines are one way of developing spirituality, it must be noted that they are not the most suitable training methods for contemporary times.

As I have already mentioned, I believe that the spiritual training method of today is the path opened up by the two great saints Hōnen and Shinran, and also in the teachings of Jesus Christ. I say this because, in the present age, with its complex lifestyles and social systems, austere training methods are totally unattainable for everyone except certain special people.

If you understand that God is always at work within human beings, then you have already developed your spirituality. But if you can advance even one step further, and understand that the divine world is a perfectly harmonious world of brilliant glory, free from any unharmonious things such as evil, unhappiness or illness, and if you know that the unharmonious conditions that now appear in our surroundings are the disappearing images of our own thoughts and actions, generated during a past consciousness, when we separated ourselves from God, and if you can always keep thoughts of gratitude in your

mind, deeply appreciating the fact that all negativities are disappearing, it means you have already become someone whose divine nature is fully developed. Your true identity as a child of God is being manifested in this world. You unknowingly brighten the people around you, and you are naturally able to perform actions which help many people to develop their own spirituality.

The method that enables people to become this kind of person within their normal daily life, with no need for hard discipline or strain, is the method of prayer for world peace.

World peace is the condition where divinity manifests itself through each and every human being. World peace means that the divine mind—the ideas of God—are realized in this world with no element of distortion. This is why, when you think of praying for world peace, you are already on the road to spiritual development. And the great value of this prayer, as a prayer for modern times, is that it is both a prayer for individual spiritual development and also a prayer for human society as a whole.