

**Offerings From the Heart**  
**By FRED M. ZAITSU**  
**SGI-USA General Director**

April 28 and May 3 are significant dates in our practice of Buddhism. April 28 marks the date that Nichiren Daishonin first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. And May 3 — Soka Gakkai Day — marks the anniversary of the inauguration of Josei Toda, 1951, and Daisaku Ikeda, 1960, as the second and third Soka Gakkai presidents respectively. When we celebrate these events each year, we have an opportunity to renew our determination to accomplish kosen-rufu and make a fresh start toward realizing our dreams.

Also, between April 28 and the first week in June, we hold the May Commemorative Contribution, an opportunity for members to make financial contributions to the SGI-USA at local community centers and activity centers.

In Buddhism, there are many different kinds of offerings. Material offerings such as water, fruit, incense and financial contributions can be considered “offerings of the body.” Respecting and praising the Buddha, along with sincerity, purity, chanting and propagating the Law, are considered “offerings of the heart.”

Ultimately, even our material offerings are expressions of our heart. Our heart creates fortune. Our heart enables us to attain enlightenment. By making contributions from the heart, motivated by our desire to see the Buddha in our lives and in the lives of others, there is no doubt that we experience great benefit.

With this in mind, I’d like to make a few points about the May Commemorative Contribution.

**All contributions to the SGI-USA are significant.** First I’d like to thank all of you for all the contributions you have made to the SGI-USA. Offerings such as your time, dedication, sincere prayers and efforts to study, chant and care for one another are treasures. With all of your contributions, you are making great causes for your happiness. Financial offerings, too, are tremendous causes, and I can’t thank you enough for these contributions.

**Financial offerings are not charity.** Nichiren Daishonin’s followers made many offerings of food, shelter, clothing, medicine and money to him, even though many of them were experiencing severe economic hardships. In his writings, the Daishonin says that without these offerings, he would not have survived. It could be said that without the wide variety of contributions made by members, the SGI-USA would not exist.

Even so, it’s important to point out that offerings to the Daishonin and the organization are not charity (though they are legally considered charitable contributions). Members do not give out of a feeling of pity, guilt, obligation or even kindness. Rather, in Buddhism, offerings reflect our deep sense of appreciation and the strength of our desire to attain enlightenment. What’s most important is our joy at being able to make such contributions. As SGI President Ikeda writes in *The New Human Revolution*, “Such joy is the true spirit of offering and it is the wellspring of abundant good fortune” (vol. 4, p. 110).

**Financial offerings do not equal financial fortune.** I’ve heard that some members feel they can improve their financial situation by challenging themselves to contribute more money to the organization. It’s true that when you make offerings, you are making a cause to change your karma — just as it’s true that when you chant, you are changing your karma. How this change in karma will manifest, though, no one can readily predict. I have no doubt that when we make offerings we increase our fortune. That doesn’t necessarily mean, however, that we increase our bank balance.

**Offerings may result in benefit, but that’s not why we make them.** When we

Title: Offerings From the Heart

Subject: World Tribune 04/17/98 n.3187 p.9 WT980417p09

Author: Fred M. Zaitso

Keywords: Director Financial Fred General Guidelines Heart Offerings Organization Points Practice  
Prime Support Tribune World Zaitso

make offerings, if we think, “I’m going to donate \$100; then I’ll get \$200 in return,” then we need to re-evaluate the spirit with which we’re making a contribution. Contributions are not like investments. There’s a difference between having no doubt that contributions result in benefit and expecting benefit because we make contributions.

It’s a paradox, I suppose: If we contribute with a purity of heart that expects nothing in return, that’s when we reap the most benefit. Our heart is what matters most.

**The Buddha praises our sincere offerings.** In all of his personal letters to believers, the Daishonin mentions each person’s offerings. Each letter includes words of praise and gratitude. The Daishonin’s constant message to us is that when we make sincere offerings to the Buddha, the Buddha — that is, the entire universe — responds with praise and gratitude. The Daishonin writes: “In the deepest sense, earnest faith is the will to understand and live up to the spirit, not the words, of the sutras.... Therefore, saints consecrate themselves by offering their own bodies, whereas common mortals may consecrate themselves by the sincerity with which they give” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 268).

I hope that through home visits, dialogue and sharing our experiences, we can thoroughly explain to people the importance of offerings. Their understanding derived from such explanation — not from any kind of pressure — will naturally spur them to take joyful action. Please join me in encouraging everyone to participate in this year’s May Commemorative Contribution!

**WT**