

Nichiren Buddhism  
practiced in the  
Soka Gakkai  
International Lay  
organization (SGI)

- Scott Wilson has been practicing Nichiren Buddhism with the SGI for over 50 years
- Nichiren Buddhism is based upon the Lotus Sutra
- The Lotus Sutra represents the essence of Siddhartha Gautama or Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings
- Our daily practice is reciting portions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the LS and chanting Nam Myoho Renge Kyo the title and essence and intent of the Lotus Sutra
- Nichiren Daishonin (13<sup>th</sup> Century) was a reformer committed to returning Buddhism to its original purpose, the human happiness, overcoming suffering and engagement with the world.

# **Beliefs about Individual Existence (souls?) prior to Conception**

**The Buddhist views of life and death is a departure from the western view of the permanence of a soul.**

**I will share a view of the universe as one life entity, birth, death, and the karmic energy that transmigrates cycles of life and death.**

**Why is this important?**

**The references I am quoting in this presentation are from: Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death (...and everything in between) A Buddhist View of Life**

**By Daisaku Ikeda (3<sup>rd</sup> SGI President)**

**The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Vol IV, Ikeda, Saito, ...dialogue**

According to Buddhism, life takes on no physical entity after death, nor does a spirit or soul continue to exist as a fixed entity

**Buddhism views the universe as one life entity** always in motion with a pulse or vibration to create life when the conditions are right.

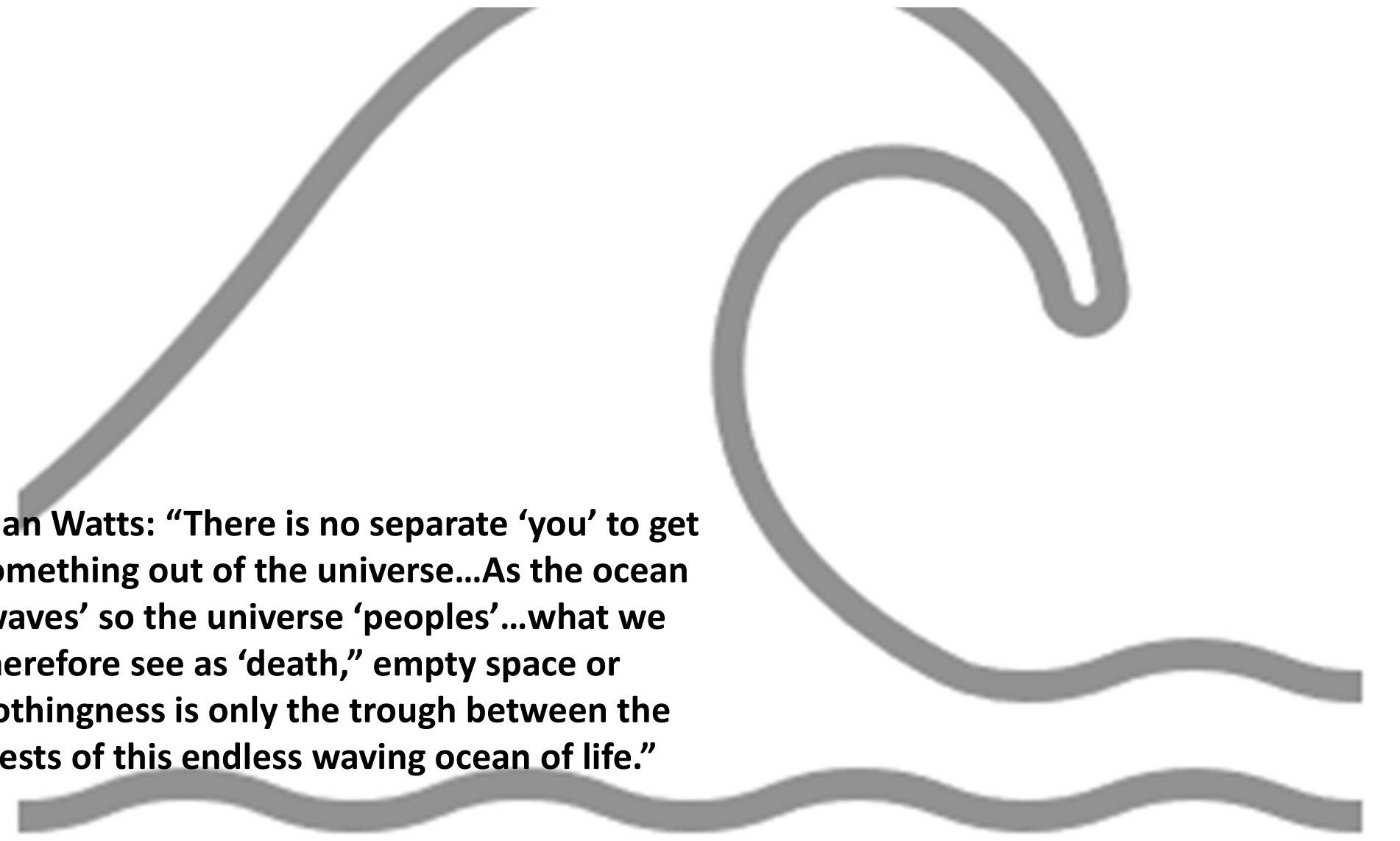
**Life in all its forms, and at all times contains the urge to create**, is inherently active, and possesses the positive power of self-generation. Indeed, life is a grand and eternal pulse that constantly seeks to become manifest throughout the universe whenever conditions are right.



**Toda- A simple way to explain our view on life and death is to say that Buddhism compares living and dying to waking and sleeping. We die when we are old or very sick or maybe because of an accident. Although the physical body decays when we die, we believe the essential part of us re-merges with the universe.**

**When the time is right, we come back refreshed. There is also an analogy that describes our life at birth as being like a wave that rises on the ocean. When we die, it is like the wave sinking back into the ocean. But the water itself doesn't disappear, and with new energy, the wave emerges from the depths of the sea again.**





**Alan Watts: “There is no separate ‘you’ to get something out of the universe...As the ocean ‘waves’ so the universe ‘peoples’...what we therefore see as ‘death,” empty space or nothingness is only the trough between the crests of this endless waving ocean of life.”**

# Birth & Conception

Birth, like death, is a process. Some sutras describe conception and consciousness, as the appearance of an entity of intermediate existence. Conception is the moment when this intermediate existence is wedded to its new human form.

The life and karma of the mother, father, and child—all must align. (Unlocking the Mysteries...)

Nichiren wrote: "When we examine the nature of life with perfect enlightenment, we find that there is no beginning marking birth and, therefore, no end signifying death." (Unlocking the Mysteries...,23)



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# The Karmic Storehouse

- **life is when the energy of karma temporarily assumes a fixed form (our bodies), and death is when the form breaks down and becomes one with the life current of the universe as a flow of pure energy.**

*(Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Volume IV, page 259)*

- **Mr. Ikeda affirms that only karmic causes and conditions transmigrate from one existence to the next.** He reiterates the Buddhist view that there is no spirit. Upon death, there's neither annihilation nor eternal existence. In the non-substantial state of emptiness, we become one with the universe.
- **Good karma, then, means actions born from good intentions, kindness and compassion. Conversely, bad karma refers to actions induced by greed, anger and foolishness."**

# Eighth Layer of Consciousness = Karma

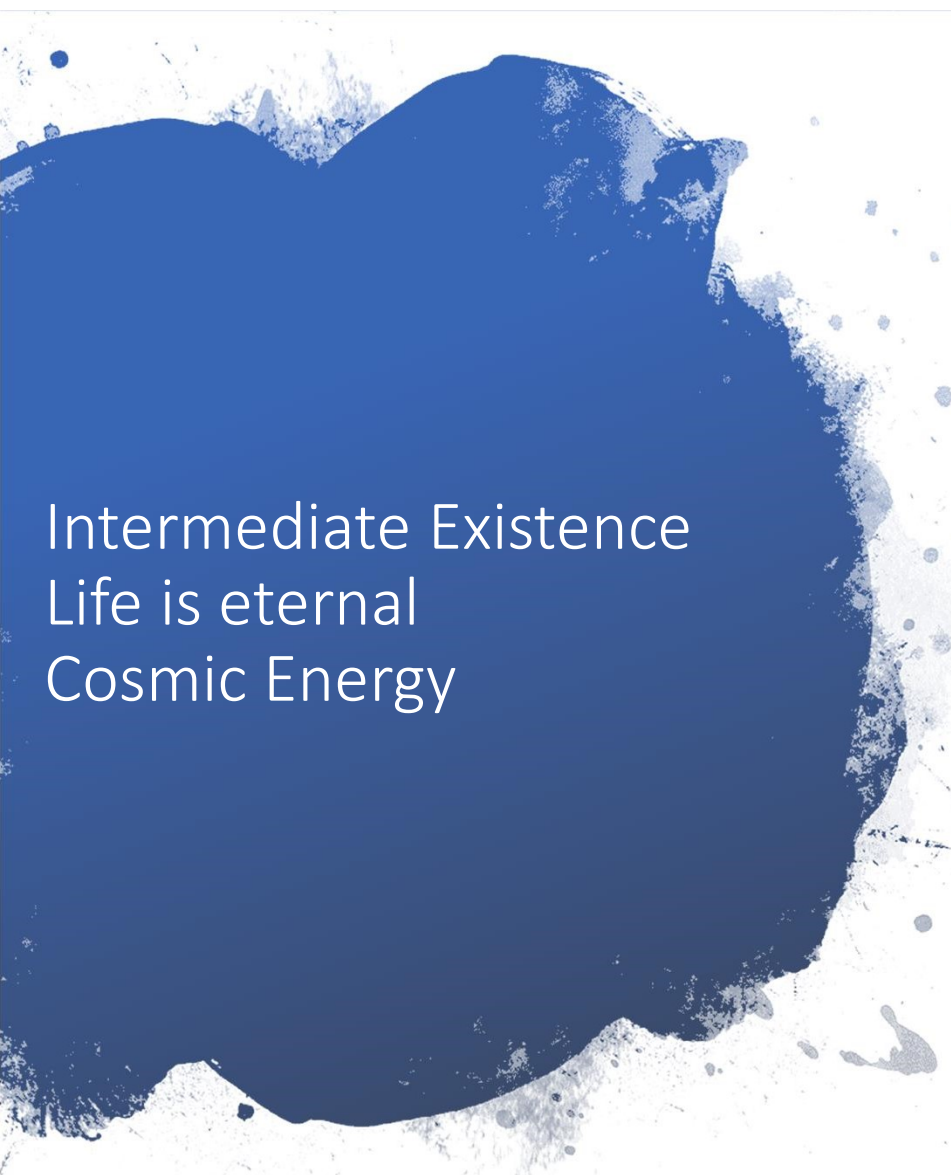
The eighth layer of consciousness contains the potential energy, both positive and negative, created by our thoughts, words and deeds. ***This potential energy, or profound life-tendency, is referred to as karma.***

When we die, the potential energy which represents the "**karmic balance sheet**" of all our actions--creative and destructive, selfish and altruistic--continues to flow forward in the alaya-consciousness. (it is an illusion to think of this as a permanent self. Our life as we know it is a temporary existence tied to our environment)

**A lifetime of one's actions— remembered and forgotten—will be expressed in how we face death.** Those who have lived sincerely and contributed to others' well-being are likely to die with a deep sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. On the other hand, those who have lived in idleness, self-indulgence or without respect or concern for others, may face death with regret. (SGI focuses on our actions in the present)

Buddhism does not consider karma to be fixed and unchangeable. Our karmic energy, which Buddhist texts describe as the "**raging current**" of the alaya-consciousness...





Intermediate Existence  
Life is eternal  
Cosmic Energy

- According to Buddhism, life takes on no physical entity after death, nor does a spirit or soul continue to exist as a fixed entity
- *The Buddhist view of life is that it is eternal— that, like the existence of the universe, our lives have continued and will continue to exist eternally*
- Shakvamuni concluded that it is karma itself that continues
- *All that I preach is true and not false. Why do I do this? The Thus Come One perceives the true aspect of the threefold world exactly as it is. There is no ebb or flow of birth and death, and there is no existing in this world and later entering extinction. It is neither substantial nor empty, neither consistent nor diverse. Nor is it what those who dwell in the threefold world perceive it to be. All such things the Thus Come one sees clearly and without error. Lotus Sutra Vol 16*
- **Not Buddhist Thought:** The doctrine of annihilation refers to the view that upon death life reverts to nonexistence and the concept of an immortal soul
- Both concepts are rejected by Buddhism

## Concluding happy thoughts

**“Our body is just like a cocoon. When a cocoon deteriorates to the point that nothing can be done for it, a butterfly jumps out of it. It makes us happy to think that the butterfly jumping out of its cocoon to fly toward the infinite expanse of the sky is much nicer than remaining confined in that place. The butterfly’s flight signifies our departure for death.”** Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

**The stars in the sky simply become invisible. It’s not that they have ceased to exist. Nichiren**

