



LIVING BUDDHISM

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Living Buddhism is the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Buddhism.



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On The Cover: *Mt. Vernon Street* (Boston), watercolor, 40 x 28 in., by Thomas Rebek..

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FROM OUR READERS

Due to the volume of letters we receive, not all can be printed, and all letters are subject to condensation. Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number with all correspondence. Mail to: Letters, Living Buddhism, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

JUNG AND THE NINE CONSCIOUSNESSES

THE December issue article "The Nine Consciousnesses and Jung's Theory of the Collective Unconscious" was absolutely fascinating. I'm a psychology major, and Jung is of great interest to me. However, I found some discrepancies in Stacks' quote to suggest Jung saw dreams entirely as showing "... no apparent order and no tendency to systematization, as they would have to do if there were a personal consciousness at the back of them," and as such cannot be interpreted scientifically.

On the contrary, Jung, being a student of Sigmund Freud (founder of psychoanalysis), knew that the makeup of the foundation of the aforesaid science was the interpretation of dreams. So heavily did Jung believe in the importance of dreams that in *The Practical Use of Dream Analysis*, he wrote: "The dream is specifically the utterance of the unconscious.... The dream shows the inner truth and the reality of the patient as it really is: not as I conjecture it to be, and not as he would like it to be, but as it is" (p. 95, par. 317).

In fact, Jung wrote numerous texts on his fascination with the dream world, namely: *The Analysis of Dreams*, *On the Significance of Number Dreams* and *General Aspects of Dream Psychology*.

I have not yet decided for myself whether or not dreams hold any deep significance, but one thing is for sure, if Jung were here, he would argue passionately to convince me of it.

ALDO CIMINO,
Sebastopol, Calif.

ARTWORK

AS I review this past year's magazines, I am struck again at your wonderful dedication to sharing artwork with us, your readers. The cover artists, with more pictures and bios in the back, are like a trip to a museum or show with a thoughtful friend. I love them, and I appreciate you bringing them to us. April and May were my favorites.

But, my real reason for writing, though, is to praise artist Blair Thornley's pen and ink. I can vividly bring to mind a half-dozen sketches that charmed and cheered me up. Please have more of them!

The September '96 issue, p. 37, is a prime example: a teenager and his mom sharing a little chat. Much of Ms. Thornley's work just seems to radiate happiness. An earlier sketch of horses illustrating the Lotus Sutra was also so with it, life-full. Please have more.

MELISSE WILLETTE,
Minneapolis, Minn.

Living Buddhism is the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Buddhism. In association with the SGI, the SGI-USA works in tandem with members around the world. On an international scale, the SGI centers its activities on the human potentialities for individual happiness and global peace and prosperity. Rooted in the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren, SGI members share a profound commitment to the values of peace, culture and education.

These values are expressed in the SGI Charter, which embodies core beliefs in the ideal of world citizenship, the spirit of tolerance and the safeguarding of fundamental human rights.

The SGI-USA applies Buddhist principles through a nationwide network of grass-roots activities centering primarily on neighborhood discussion groups. Learn more about the SGI-USA, or find a discussion group in your area by calling our national office in Santa Monica, California: (310) 451-8811. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

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THANK YOU

IT'S 6 a.m. and I've just finished organizing my *Seikyo Times* (recently renamed *Living Buddhism*). I'm writing this letter to say "Thank you" for our publication. I cannot begin to express my debt of gratitude to all people who have had any part in the production of our great magazine.

I say this not out of flattery. For the past sixteen years, this magazine has played an integral part in my human revolution journey and has helped me spread the Buddhist law around the globe. I do mean this quite literally.

I started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in Japan in 1980. At that time I was starry-eyed. I thought all I had to do was profess the greatness of Buddhism and my problems would be solved for me. I used to collect articles from the early issues of the *Seikyo Times* from the older (in faith) members in my district. In fact, I have articles dating back

to 1976. I wanted to know all I could about Buddhism so I could explain Buddhist concepts to others who questioned my conversion. On the one hand, I had a seeking spirit for the truth. On the other hand, I was arrogant. I thought, somehow, I was more lofty because I began my practice in Japan. I was quite spoiled. Studying all those articles in the magazine helped me dig deeper into my life. I prayed to understand Buddhist concepts and actualize them in my life, not just know them in my head.

Since those beginning days of my practice, I've continued to forge a greater understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and somehow impart his teachings to others. I just returned from a five-year stay in Germany. These past five years have been the most difficult years of my practice. Through all my trials, ups and downs, and tribulations — this great magazine was there to guide me toward a deeper understanding of myself and

the world around me. I have so many fond memories that I can't express in this letter. Suffice it to say — because of all of the behind-the-scenes efforts of so many — I am still practicing Buddhism with a bit less arrogance and a profound appreciation for all of the hardships I've endured and overcome.

I've traveled around the world, from east to west, and am now living in Tacoma, Wash. I came here with such a sense of urgency to show actual proof of the validity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I have a tremendous appreciation for the Gohonzon, President Ikeda, wonderful leaders, the SGI as a whole, and the magazine.

I've still got a long way to go. I feel confident knowing that no matter what name you call our great magazine, it will continue to clarify Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, President Ikeda's guidance and guide me in my faith journey.

ELYSE M. GITTENS-OWUSU
Tacoma, Wash.

Glossary

Bodhisattvas of the Earth: Those who chant and propagate Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. *Earth* indicates the enlightened nature of all people, and *bodhisattva* is one who dedicates his or her life to helping others.

Buddha: One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

daimoku: Literally, *title*, it refers to the invocation or chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

Gohonzon: It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the form of a scroll, which SGI members enshrine in their homes. *Go* means *worthy of honor* and *honzon* means *object of fundamental respect*.

gongyo: Literally, it means *assiduous practice*. In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo consists of reciting excerpts from the second and sixteenth chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

karma: Sanskrit word meaning *action*. The life tendency or destiny each individual

creates through thoughts, words and deeds that exert an often unseen influence over one's future.

kosen-rufu: Literally, it means to *widely declare and spread* (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Lotus Sutra: The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members' daily Buddhist practice.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The fundamental component of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it expresses the true entity of life that allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the entity of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (Buddha's teaching), all phenomena.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82): The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of worship, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one's mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice to attain enlightenment. *Daishonin* is an honorific title that means *great sage*.

Shakyamuni: Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in Nepal about three thousand years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

Soka Gakkai International (SGI): The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association with membership in 128 countries and territories. In the service of its members and of society at large, SGI centers its activities on human potentialities for individual happiness and for global peace and prosperity. The breadth and focus of its mission derive from the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Buddhism. Soka Gakkai means *value-creation society*. The SGI-USA is a member-organization of the SGI.

LIVE YOUR OWN LIFE

IN preparing for this column, the *Living Buddhism* staff and I were discussing the subject of diversity. It occurred to me that the analogy of the cherry, plum, peach and apricot (Jp. *o, bai, to, ri*) Nichiren Daishonin refers to in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” is particularly instructive in that it celebrates the unique personality possessed by each of us and that each precious life is irreplaceable.

It was during that discussion I realized, that beyond the Daishonin’s oral teachings, I had no idea of the concept’s historical source. Did Nichiren Daishonin find its origin in some ancient Chinese text? Was it in one of the many sutras he studied? I immediately set about the task to find the answer. Others joined the quest. And though we are still researching, I would like to share what fueled my curiosity in the first place.

In a modern world struggling to understand the diversity that surrounds us, I was moved that it was also a subject Nichiren Daishonin clarified nearly eight-hundred years ago. It also struck me that in the context of thirteenth-century feudal Japan, it is quite revolutionary. It points out the wisdom of acknowledging our diversity; of being able to recognize what is unique about those around us and to appreciate them for who they are and what they have to offer our burgeoning society. I also realized that there are some, perhaps even among our readers, who find it difficult to embrace others when it comes to recognizing the humanity of someone we’ve been taught to hate. Imagine, if

you will, how extraordinarily difficult it must have been for the farmers and fishermen and samurai of thirteenth-century feudal Japan. What a brilliant glimpse into the depth of Nichiren Daishonin’s mind. His incredibly perceptive open-mindedness. His cosmic perspective.

SOMETHING else occurred to me as well. And that is the responsibility that goes along with pursuing our individual rights. I think this is particularly relevant in the “Disneyland” of a world painted by mainstream media, replete with its mega-buck media heroes from entertainers to sports figures. I am reminded of an essay by the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, who wrote:

You may be distressed about your dismal financial state, anxious about the failure of your business, feeling miserable after fighting with your spouse, or even nursing an injury suffered when you tripped over your charcoal heater; but ultimately, these are all your very own personal existences. That is, these are all expressions of the workings of your own life. Carrying this thought a step further, all of the phenomena of your existence are a matter of changes within your own life. Thus, isn’t it crucial that we change our lives for the better and strive to attain a permanent state of happiness? Therefore, live your own life; in fact, you must perceive that there is actually no other way than to live your own life.¹

COMMENTING on the above passage, SGI President Ikeda said: "We must not be unduly swayed by what other people might think, nor by the organization, nor by society. The most respectable way of life exists in being absolutely true to ourselves based on faith under any circumstances."²

In a letter Nichiren Daishonin sent in 1280 to Sennichi-ama, a sincere, elderly believer living on distant Sado Island in the Sea of Japan, he wrote:

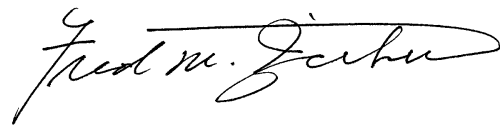
All the various beings in the nine worlds and the six paths differ from one another in their minds. It is like the case of two people, three people or a hundred or a thousand people: Though all have faces about a foot in length, no two look exactly alike. Their minds differ and therefore their faces differ, too. How much greater still is the difference between the minds of two people, of ten people and of all the living beings in the six paths and the nine worlds! So it is that some love the blossoming cherry trees and some love the moon, some prefer sour things and some prefer bitter ones, some like little things and some like big. People have various tastes. Some prefer good and some prefer evil. People are of many kinds.

But though they differ from one another in such ways as these, when they enter into the Lotus Sutra, they all become like a single person in body and a single person in mind. This is just like

the various rivers that, when they flow into the great ocean, all take on a uniformly salty flavor, or like the different kinds of birds that, when they approach Mount Sumeru, all assume the same [golden] hue. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, pp. 295–96)

The philosophy of the Lotus Sutra embraces and harmonizes human diversity. As President Ikeda stated in New York in June of last year: "The Mystic Law is the source that enables us to manifest our unique brilliance against a backdrop of mutual understanding and appreciation of one another's differences; to create a lush garden of cherry, plum, peach and apricot blossoms."

The beginning of respecting another person's life lies in respecting the dignity of our own lives and recognizing that same dignity in others. It is here in the garden of the SGI-USA that we have the unique opportunity to put this ideal into practice.



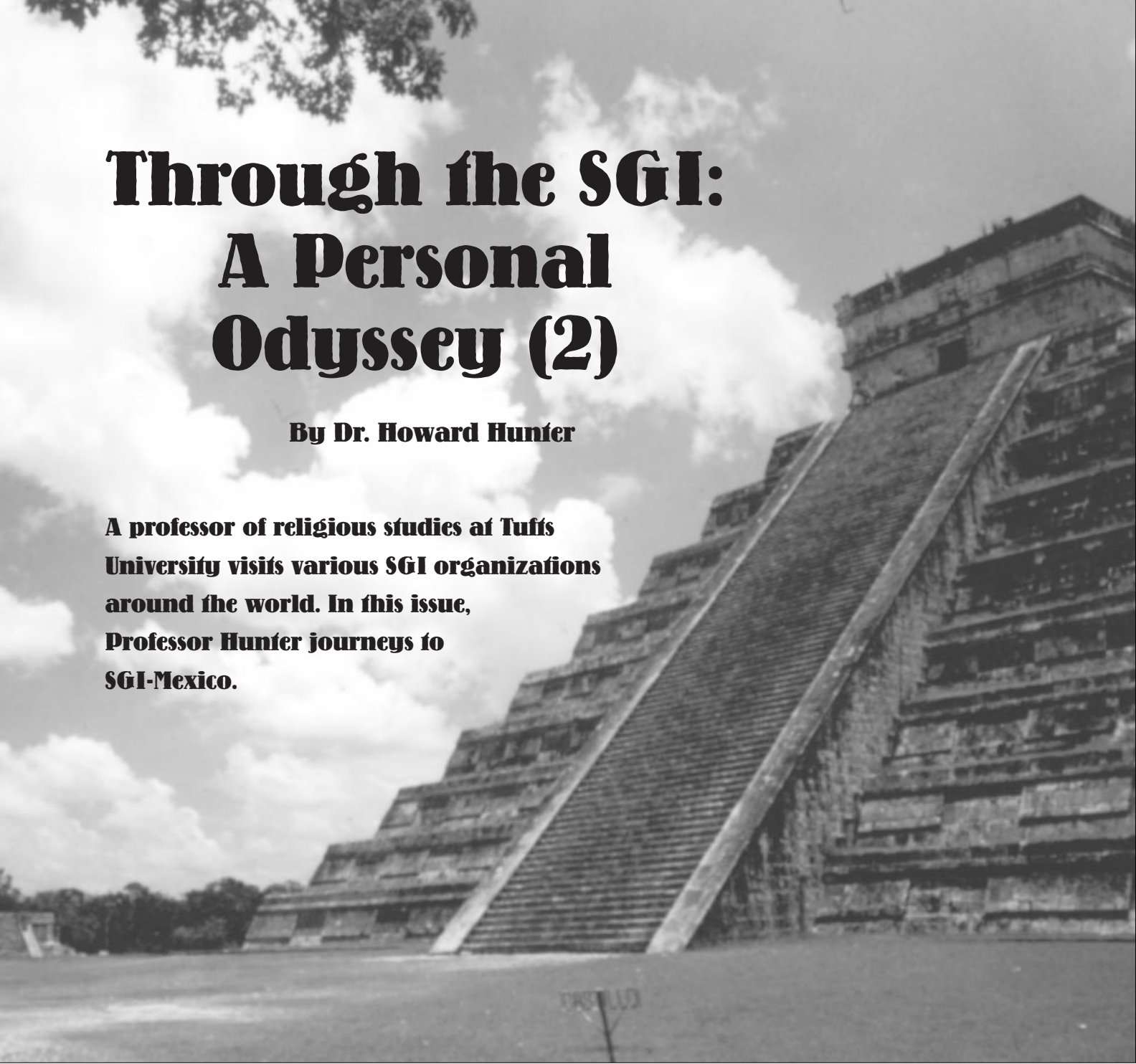
Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

1. Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism in Action*; vol. 7, p. 45.
2. *ibid.*

Through the SGI: A Personal Odyssey (2)

By Dr. Howard Hunter

A professor of religious studies at Tufts University visits various SGI organizations around the world. In this issue, Professor Hunter journeys to SGI-Mexico.



GARY MURIE

Pyramid ruins in Chichén Itzá, a village in Yucatán state, Mexico, once one of the principal centers of the Mayas.

IN a crowded office in an unpretentious building in the sprawling metropolis of Mexico City, five women sat across from me responding to my questions about their membership and participation in Soka Gakkai International. Why, given the rather routine nature of this encounter, did I

have to resist revealing my tears? What was it about this meeting that immediately provoked an emotional response from me? It was the depth of appreciation these women expressed for their Buddhist faith and practice. It was also the simple eloquence of several of the older women as they recalled

their life histories, typical histories of poverty, early marriage, lack of educational opportunities and unending labor. It was also the measured eloquence of one woman who fulfills dual roles as mother of four talented sons and as a career woman working as a medical doctor and administrator, challenging



GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI-Mexico members recognize that the prevailing culture of their country presents both obstacles and opportunities for the development of Buddhist faith and practice, and that those obstacles and opportunities are two sides of the same coin.

roles difficult to maintain anywhere, but especially so in Mexico.

When I heard the testimonies of these women, especially those from humble farm and working class origins, I could not help but think of two groups of people. The first was my own family with its similar story of rural poverty in Appalachia, a chronically impoverished area of the United States. While some instances of religious practice and conviction could be found among my family members, for the most part religion remained a distant and relatively unimportant consideration. These Mexican women, on the other hand, had found in Buddhism a practical and life-enhancing alternative to the prevailing options.

The second group of people who came to mind were the masses of women still experiencing lives of profound hardship, not only economic hardship, which is a condition confronting all of Mexico at present, but also the hardship of male domination, lack of educational encouragement and opportunity and religious authoritarianism.

Several women told of the struggles they had endured to overcome the hostility of their husbands and families as well as the disapproval of religious leaders when they began practicing the Buddhist faith with its stress on individual responsibility and freedom from depersonalizing, conventional social traditions. Each woman in her own unrehearsed

and spontaneous way paid tribute to the central importance of Buddhism's emphasis on the personal obligation to cultivate one's spiritual life as well as the need to offer meaningful assistance to other people in the quest for personal authenticity. They were also thankful for the supportive community of fellow believers without whom they could not have succeeded in revolutionizing their lives.

When I reflected upon their stories, I remembered that I was listening to the stories of only a small fraction of the people living in Mexico City and the country of Mexico. I asked myself what could be the importance of hundreds of Buddhists in a sea of millions of non-Buddhists. The answer was



GREGORY MAKASUI

Monument in Mexico City honoring Benito Pablo Juárez (1806–72), president of Mexico from 1867–71.

revealed in the story of the small boy who was seen at a beach retrieving small starfish one by one from thousands stranded on the beach that were facing certain death. An adult asked the boy why he was wasting his time when it was so clear that he could save only a few of the hundreds that were certain to perish. The boy responded: "What I am doing is important for the one I save." And so it is with the Buddhists of Mexico!

Challenging the Environment

SOKA Gakkai International of Mexico impresses me as an organization with an enthusiastic, energetic, ambitious and highly motivated membership. It has

members representing a wide range of Mexican society, from people in professional careers to workers, students, homemakers and artists. The organization recognizes that the prevailing culture of Mexico presents both obstacles and opportunities for the development of Buddhist faith and practice, and that those obstacles and opportunities are two sides of the same coin.

The entrenched machismo attitudes of male superiority and self-definition in terms of virility as well as patriarchal patterns and a predominant formal religious tradition with its emphasis on tradition, mystery, suffering and dogmatic authority are regarded as both obstacles and opportunities by many

SGI members. While these aspects of Mexican culture may differ from Buddhism's stress on the inherent worth of each individual, the necessity of discovering within one's self the truth of one's life and recognizing that truth alone as truly authoritative, they also cause people to rebel against the prevailing culture. Many people are no longer able to defend traditional machismo attitudes, and many accept only at a ritualistic level the religion which the Spaniards imposed on Mexico centuries ago. The Mexican people's disenchantment with the traditions of the church and with patriarchal society affords the members of SGI significant opportunities for teaching others about their philosophy and practice.

Mexico of today is still a challenging environment for the spread of Buddhist principles, however. Although there is a strong sentiment of anti-authoritarianism in religion, there are vast numbers of people who still profess and practice loyalty toward the church. In fact, in some areas of Mexico it can be extremely dangerous even to question or to deviate from the strictest conformity to traditional patterns of church-dominated society.

One SGI member made the point, however, that in spite of these conditions, more and more Mexicans are searching for something beyond their traditional religious and cultural patterns. Unperturbed by those people who are fanatic in their religious zeal, there are many people who have overcome their fear of that which is different.

A Tool for Living

ONE of the most impressive aspects of SGI-Mexico is its youth division. The youth division members' vitality, humor, intellectual curiosity and obvious joyfulness gave me reason to feel confident about the future of SGI in Mexico.

One student in particular demonstrated keen insight into the distinctive attributes of Buddhist thought. He spoke of his studies of various faiths and his conclusion that Buddhism is a truly universal religion, unlike those religions that preach salvation only for those who accept certain dogma. He said that Buddhism regards all life as valuable and, like water and the sun, it encompasses everything now and forever.

When I asked him to summarize his view of Buddhism as taught by the SGI, he responded

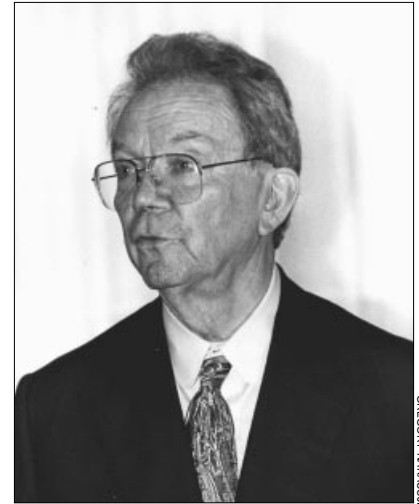
that it is a tool for living, a love for life. He said that Buddhism teaches us to embrace life joyously whatever the circumstances and to keep on growing. He had prepared notes for our interview and had questions for me regarding my reasons for studying the SGI in India, England and Mexico. He even suggested something that I had not recognized: a mystical connection between these countries!

This young man pointed out that the most current scholarship of human origins and cultures shows that pre-Hispanic Mexican cultures had their origins in Asia and that significant similarities exist between the philosophic concepts of Buddhist and pre-Hispanic culture. Both cultures question the meaning of life and death most intensively.

He expressed deep appreciation for the SGI and the guidance it affords him, and he spoke appreciatively of President Ikeda and especially of his book, *Life: An Enigma, A Precious Jewel*. He asked if I knew of it, and I replied that I had a copy in my suitcase!

Surprisingly, it was a question from eleven-year-old Aloysha Vilalpando, following a talk I gave at the Cultural Center of SGI in Mexico City, that captured the essence of my project and its limitations. Standing with a group of adults, he looked up to me and said: "Excuse me, but I have a question. Just how far can you actually penetrate when you are studying someone else's religion?"

What an insightful question at any age! I told him that one could only go as far as descriptions of ideas and actions can go. The true location of the religious life cannot be penetrated by another person, because the true location of reli-



GREGORY NAKASUJI

Dr. Howard Hunter is chairman of the Department of Religion of Tufts University. He has written widely on the social role of religious belief.

gion is in the human heart. It was clear to me that Aloysha knew this before he asked the question. It was a delight to encounter him and so many of his fellow SGI members who recognize that the true source of authority for their faith and practice lies within their hearts. The true Gohonzon, as Nichiren taught, is in the human heart.

Throughout my visit to SGI-Mexico, I was again impressed, as I had been in India, with the unmistakable reality that this organization is fundamentally indigenous, independent, freely chosen, deeply appreciative of the words and leadership of its President Ikeda but not dominated by him or his staff, and made up of studious, self-disciplined members committed to self-realization through lives dedicated to truth and to compassionate concern for all humanity. Presently their numbers are small, only thousands among ninety million, but their organization is strong and has within it the seeds of considerable growth. □



Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures

**Necdet Serin —
Former Rector
of Ankara
University, Turkey**

I HAVE the most profound respect for elementary school teachers," declares Dr. Necdet Serin, former rector of Turkey's Ankara University. Elementary education builds the fundamental framework for a child's character and as such is the most important level of education, he believes.

When I asked what he thought was elementary education's key role, he replied: "To develop children's creativity and self-confidence. Helping children to develop confidence in themselves, to trust themselves, enables them to grow in their capabilities. Once their creative powers have been unlocked, children will study on their own. I admit, however, that when it comes to how this is best achieved, I'm not really in a position to offer any insights. It is a very challenging task. That is why I have so much admiration for elementary school teachers."



SGI President Ikeda receives an honorary doctorate from Rector Necdet Serin of Ankara University, June 1992.

Being a university professor doesn't necessarily make one superior; on the contrary, he believes, those who are tackling the most challenging task of elementary school are the ones who are truly commendable. Dr. Serin's brief remarks reveal his profound perspective on people and on education.

I understand that he himself was blessed with a wonderful teacher in the first grade of elementary school.

Dr. Serin's observations may seem very simple, but they contain a humanism that shakes Japan's hierarchical society, its distorted values, to the core. Amazing as it may seem, a certain educational specialist in Japan has come up with a paired ranking of IQs and professions, which he divides into six levels. He suggests that those in the highest IQ bracket are suitable for such professions as university professors, high-level government administrators

and attorneys; those of the next IQ bracket, for doctors and secondary school teachers; and those of the third bracket, for nurses and elementary school teachers!

THIS type of pyramid hierarchy, in which each person is assigned a rank and a place, is firmly rooted in the minds of Japanese people and in Japanese society. We even rank our universities in order of their prestigiousness and then rank our high schools according to how many of their students manage to enter the most elite universities. This ensures that all but the select few, who reach the very top of the pyramid, are fated to be frustrated in their ambitions and left with only a bitter sense of defeat and a profound loss of self-esteem. It is not surprising, then, that people's basic values, their very humanity, should grow twisted and misshapen.

The end product of such a hierarchical society is a country in which the majority, void of confidence and esteem, is dominated by a small elite that is poisoned by feelings of superiority toward their fellow human beings. A hierarchical nation also ranks other countries, fawning on those it regards superior to itself and acting arrogantly toward those it regards inferior. Such behavior is truly deplorable.

What we see at work here is a fundamentally flawed view of humanity. How can it be possible to assign any rank to this precious, irreplaceable treasure called life?

I first visited Ankara University — which also happens to be Dr. Serin's alma mater — three years ago in June 1992. Ankara, the Turkish capital, extends across the slope of a mountain rising to more than 3,000 feet above sea level. As I stepped out of the plane at

Mr. Ikeda delivers a commemorative lecture titled "A New Silk Road From the Cradle of Civilization" at Turkey's Ankara University, June 1992.



Ankara's Esenboga Airport after our flight from Istanbul, the air was dry and the skies clear, reminding me of the Japanese island of Hokkaido.

We passed through the old part of the city, with its many historical sites, and entered an orderly modern city, where the university and its many different departments are located. I paid a visit to the Atatürk Mausoleum, which stands on a rise overlooking the city. It is a magnificent monument to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), the founder and first president of modern Turkey. Towering marble columns stood proudly under the bright, clear Anatolian skies.

Kemal Atatürk embarked on a momentous reformation of his country — well described in the words of British historian Arnold Toynbee as an endeavor corresponding to "the Renaissance, the Reformation, the secularist, scientific, ... the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution ... telescoped into a single lifetime..."¹

What made such an undertaking possible? The answer lies in the fact that the Turkish leader's first task was to restore the people's faith and pride in themselves. For several centuries, the ancient Ottoman Empire had continued its steady decline. The great powers hovered at Turkey's borders, ever ready to devour its riches and territory. The nation's rulers conspired with the invaders to protect their own interests. For too long, the Turkish people had been scorned, exploited and oppressed.

Anyone's confidence would be

undermined if they were ignored or told for a long enough time that they were inferior. Anyone would lose the energy and courage to demonstrate their true potential. Atatürk called out to the Turkish people to hold up their heads, to be proud of themselves. You are the nation's most valuable treasure, he said. You are its rulers. You are its hope. You are its light.

ONCE, when a general of one of Turkey's allies disparaged Turkish soldiers as being cowardly, Atatürk replied in anger: "A Turkish soldier never runs off. He does not know the meaning of the word retreat. You, general, if you saw the backs of Turkish soldiers, it was because you yourself were running off! How dare you blame a Turkish soldier for your own cowardice!"²

His heart a raging sea of love and trust for the people, he was adamant: The soldiers are not to blame; their leaders are. Because you, the leader, are cowardly, the troops do not follow you.

Atatürk also dared to oppose those who used religion to dominate the people and for his activities he was excommunicated by the religious authorities. He was not in the least perturbed, however. He once said: "To be disowned, ridiculed, crucified, what does it matter... Yet one must be a man ... yes, one must

be a man, stirred by a deep faith and strengthened by these beliefs."³

The focus of the Turkish reformation was the creation of such confident individuals. Atatürk's goal was to instill fresh pride in the Turkish people whom he loved so dearly.

This was also evident in his ambition, once independence was achieved, to "establish a new school every day." "Teachers and educators are the sole salvation of the nation," he declared. He devoted himself to giving people access to new knowledge and building a new society in the process. He personally even devised a new alphabet corresponding to the colloquial speech of the people and taught it to them. He went from town to town, village to village, chalk and blackboard in hand. In one of those villages, the president taught a farmer to write his own name. "I can write!" cried the farmer in excitement and joy, and the president embraced him and congratulated him.

"I can do it, if I try!" — the joy of people savoring this realization is the starting point of all true education. Isn't it the very purpose of education to make that joy available to all?

Dr. Serin has a personal warmth that puts all who meet him at ease immediately. He is forthright and sincere without the least pretense or arrogance. He says: "What is the

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first president of modern Turkey, and his wife, Latife, in 1923. President Kemal's reforms included the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, the Swiss civil code and universal education, and women were given equal rights.

source of my strength? It is my friends. I don't want anything for myself. I've always thought only of being of service to others. Life may be fine today, but we never know what tomorrow will bring, and that is why it is important for people to help each other."

When he was university rector, Dr. Serin established an Ankara University Fund to provide assistance to students. Among its many contributions, the fund also made it possible for one student to have liver surgery in the United States and another to have brain surgery in Sweden. "My message to young people," says Dr. Serin, "is to help others. We mustn't be self-centered. I would like young people to grow up to exert themselves for their families and their society, viewing things from the long term rather than pursuing only temporary desires and concerns."

DURING our talks together in Japan, Dr. Serin illuminated the Turkish national character for me by sharing one of their proverbs: "If you have a loaf of bread, give half to those in need."

What type of human being is really superior? Isn't it the person who has the compassion to share another's pain and suffering? This is the mark of true excellence as a human being.

I'd like to share a story I heard from a Japanese acquaintance. When he was an elementary school student, his family was very poor,



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and he dreaded the day each year when his teacher made the customary home visit to meet with his parents. They were so poor that they didn't even have a decent cushion for the teacher to sit on, so his mother had to borrow one from next door. She even went to the trouble of preparing some sweets for the guest, even though the family could never afford to eat such delicacies themselves.

But in spite of all her efforts, the teacher didn't even deign to sit on the worn cushion or try even one of the sweets. As the visit came to an end, his mother wrapped the sweets up and gave them to the teacher. But once outside the door, the teacher tossed the small package to the ground. The young boy saw the whole thing. After the teacher had gone, he started to pick up the sweets to eat, but his mother shouted, "Don't touch them!" She refused to allow him to taste them. My friend still remembers

the angry and bitter tears his mother shed that day, though it was decades ago.

How can a person who is so unconcerned with human feelings, with a child's sadness, be responsible for educating others?

A society in which people have become machine-like existences, incapable of heart-to-heart communication and indifferent to the feelings and emotions of other human beings, is a frightening thing. The underlying values of contemporary Japanese society are now being called sharply into question. □

1. Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 28.

2. Translated from French: Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Le Loup et le Léopard: Mustapha Kemal ou la mort d'un Empire* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1954), p. 171.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

DEDICATED TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF HUMANITY

BY CRAIG DEROUSSE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ON Feb. 16, 1222, a baby boy named Zennichimaro was born in the tiny Japanese fishing town of Kominato, or “Littleport,” which overlooked the Pacific Ocean. Zennichimaro was the only child of a poor fisherman, Mikuni, and his wife, Umegiku. Although details of his earliest years

with his parents or continuing his studies toward becoming a priest. He chose the latter.

On entering the priesthood, Zennichimaro was renamed Rencho, meaning “growth of the lotus,” and moved to Kamakura to further his studies. For the next several years, Rencho studied many forms of

First Invocation of the Mystic Law

EARLY on April 28, 1253, Rencho climbed a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean and awaited morning. As the sun rose above the horizon, the young man from Kominato greeted it with humanity’s first invocation of the Mystic Law, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Much more than the title of the Lotus Sutra to young Rencho, it was the essence of the Lotus Sutra itself, the ultimate reality of life.

Returning to Seicho-ji from the hilltop, Rencho announced his revelations to the gathered priests and students. At high noon, he made his proclamation and declared all other Buddhist sects to be provisional teachings.

In addition to refuting the existing sects of Buddhism, Rencho changed his name to Nichiren or “Sun Lotus” which, he said, “Signifies that I attained enlightenment by myself” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 236). This was of great philosophical importance.

Shakyamuni had declared that he originally attained enlightenment in

This “Topics for Discussion Meetings” series is intended to stimulate lively conversations about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

are sketchy, we know that there were no public schools to attend. The only formal education available to him was found on the green hilltops of Mount Kiyosumi, which cushioned the town against the Pacific Ocean. It was here, at age 11, that Zennichimaro entered the temple Seicho-ji, where he studied Buddhist doctrine in both Japanese and Chinese. A brilliant student, he soon exhibited a profound mastery of both languages as well as a powerfully beautiful writing style.

After several years of intense study, at 15, Zennichimaro had to choose between returning to life

Buddhism and eventually moved on to other centers of learning in Japan, such as Kyoto and Nara. As his studies progressed, however, Rencho grew increasingly dissatisfied with the confused state of Buddhism in Japan, and he embarked on a personal quest to find the ultimate truth of Buddhism.

By age 30, Rencho was convinced that the Lotus Sutra was superior to all other sutras. He perceived the direct path to enlightenment within its title, Myho-renge-kyo. At age 31, he returned to Kominato to announce his revelations in an audience with his childhood mentors at Seicho-ji.

an unimaginably distant time in the infinite past. Shakyamuni also referred to past Buddhas from whom he had learned the truth of life, such as one of his fathers from a past life who had been enlightened in another remote period of time.

Although Shakyamuni never indicated that he attained enlightenment on his own, Nichiren specifically stated that he became a Buddha by himself. This is why he is sometimes called “the original Buddha.” This is not to say, however, that Nichiren was in any way better than anyone else.

The Original Buddha and a Common Person Are the Same

SINCE many of us have been conditioned to believe that religious practitioners can never attain the enlightened state of our religion’s founder, we may be compelled to think of Nichiren as a superhuman or god-like being. However, Nichiren himself taught that the original Buddha and a common person are the same. As he wrote just two years after he first invoked the Mystic Law:

While deluded, one is called a common mortal, but once enlightened, he is called a Buddha. Even a tarnished mirror will shine like a jewel if it is polished. A mind which presently is clouded by illusions originating from the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but once it is polished it will become clear, reflecting the enlightenment of immutable truth. Arouse deep faith and polish your mirror night and day. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. (MW-1, pp. 4-5)

Although millions of practitioners in ages to follow would praise his advent, Nichiren was greeted with much less enthusiasm by the Japanese people of 1253. Since he felt that the truth of Buddhism had been completely misunderstood, Nichiren tirelessly worked to establish the essential practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the direct path to enlightenment in one’s lifetime.

Due to his dynamic personality and remarkable success in converting practitioners of other sects, his life was in constant danger from jealous political and religious leaders. He was exiled, nearly assassinated, publicly denounced and ridiculed along with his followers, several of whom were executed because of their refusal to renounce their faith.

After years of such persecution and remonstrance with the Japanese government, which continued to support the Shingon faith despite ongoing domestic disasters and foreign invasion, Nichiren retired to Mount Minobu. It was there that he would fulfill the ultimate mission of his life.

Staunch Faith Now Appeared To Be the Rule

ON Oct. 3, 1279, Nichiren received word from Nikko that some farmer-disciples in Atsuhara had been arrested and tortured, facing possible execution for their faith. Even so, they refused to recant. Previously, many disciples had wavered during persecutions; therefore, only a handful of the staunchest followers had been bestowed Gohonzon. But since staunch faith now appeared to be the rule rather than the exception, Nichiren decided to inscribe a Gohonzon for the entire world.

This, he believed, was the ultimate mission of his life: to ensure that the Law he propagated would be physically embodied in ink, which he then directed one of his disciples to carve into a wooden plank to last “for ten thousand millennia.”

On Oct. 12, 1279, twenty-seven years after his declaration of the True Law and three days before three farmer-disciples were put to death for their refusal to deny the greatness of Myoho-renge-kyo, Nichiren inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity. In the lower left corner on the Dai-Gohonzon is a dedication to a fictional lay believer who represents the common people of the world who would now inherit the direct path to enlightenment, and on the right side are the words *bestowed upon the entire world*.

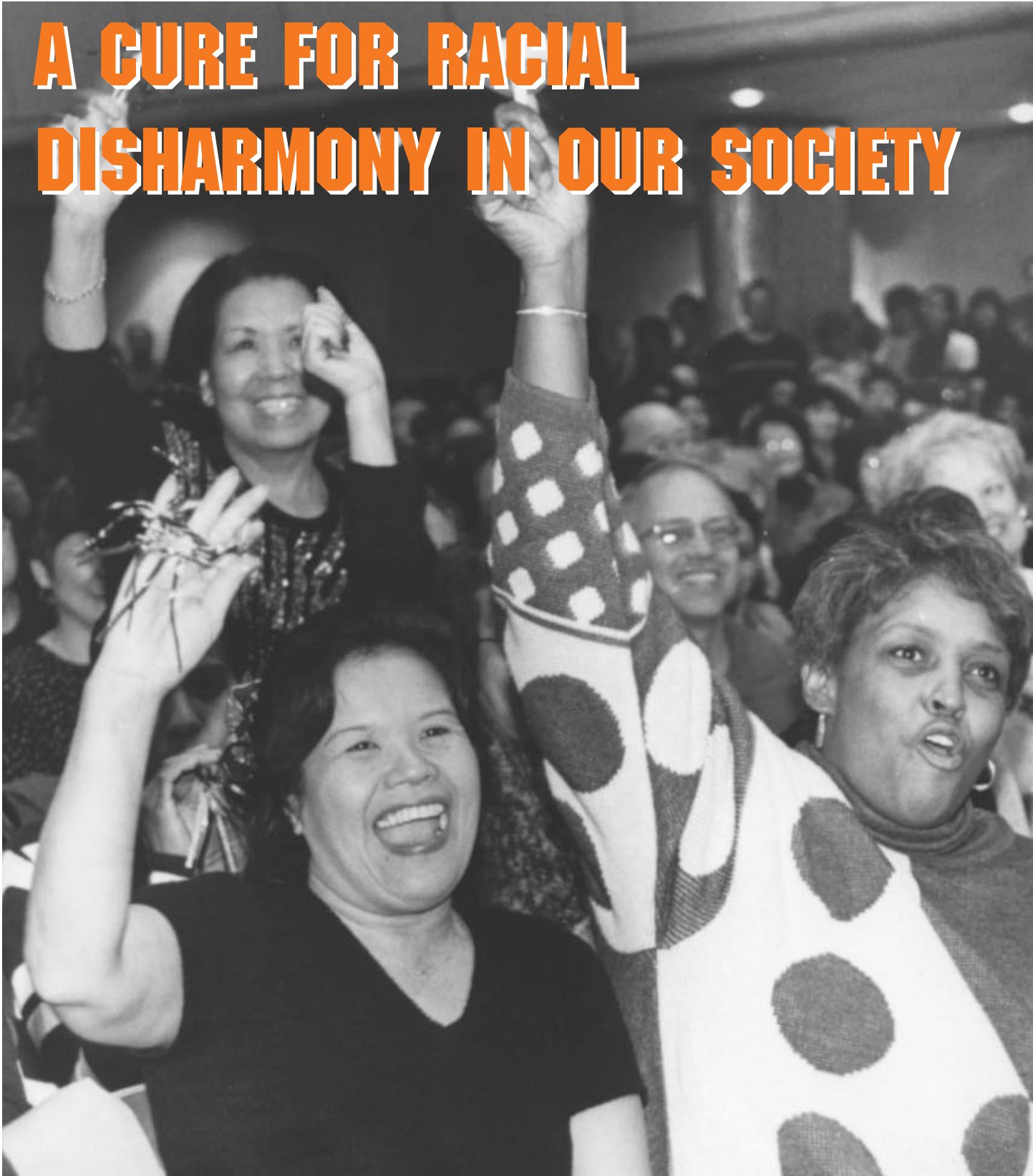
Over the next few years, Nichiren’s health began to fail, and he knew the time had come to transfer his responsibilities to his most trusted disciple, Nikko.

On his way to a hot spring, Nichiren realized his time of death was near and stopped at the home of his disciple, Ikegami Munenaka.

It was there, on the morning of October 13, 1282, that while he and his disciples calmly chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo together, Nichiren—Rencho, Zennichimaro, the boy from “Littleport”—breathed his last in this lifetime and moved peacefully on.

For a more detailed account of the life and times of “the boy from Littleport,” please read the revised edition of The Life of Nichiren Daishonin, published in 1993 by NSIC, Tokyo, available at SGI-USA community centers or through mail order.

A CURE FOR RACIAL DISHARMONY IN OUR SOCIETY



The Practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in Modern Society: The So

The following essay is based on a presentation given at the 1996 Conference of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies at DePaul University, Chicago, July 29, 1996.

**By Darlene Oliver
Chicago**

IN 1992, the world looked on in disbelief as riots broke out in South Central Los Angeles after a jury exonerated four white policemen of serious charges in the videotaped beating of a black man named Rodney King. Those riots were the result of decades of frustration felt by many African Americans at the perceived injustice of the legal system.

In 1995, the world again sat in disbelief as O.J. Simpson, an African American man, was exonerated of charges for the brutal murders of Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman. Many whites were angered and believed that the legal system had failed to punish the person they viewed as being obviously responsible for the killings. Many African Americans, on the other hand, rejoiced in the verdict and believed that they "had finally won one [a legal decision]."

Both of these spectacles, or tragedies in American history, offered many parallels. They seemed to further fragment race relations in this country and to highlight the role that the legal system has played in fostering racial inequities and injustice.

The general purpose of the laws of society was to create a civilized, harmonious system to bring people out of the chaos that existed when there were no rules. The aftermath of the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson verdicts, and the adverse effect they have had on race relations, demonstrate that this system of rules, or the "civil law," is failing to create the peace and civility originally intended.

Despite our best efforts, such as the desegregation of schools, fair housing and equal employment laws, racism and racial tensions permeate our society. This is so

GREGORY NAKASUJI



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because we cannot legislate away the deeply rooted insecurities that cause people to hate and distrust people of other ethnicities. Nor can we legislate away feelings of inferiority brought on by centuries of slavery and discrimination. Instead, what we need to foster true equality is a “law” that focuses on healing each individual — a spiritual or mystic law.

NICHIREN Daishonin’s Buddhism focuses on the existence of an all-encompassing mystic law within the individual — rather than an external societal or civil law — as the key to ending the suffering of all people and as a result, the disunity and disharmony among the races that permeate society today. Nichiren Buddhism also teaches the interconnectedness of all human beings, such that we can achieve our highest potential when we perceive the inherent greatness of our lives as well as the lives of others.

Let’s examine the insecurities that underlie the African American and white American experience. Among many African Americans, there is a prevailing belief that they can never achieve their highest potential because white society is designed to either limit their success or ensure their failure. This belief is felt across socioeconomic lines.

In his book, *The Rage of a Privileged Class: Why are middle-class blacks angry? Why should America care?*, Ellis Cose posits that despite the economic growth and status that middle-class African Americans have achieved as the direct beneficiaries of the civil rights movement, there is a prevailing sense of despair among that group. Many middle-class blacks believe that because of racism they will never be able to advance to the top of their professions. An African American female who resigned from a high-paying job at a Fortune 500 company is

quoted in Cose’s book as saying that, “the bottom line is you’re black, and that’s still a negative in society” (p. 6).

In her book *No Disrespect*, Sister Souljah also views white society as being the ultimate barrier to the progress of poor urban blacks. She states: “I could see every day, as I walked to work, how the processes and practices of institutionalized white racism and the way those whites in power had designed, organized and maintained the lifestyle of urban Africans had created a pressure cooker in which blacks could no longer survive” (p. 237).

Cose and Souljah echo sentiments felt by many people of color that their potential to achieve ultimate happiness and success is limited by white society. However, true racial harmony will never exist if African Americans continue to believe that white society controls their ultimate destiny, because such

(Photo at left) The Rev. Martin Luther King (sixth from right) participates in a march down Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C., Aug. 29, 1963. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), is at far right.

(Photo at right) Ku Klux Klan supporters march through downtown Houston July 5, 1990, to a rally for white power the weekend prior to the start of the Economic Summit. Approximately seventy Klansmen marched and were followed by hundreds of screaming protestors.



REUTERS/CORBIS-BETTANN

limited views become barriers to success in and of themselves.

Many African Americans also feel a sense of inferiority and devalue their own lives. We see this phenomenon in black-on-black crimes, gang violence and the drug use that exist in many of our communities. Again, Sister Souljah holds the view that whites have caused these feelings of inferiority. She states: "Racism has turned our [African American] communities into war zones where we are dying every day. It is black on black hate, created by racism and white supremacy that is killing us. Black people killing black people. It is a sad measure of our profound contempt for each other and our thoroughgoing self-loathing that we continue to persist in this ugly practice" (p. 350).

Cose and Souljah both highlight the insecurities felt within the African American community and focus on racism and white society as the cause of African American

suffering. However, this view is limited because it focuses on external factors as the cause and solution for this suffering, instead of looking internally at the individual. The cause of the emotional suffering and insecurities within the African American community is the inability to perceive the true nature or worth of their existence; a concept that I will review shortly.

INSECURITIES also permeate the experiences of white Americans. Many whites believe that they are inherently superior to people of color, especially African Americans. Some also feel that the economic and social gains made by African Americans have somehow caused them, meaning whites, harm.

In 1991, ABC's "Prime Time Live" demonstrated how this idea of whites believing they are superior to African Americans still exists in our society. Over a period of two-and-one-half weeks, the program followed two "testers," one black

and one white. Both were trained to present themselves in an identical manner in a variety of situations. While at times the two men were treated equally, over and over again, every single day, they were not. The white tester got instant service at an electronics store; the black man was ignored. The black man was followed, not helped, by a white salesman in a record store. In an apartment complex, the white man was given the keys to view an apartment, while the black man was told that the apartment was rented (Cose, p. 4).

The insecurities of White America also come in the form of fear that economic and social progress made by African Americans and other people of color somehow diminishes the economic and social progress of whites. For example, a national survey of American youth conducted in 1991 by Peter Hart Research Associates found whites more likely to believe that "qualified whites" were more harmed by affirmative



(Photo at left) Hundreds of SGI-USA members participated in Hands Across L.A., organized June 14, 1992, in the aftermath of the civil unrest.

(Photo at right) A business man holds his hand to his head as the store he owns burns down across the street from him in the early morning hours April 30, 1992. Dozens of arson fires were set in South Central Los Angeles after the acquittal of four LAPD officers in the beating trial of Rodney King.

action than that qualified minorities were harmed by racial discrimination (Cose, p. 9). This type of thinking has no doubt been a catalyst for referendums such as Proposition 209, which is aimed at nullifying affirmative action policies in the state of California.

Just as African Americans are mistaken in their belief that whites are the cause of their suffering, whites are equally mistaken in their feelings of superiority and their fear that social and economic progress by people of color somehow negatively affects whites.

Another false view that both whites and African Americans hold is the belief that each race is inherently different from the other; that there is no common ground between them. In fact, both races suffer from the inability to perceive the true nature of their own lives and the lives of others, a concept that I alluded to earlier.

In the "Prophecy of Enlightenment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, there is a parable called the "Gem in the Robe" about:

... a man who went to the house of a close friend and, having become drunk on wine, lay down to sleep. At that time the friend had to go

out on official business. He took a priceless jewel, sewed it in the lining of the man's robe, and left it with him when he went out. The man was asleep, drunk, and knew nothing about it. When he got up, he set out on a journey to other countries. In order to provide himself with food and clothing, he had to search with all his energy and diligence, encountering great hardship and making do with what little he could come by.

The story goes on to say:

"Later, the close friend happened to meet him by chance. The friend said, 'How absurd, old fellow! Why should you have to do all this for the sake of food and clothing? In the past I wanted to make certain you would be able to live in ease and satisfy the five desires, and so on such-and-such a day and month and year I took a priceless jewel and sewed it in the lining of your robe. It must still be there now. But you did not know about it, and fretted and wore yourself out trying to provide a living for yourself. What nonsense! Now you must take the jewel and exchange it for goods. Then you can have whatever you wish at all

times and never experience poverty or want'" (Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 150-151).

In our society, whites and blacks are like the poor man stumbling along in life, blaming each other for their "impoverished" condition. The insecurity, or the suffering among the races, is caused by their inability to perceive the true nature, or the "gem" of the highest human potential that exists in their own lives and the lives of others. Instead of focusing on the internal, individual mystic law that exists within each of us, we have created a system of external, social law to create some sense of equality among the races. However, this socially created system of equality remains artificial. And that is because it fails to address the insecurities and fears felt by African Americans and whites.

If I am taught as a child to believe that I am inherently inferior, there is no man-made law that can change my inability to see my inherent greatness. If I am taught as a child to believe that people of color are inferior and that any progress made by that group somehow takes away from my own ability to progress,



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then I resent man-made laws designed to assist people of color.

Given this deep-seated inability to appreciate one's own worth and the worth of others, it is understandable that social or civil law has been unable to create true equality among the races. Equality is a state of being that is reached when an individual feels neither superior nor inferior to another individual for any reason — racial or otherwise. Therefore, to reach true equality among the races, we must make revolutionary, though gradual, changes within the psyche of the individual and illuminate each person's individual worth. Dialogue among the races is essential to this process. (Daisaku Ikeda, "In Search of New Principles of Integration," March 1993 *Seikyo Times*).

Nichiren Buddhism does away with the insecurities and fears of the individual by teaching that each person is inherently great. Nichiren Daishonin states: "Life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 267).

He also expounded on the fundamental equality of all human beings by recognizing the "gem" or the highest human potential in every

individual. On that fundamental level, regardless of status or race, we are all equal because we inherently possess a life of great goodness (Greg Martin, "A Buddhist Perspective on Diversity," August 1993 *Seikyo Times*).

In addition to the inherent equality of all individuals Buddhism also teaches that there is a common thread connecting all life, a "dependent origination" (Martin, p. 32). "Nothing in this world exists alone; everything comes into being and continues in response to causes and conditions" (Daisaku Ikeda, "The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land," March 1993 *Seikyo Times*). It is important that we come to understand this connection and how we relate to others. The term *dependent origination* means to be able to recognize the connection of all living things, while also being able to appreciate the worth or the value in each individual.

"We need to remember that we owe people so much. Dependent origination implies that we need to feel and express appreciation for the efforts of others." (Martin, p. 32). Our society could break through the bonds of racial insecurities and inequality if each individual would embrace these higher principles.

Having discussed my views on racial diversity and the Buddhist solution, I would like to leave everyone with this challenge:

When neighbors distance themselves from neighbors, continue your uncompromising quest for your truer roots in the deepest regions of your lives. Seek out the primordial "roots" of humankind.

Then you will without fail discover the stately expanse of *Jiyu*

[emerging from the earth] unfolding in the depths of your life. Here is the home, the dwelling place to which humankind traces its original existence — beyond all borders, beyond all differences of gender and race.

Here is a world offering true proof of our humanity.

If one reaches back to these fundamental roots, all become friends and comrades. To realize this is to "emerge from the earth."

(Daisaku Ikeda, "The Sun of *Jiyu* over a New Land," March 1993 *Seikyo Times*) □



DORIS HOPSON

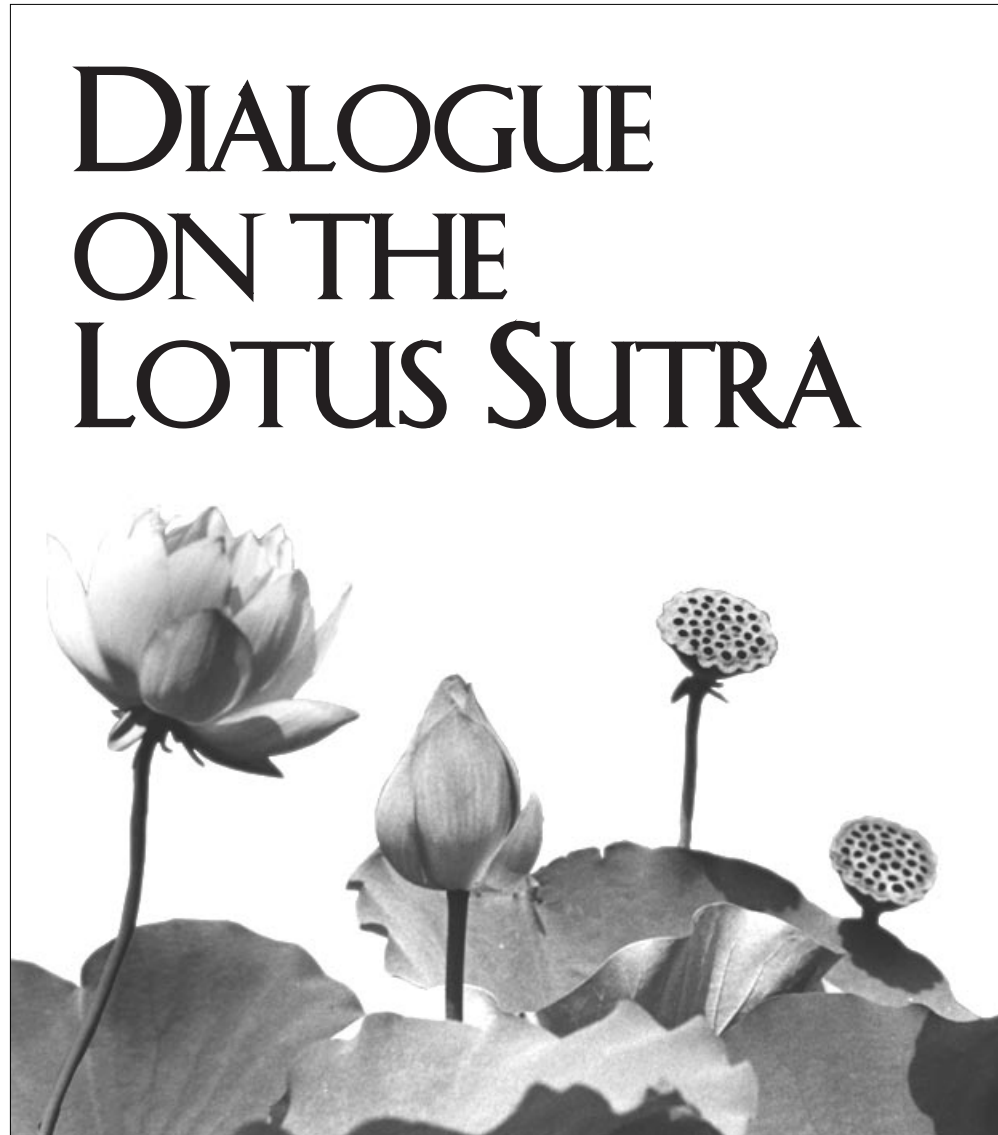
Darlene Oliver is an attorney in private practice in Chicago. She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center in 1994.

This is the sixteenth installment in a series of discussions on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and Vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the May 1996 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

This time, they discuss the identity of the “teacher” in the “Teacher of the Law” (tenth) chapter, as well as the two modes of propagation, shoju and shakubuku; the three rules of preaching, robe, seat and room; and the principle of “deliberately creating the appropriate karma.”

Suda: The exhibition of photographs by Rajiv Gandhi (1944–91), the late former prime minister of India, has been very well received.

[The exhibition, which includes two hundred photographs taken by Rajiv Gandhi, an avid photographer since childhood, was on display at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in Hachioji, Tokyo, through May 19, 1996. It was also shown in Chiba Prefecture in June, and in Saitama Prefecture in September.]



DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA

Endo: The photos convey a certain warmth that is beyond words to describe. In particular, the photos of elderly people and children that he took during his travels left me with a sense of the depth of his love for the Indian people.

Ikeda: Rajiv Gandhi valued the modest handmade items that people gave him—a shellwork or a basket woven from bamboo—as though they were treasures.

I understand he would occasionally take these items out and hold

them in his hands with a look of fond reminiscence.

Rajiv Gandhi was a leader of conviction. At the same time, he always prized sincerity.

Saito: Speaking before the Japanese Diet [on November 29, 1985], Prime Minister Gandhi asserted, “The Buddha’s message of compassion is the very condition of human survival in our age.”¹

His meeting with you, President Ikeda, immediately followed this address.

THE WISDOM OF THE LOTUS SUTRA—
A DISCUSSION ON RELIGION IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



Ikeda: That's right. Although he must have been exhausted, he was smiling and had a look of peace and tranquillity about him. The moment we shook hands, I intuitively sensed that behind his gentle countenance was a person of rock-like strength who really threw himself one hundred percent into achieving his goals.

Saito: That was only a year after the assassination of his mother, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1917–84).

Ikeda: Asked once what was the most important thing she had inherited from her father Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), Indira Gandhi replied it was her great love for the Indian people. Had Rajiv Gandhi been asked what the most important thing he had received from his mother was, his answer would doubtless have been the same.

Not even the terrorist bombing that took his life [in May 1991] could have destroyed the love for the people that continually burned in Rajiv Gandhi's heart. I believe people

have a mission to fulfill that transcends life and death. The lives of those who embrace a mission to which they can wholeheartedly dedicate themselves and even be willing to die for are the most sublime.

Endo: I have vivid recollections of the time you laid a wreath at Rajiv Gandhi's tomb [in February 1992]. I accompanied you on that visit to India. I recall that in the register of the memorial, you wrote, "There are times when the lives of great leaders seem tragic, but they are actually great, magnificent dramas that serve to eternally awaken the people."

Suda: After Rajiv Gandhi's death, you and Mrs. Ikeda met with his wife, Sonia Gandhi, to console and encourage her. "I really hope that you can change your sad destiny into a cause for realizing an important mission in India," you told her. "Although it may be difficult not to look back, I hope you will keep advancing ever forward. That is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, who was born in this great land of India." Over and over, I read the account of your meeting that appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

Ikeda: We can change even painful destiny into mission. The Lotus Sutra teaches this strong and resilient way of life. This is what the "Teacher of the Law" chapter explains when it speaks of the great bodhisattvas who, while capable of being born into pure lands if they so desired, choose instead to be born into impure worlds so that they can expound the Lotus Sutra to help those suffering. We who now spread the Mystic Law in this world are the bodhisattvas to whom the sutra refers. We are enacting a grand drama that we ourselves chose.

SGI President Ikeda met with India's prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, at the State Guesthouse in Tokyo, November 29, 1985.



SEIKYO PRESS

This time, let us discuss the “Teacher of the Law” chapter.

The Lotus Sutra Was Expounded for the Latter Day

“... you should understand that these persons voluntarily relinquish the reward due them for their pure deeds and, in the time after I have passed into extinction, because they pity living beings, they are born in this evil world so they may broadly expound this sutra. If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One’s work. (*The Lotus Sutra*, ch. 10, pp. 161–62)

Ikeda: In a sense, all the preceding chapters up to this point have been

nothing more than preparation. The most important part of the Lotus Sutra—which represents Shakyamuni’s true intent—begins with the “Teacher of the Law” chapter.

Suda: In the progression of events that take place from this chapter on, we see a radical departure from the flow of the preceding chapters. Specifically, in this chapter, Shakyamuni begins discussing the time after his death.

Ikeda: The period after the Buddha’s death primarily means the Latter Day of the Law. Shakyamuni addresses the issue of how people should live in a time when there is confusion about which teachings are correct and which erroneous.

In the first installment in this series, we described the present as an age lacking philosophy. Who, specifically, will light the way in an “age of darkness” when people cannot see the correct path forward? The “Teacher of the Law” chapter explains in detail the identity of that “person”—in other words, “the

teacher of the Law.” In modern terms, the “teacher of the Law” could be termed a spiritual leader.

Saito: In light of the overall thrust of this chapter, “teacher of the Law” has a dual meaning. It indicates both one who “makes the Law his master” and one who “becomes a teacher and spreads the Law.” These are the two sides of a bodhisattva. “Making the Law one’s master” is the aspect of a bodhisattva as a “seeker of the Way.” “The teacher who spreads the Law” exemplifies the aspect of a bodhisattva as someone who strives to lead others to enlightenment.

Ikeda: Teachers of the Law unite both of these qualities in themselves. To forget the “seeking” side is to become arrogant; to forget the “saving” side is to become self-centered. While continuing to deepen their own understanding, teachers of the Law lead others to happiness; and through helping others become happy, they further deepen their understanding. Seek-



The late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's wife, Sonia, and his children, Priyanka and Rahul, attended the opening of the "Rajiv Gandhi: An Intimate Vision" photo exhibition, at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, April 12, 1996.

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ing the Law is itself leading others to enlightenment; and leading others to enlightenment is itself seeking the Law. Herein lies the supreme path in life.

Saito: That this is a path for all people is the key point, isn't it? In this chapter, the distinction between lay people, on the one hand, and monks and nuns, on the other, is revealed as completely irrelevant. In one place, it speaks of "the lay persons or monks or nuns who read and recite the Lotus Sutra" (LS10, 162). As this suggests, the identity of the teacher of the Law transcends distinctions of clerical and lay.

Nikken² and his followers assert, among other things, that priests are inherently superior to lay believers. It is patently obvious, however, that such a discriminatory attitude goes completely against the words of the Lotus Sutra.

Endo: The teachers of the Law expound the Lotus Sutra to others while themselves upholding, read-

ing and reciting the sutra. Their practice comes down to continually talking with people and enabling them to hear about the Lotus Sutra.

Ikeda: In a sense, it is a struggle of words, a campaign of dialogue. Our movement to conduct dialogue truly accords with the spirit of the "Teacher of the Law" chapter.

Shakyamuni spent his entire life, until the day he passed away, talking with people. Nichiren Daishonin, similarly, in addition to his efforts at dialogue, left behind a vast body of writings held to be larger than that of any Japanese person of his day. He truly wrote and spoke exhaustively. And because of his noble efforts later generations can learn the teachings he expounded.

It is a battle of words. Words illuminate not only the time when they are uttered or set down, but future ages as well. In the hope of leaving behind something of value for future generations, I give speeches on Buddhism and conduct dialogues with world leaders.

Endo: In the preceding eight chapters—from the second, "Expedient Means," through the ninth, "Prophecies Conferred on Learners and Adepts"—Shakyamuni's central concern is to enable his present disciples to attain Buddhahood. As a result of his preaching in these chapters, all of the voice-hearers enter the path of attaining Buddhahood. In other words, in his preaching up to and including the "Learners and Adepts" chapter, Shakyamuni confirms that his immediate disciples will all attain supreme enlightenment. In that sense, the preaching in these chapters is for Shakyamuni's contemporaries.

Ikeda: That is certainly how these eight chapters look on the surface. But viewed in the context of the entire Lotus Sutra, it becomes apparent that these eight chapters are also in fact for the age after the Buddha's passing.

Actually, not just these eight chapters but the entire Lotus Sutra is for the time after the Buddha's death. Nichiren Daishonin says that the Lotus Sutra's theoretical

teaching (or first half) appears to have been expounded for the voice-hearer disciples who were Shakyamuni's contemporaries. However, on a deeper level, he explains, it, like the Lotus Sutra's essential teaching (or latter half), was taught for people after the Buddha's passing, for the people of the Latter Day (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 71).

Endo: That's why the portion of the sutra from the "Teacher of the Law" chapter on is so important. According to Nichiren Daishonin, the five chapters from "Teacher of the Law" through the "Peaceful Practices" (fourteenth) chapter explain how ordinary people of the Latter Day should practice the teaching of the one Buddha vehicle that the preceding eight chapters reveal.

ings set forth in the preceding eight chapters are to be carried out by ordinary persons in a latter age. (MW-7, 3)

Ikeda: "Ordinary persons in a latter age" indicates Nichiren Daishonin and all of his followers.

In his writings, the Daishonin quotes extensively from the five chapters beginning with "Teacher



In housecleaning, for example, it doesn't matter whether one cleans vigorously or at a leisurely pace as long as the main objective of the house becoming clean is realized.

Shakyamuni's lifetime in India was short, but the period after his passing is long. Shakyamuni's followers in his day were few, but the people in the world after his passing are innumerable.

In his immense compassion, the Buddha naturally wanted to lead all people to enlightenment. Necessarily, therefore, the situation of people after his passing was the primary focus of his concern.

The teachers of the Law embody this immense compassion of the Buddha and take action accordingly. They are the "envoys of the Thus Come One" (LS10, 162).

Nichiren Daishonin writes:

The eight chapters beginning with the *Hoben* [second] chapter and continuing through the *Ninki* [ninth] chapter are concerned primarily with clarifying how persons of the two vehicles [voice-hearers and *pratyekabuddhas*] can attain Buddhahood, and secondarily with clarifying how bodhisattvas and ordinary people can attain Buddhahood.

The following five chapters, consisting of the *Hosshi*, *Hoto*, *Devadatta*, *Kanji* and *Anraku* chapters, explain how the teach-

of the Law." And within the Lotus Sutra itself, from the "Teacher of the Law" chapter on, there are a great many references to the time after the Buddha's passing.

What we should note here is that Nichiren Daishonin, more than anyone else, perfectly matched in his conduct the sutra's description of the "votary of the Lotus Sutra" who will appear in the Latter Day of the Law.

From another standpoint, in light of the fact that Nichiren Daishonin read the Lotus Sutra with his life, it could be said that the Lotus Sutra was expounded to prepare the way for the Daishonin.

The Daishonin asserts that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the “one fundamental Law” through which all Buddhas attain enlightenment, is itself the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the great teaching that can enable all people of the Latter Day to attain enlightenment.

Saito: In that light, we can see why in “Teacher of the Law,” Shakyamuni says that offerings should be made to the teachers of the Law such as would be made to the Buddha (cf. LS10, 161, 163). The Sanskrit text of the sutra is still more explicit, explaining that these teachers of the Law “should be viewed as Buddhas,” and are “equal to the Thus Come One.”

Suda: The Lotus Sutra also explains that the teachers of the Law are “envoys of the Thus Come One” who have been dispatched by the Buddha, and who carry out the Buddha’s work (cf. LS10, 161–62). “Envoys of the Thus Come One” is an important term that the Daishonin uses time and again.

Also, the offense of uttering even a single word of slander against these teachers of the Law is even greater than that of continually slandering the Buddha to his face for the duration of an entire kalpa.³

On the other hand, the sutra explains that the benefit of praising the teachers of the Law surpasses that of praising the Buddha with countless verses for a period of one kalpa.

Ikeda: In part, this is because the Law, not the Buddha, is the fundamental cause for attaining Buddhahood, and should be cherished accordingly. The Lotus Sutra is the teaching that explains the fundamental Law through which all Buddhas — including Shakyamuni —

attain enlightenment. And the teachers of the Law in the Latter Day expound the teaching that is the true cause for attaining Buddhahood.

Endo: The relationship between the Law and the Buddha is the relationship between “that which gives birth” and “that to which birth is given.”

President Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin characterizes this Law as the “ultimate principle of compassion.”

In his writing, “Sho Hokke Daimoku Sho” (Chanting the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra), the Daishonin says:

All Buddhas and bodhisattvas are our compassionate parents. You should understand that the ultimate principle of compassion that these Buddhas and bodhisattvas use to instruct living beings is contained nowhere but in the Lotus Sutra.... This is the reason why the Lotus Sutra is superior to all other sutras. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 9)

The Lotus Sutra surpasses all other sutras because it contains the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — the “ultimate principle of compassion.” It is the great teaching of compassion that can lead all people to enlightenment. As the “Teacher of the Law” chapter says, “The Lotus is the foremost!” (LS10, 164).

Endo: That’s what the well-known passage about the Lotus Sutra surpassing all teachings in the past, present and future indicates.

“The sutras I have preached number immeasurable thou-

sands, ten thousands, millions. Among the sutras I have preached, now preach, and will preach, this Lotus Sutra is the most difficult to believe and the most difficult to understand.” (LS10, 164)

Saito: In that sense, the “envoys of the Thus Come One” are “envoys of compassion.” The teachers of the Law put into practice the Buddha’s immense spirit of compassion while embracing, reading, reciting, expounding and copying the Lotus Sutra (i.e., carrying out the five practices that the sutra itself prescribes).

In the Latter Day, however, embracing the Law is itself enlightenment; in other words, all these practices are included in the one practice of embracing faith in the Gohonzon.

Ikeda: Embracing faith in the Gohonzon means living with the spirit of the Buddha and dedicating one’s life to the Buddha’s vow to lead all people to enlightenment. That is the fundamental meaning of “embracing the Lotus Sutra” and of the five kinds of practices. It’s not a matter of literally holding, reading and reciting the scrolls of the Lotus Sutra, and expounding upon their meaning.

Rather, the point is to inherit the Buddha’s spirit and to thoroughly manifest the Buddha’s compassion in one’s life.

Ultimately, Shakyamuni’s purpose in bestowing prophecies of enlightenment upon the voice-hearers in the preceding chapters is to cause them to arouse the “same spirit as the Buddha.” Those who put that spirit into practice after the Buddha’s death are teachers of the Law.

Shakubuku Means Speaking the Truth

Saito: On the matter of propagation, I've recently received quite a number of questions from new Soka Gakkai members on the difference between *shoju* and *shakubuku* methods. Many people, it seems, have the impression that *shakubuku* means using strong words whereas *shoju* means assuming a gentle manner.

Ikeda: It is a great mistake to suppose that *shakubuku* means trying to force someone to take faith. Doing *shakubuku* essentially means speaking the truth. Since the Lotus Sutra explains the truth, it is called the "sutra of *shakubuku*."

Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, all our efforts to tell people about and spread Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — the essence of the Lotus Sutra — constitute *shakubuku*. In housecleaning, for example, it doesn't matter whether one cleans vigorously or at a leisurely pace as long as the main objective of the house becoming clean is realized.

Suda: People probably suppose that *shakubuku* has to be harsh because of the somewhat alarming image one gets from the Chinese characters with which the term is written [a combination of two ideograms meaning "break" and "restrain"].

Ikeda: *Shakubuku* does not mean going out to pick a fight. *Shakubuku*, sharing the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism with others, has to be an act of thoroughgoing compassion. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, once said:

We should do abundant *shakubuku* out of sincere conviction in

the Daishonin's teaching. And in so doing, we should not harbor feelings of antipathy toward others. We should not get into angry disputes. All we need to do is teach people earnestly and gently. The important thing is that we have this spirit to teach. If someone opposes or attacks us, then that person will suffer the consequences of his or her actions. It is important to share Buddhism with a spirit of compassion. It's almost like being in love.⁴

President Toda certainly had a way of putting things! When people are in love, they go all out. They waste many sheets of stationery writing and rewriting letters. They stay up all night thinking about the words they will use to invite the other person out on their next day off.

President Toda certainly had a way of putting things! When people are in love, they go all out. They waste many sheets of stationery writing and rewriting letters. They stay up all night thinking about the words they will use to invite the other person out on their next day off. If everything

goes well, they might decide to get married. However, unlike marriage sometimes, *shakubuku* will never cause one to have regrets!

Endo: I think we can say that Shakyamuni's method of preaching was to teach people gently.

Shakyamuni first expounded the doctrine of the "true entity of all phenomena" in an attempt to help people grasp the truth that everyone can become a Buddha. When Shakyamuni revealed this



teaching, Shariputra alone understood, while others did not.

And so Shakyamuni related various similes and parables. As a result, the four leaders of the voice-hearers⁵ came to understand. However, because many still had not yet grasped his meaning, Shakyamuni next explained his profound relation-

ship with them from the distant past. Through this revelation, all of the voice-hearers could finally accept and understand his teaching.

Thus, Shakyamuni racked his mind to find a way to clarify his teaching so that all people could comprehend it. He did not abandon people because they were slow to understand. He had the deep wish, and the tenacity of purpose, to enable all people to become Buddhas, no matter how much effort it required on his part.



Suda: That is the very spirit that motivates our practice of *shakubuku* today.

Ikeda: Yes. The key point is to pray that one's sincerity will be understood by the other person. Wisdom arises from prayer. Prayer gives birth to confidence and joy.

While *shakubuku* is difficult, when we bear in mind that, through our actions, both the other person and we ourselves will definitely realize tremendous happiness and benefit, nothing could be more joyful. Mr. Toda often said: "We should not agonize over doing *shakubuku*. We have to do *shakubuku* with a sense of joy."⁶

In practice, while some will immediately believe and understand the Daishonin's Buddhism, there will of course be those for whom this will not be the case. But there is no need to be impatient. Whatever the immediate outcome of our efforts, there is absolutely no doubt about the benefit we receive from having offered earnest prayer and made the effort to conduct dialogue about our Buddhist faith. And precisely because *shakubuku* is not easy, it affords us opportunities to tap our innate wisdom and grow. If we plant a seed, in time it will definitely flower.

The key point, it seems to me, is to talk to people with a sense of joy and exhilaration to be serving as the Buddha's envoy.

Endo: I think it's also important to warmly praise those doing *shakubuku*.

Ikeda: That's right. Those carrying out this practice are "envoys of the Thus Come One"; they should be respected as Buddhas. This is the spirit of the "Teacher of the Law" chapter. Those who have the spirit to praise others accumulate good fortune and strength, and as a result can lead many to happiness.

SGI members who dedicate their lives to *kosen-rufu* should be treasured as Buddhas. When we understand this spirit, we understand not only the "Teacher

of the Law" chapter but the entire Lotus Sutra.

The Three Rules of Preaching: Robe, Seat and Room

1) The "Room of Compassion"

Endo: In the "Teacher of the Law" chapter, Shakyamuni explains the manner of propagation after his death in terms of the three rules of preaching, robe, seat and room:

"Medicine King, if there are good men and good women who, after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, wish to expound this Lotus Sutra for the four kinds of believers, how should they expound it? These good men and good women should enter the Thus Come One's room, put on the Thus Come One's robe, sit in the Thus Come One's seat, and then for the sake of the four kinds of believers broadly expound this sutra.

"The 'Thus Come One's room' is the state of mind that shows great pity and compassion toward all living beings. The 'Thus Come One's robe' is the mind that is gentle and forbearing. The 'Thus Come One's seat' is the emptiness of all phenomena." (LS10, 166)

Ikeda: This is highly poetic. Shakyamuni uses the images of "robe," "seat" and "room" to clarify the Buddha's spirit in expounding the Lotus Sutra. And he urges people to broadly expound the teaching, saying in effect, "If you base yourselves on this spirit, then, even if you encounter difficulties, you can lead people to enlightenment unerringly just as the Buddha does."

Why, then, is the Buddha's great compassion compared to a room?

Saito: Compassion in the Buddhist sense is pity and profound affection. Feeling compassion toward others means sensing a common humanity or kinship, a bond as fellow living beings.

This could also be called "love," but it is not egoistic love of the kind that can readily devolve into hate. It is love of humanity rooted in profound insight into the nature of life and existence. It could also be thought of as a true sense of solidarity arising from a shared aspiration for mutual happiness and growth.

Suda: Compassion is also the spirit to share others' sufferings, to empathize with them in their sorrows. If we see someone suffering, compassion impels us to extend the person a helping hand, to share his or her pain. It is a profound emotion of that kind.

Ikeda: In terms of our stance vis-à-vis others, an attitude of compassion does not mean looking down on someone from a position of superiority. It is not a vertical but a horizontal relationship. It is a feeling of sympathy toward others as fellow human beings. And it is based on respect.

That's why it's called the "room of compassion." We invite a friend into a compassionate life space and warmly embrace them; we sit down in the same room and discuss life as equals. We discuss things and learn from one another as fellow human beings, and together we strive to improve our lives. Creating such a warm and welcoming space for dialogue and exchange is in itself *shakubuku*.

Endo: If we approach someone with the arrogant attitude that we are going to "save" the person, it will only provoke a negative response.

Ikeda: In the treatise, "On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism," Nichiren Daishonin calls the "host" who engages the "guest" in dialogue a "friend in the orchid room" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 36). When someone spends time in a room filled with orchids, the fragrance of the flowers naturally permeates their clothing. Similarly, dialogue should be conducted in such a way that the other person is imbued with the "fragrance of compassion."

Propagation does not mean trying to force something on someone, nor is it for the sake of the organization. Propagation is an act of venerating the Buddha nature in the lives of others. Therefore, our efforts in *shakubuku* should be motivated by a spirit of the greatest respect for the other person.

President Toda said, "The basis for doing *shakubuku* is a feeling of sympathy for others' sufferings." Compassion, in other words, is fundamental. You don't propagate Buddhism with a confrontational spirit of trying to refute someone's ideas and win the person over to your own side.

Suda: Since it's a matter of conducting dialogue, we have to listen to what the other person has to say. Yet there are those who talk on and on, monopolizing the conversation, and then suppose that they have had a dialogue.

Ikeda: It can't be called a dialogue where one person constantly inter-

rupts while the other is trying to express an opinion, and then lays down sweeping conclusions.

Even if you think that what someone is saying is a bit odd, rather than constantly raising objections, you should have the broad-mindedness to try to understand his or her point of view. Then the person will feel secure and can listen to what you have to say.

In that sense, the Buddha is truly a master at dialogue. Shakyamuni and the Daishonin had such heartwarming personalities that just meeting them must have given people a sense of immense delight. And that's probably why so many took such pleasure in listening to their words.

Suda: The term *room of compassion* conveys an image of such warmth and breadth of character.

Ikeda: In this connection, I would like to relate a certain recorded incident involving Shakyamuni.⁷ A man named Upali, who believed in Jainism,⁸ once tried to defeat Shakyamuni in debate. But he was so moved by Shakyamuni's character and wisdom that he wound up asking to be allowed to become the Buddha's disciple.

Shakyamuni, rather than exulting at his having won Upali's admiration, admonished the latter, saying, "You should not so lightly cast aside the beliefs that you have held up to now. Please think the matter over carefully."

Upali, impressed all the more by this response, answered, "In society, it is rumored that the monk Gautama [Shakyamuni] says that people should make offerings to him and not make offerings to others; and asserts that whereas making offerings to him and his disci-

ples confers benefit, there is no benefit to be gained from making offerings to others.

But in reality, the attitude of the World-Honored One is completely the opposite. I will devote myself to the Buddha's teachings with increased ardor."

Hearing about Upali's conversion, a Jainist leader accompanied by a number of his followers went to Upali's house. Upali received them cordially. But the leader rebuked him saying, "You're like a

2) *The "Robe of Gentleness and Forbearance"*

Suda: Continuing, it is easy to see why the Buddha's "robe" is a metaphor for a "mind that is gentle and forbearing." Just as a robe protects one's body from cold and heat, when we don the "robe of gentleness and forbearance," we are not shaken by hardships or difficulties.

Ikeda: That's right. In our propagation efforts, remaining undaunted in

and win. No matter what happens, we must not become disheartened. Kosen-rufu is a struggle of the spirit. Those who allow themselves to be inwardly defeated cannot be said to possess forbearance.

Saito: In "The Selection of the Time," Nichiren Daishonin says, "Since I have been born in the ruler's domain, I must follow him in my actions. But I need not follow him in the beliefs of my heart" (MW-3, 171). By saying that he



When someone spends time in a room filled with orchids, the fragrance of the flowers naturally permeates their clothing. Similarly, dialogue should be conducted in such a way that the other person is imbued with the "fragrance of compassion."

fool who goes for wool and comes home shorn." With great politeness, Upali patiently explained, "If it should be someone like Shakyamuni by whom I should be led astray, I could desire nothing more. If the royal families and Brahmins, peasants and slaves throughout the world could be so led astray by Shakyamuni, there would be eternal peace and happiness throughout the world."

Endo: That's a wonderful story.

the face of obstacles is very important. With these words, Shakyamuni is urging his followers to maintain a radiant and composed state of mind, no matter what pressures might be brought to bear against them.

In seeking to propagate Buddhism after the Buddha's passing, difficulties are inevitable. Therefore, it is necessary that we have a spirit of forbearance and patience. We need a spirit to endure. Enduring is neither retreating nor conceding defeat. We have to persevere

must "follow the ruler in his actions," the Daishonin means that he has to endure persecution. By "I need not follow him in the beliefs of my heart," he indicates that in his heart he is not defeated.

Ikeda: That is the spirit of forbearance. When the Daishonin was condemned to be exiled to desolate Sado Island, physically he abided by the government's decree. But in his heart he possessed the vast state of life to be able to say, "I feel immea-



In Nichiren Daishonin's case, Nembutsu followers and others committed murders and acts of arson in Kamakura, the capital, and then spread rumors that these crimes were the work of the Daishonin's followers.

surable delight even though I am now an exile" (MW-1, 94).

A spirit of patience generates the greatest strength. If one has true courage one can endure any hardship. In the "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) chapter, the metaphor "armor of perseverance" (LS13, 194) is used to describe that strength. "One Who Can Forbear" is another name for Buddha. Both Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin had tremendous powers of patience and forbearance.

Endo: The "Teacher of the Law" chapter emphasizes that the teachers of the Law will encounter persecution. The passage that the Daishonin read with his life, "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?" (LS10, 164), is also found in this chapter.

Suda: This explains that the teachers of the Law meet with persecution because the Lotus Sutra is difficult

to believe and difficult to understand. Because it is difficult to believe and understand, there was much hatred and jealousy aroused by it even in Shakyamuni's day. This passage indicates that persecution will be even worse in the future.

Ikeda: It says, "how much more will this be so after his passing?" Why should there be more persecution after the Buddha's passing than while he is alive?

"After his passing" refers to a time when the Buddha's spirit has been forgotten and there is great turmoil and confusion in areas of religion and philosophy. In such an age, while people might appear to revere the Buddha, they forget the Buddha's essential spirit; and while there are Buddhist schools, the spirit of the Buddha does not abide in them. In such a time, while there may be religions, they exist for the sake of religion and not for human beings. The Lotus Sutra was taught especially for the people of such an age.

The teachers of the Law propa-

gate the Lotus Sutra, which conveys the Buddha's spirit, in an age that has completely forgotten the spirit of the Buddha. Consequently, there is much hatred and jealousy toward them. In an age that has lost sight of humanity, it is no easy undertaking to campaign for a restoration of humanity.

Suda: In that sense, those who do not experience any difficulties are not truly propagating the Law. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, for example, has never — either now or during the war — been persecuted.

By contrast, from the time of its first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to the present, the Soka Gakkai has been repeatedly attacked and persecuted. Truly, we are reading the Lotus Sutra with our lives. This is proof that our organization is indeed putting the spirit of the Buddha into practice.

Saito: Persecutions are always occasioned by scheming. In Shakyamuni's day, there was an unending succession of scandals stem-

ming from fabrications and misrepresentations by those of malicious intent. To obliterate the Buddhist order, some heinous individuals went so far as to commit acts of murder and then try to pin the blame on Shakyamuni's followers.

Suda: In Nichiren Daishonin's case, Nembutsu followers and others committed murders and acts of arson in Kamakura, the capital, and then spread rumors that these crimes were the work of the Daishonin's followers. This resulted in the Daishonin being exiled to Sado Island. The Daishonin's followers were suppressed because those hostile to their activities had made them appear a "dangerous order." In any age, there is a similar pattern of persecution against those who uphold the correct Buddhist teaching.

Endo: Therefore, we cannot discard the "robe of forbearance."

Ikeda: Allow me to share another anecdote.⁹ Once there was a Brahman who was upset that his wife had become a follower of Shakyamuni. Since his wife praised the Buddha so highly, he went to try and defeat him in debate. But instead of refuting Shakyamuni, the Brahman was so impressed by his preaching that he converted to Buddhism himself. His fellow Brahmans thought this scandalous. They stormed into the Jetavana Monastery,¹⁰ and there heaped curses and abuse on Shakyamuni. What do you suppose Shakyamuni did in response?

Endo: I am intrigued. Please tell us.

Ikeda: Shakyamuni asked one of the Brahmans, "If a relative or

friend came to your house, would you welcome him as a guest?"

"That's right," the Brahman replied. "I sometimes entertain guests."

"If the person does not accept the food that is provided for him, then to whom does it belong?" Shakyamuni continued.

"It naturally belongs to me, the head of the household."

"In the same way," Shakyamuni said, "if I do not accept the abuses that you hurl at me, then will not these return to you and become your own?"

Suda: He certainly knew how to touch a sensitive nerve with gentleness and forbearance!

Endo: When we put on the "robe of gentleness and forbearance," our hearts become impervious to negative words.

Saito: And to the extent that such words do not enter our hearts, they return to the people who uttered them in the first place, causing them to suffer.

3) *The "Seat of the Emptiness of All Phenomena"*

Endo: Third, what is meant by "The 'Thus Come One's seat' is the emptiness of all phenomena?"

Ikeda: This refers to the Buddha's unrestricted wisdom. Everything is constantly undergoing change. All existence is impermanent, nonsubstantial.

The "Thus Come One's seat" indicates the Buddha's capacity to correctly perceive the true entity of all phenomena in the world, and his state of life that nothing can sway or upset.

Suda: This is easy to understand theoretically, but actually achieving such a state is no easy matter.

Ikeda: The Daishonin says, "The 'seat' means carrying out religious practice 'without begrudging one's life.' By carrying out such practice, one awakens to the 'emptiness of all phenomena'" (GZ, 737). Sitting in the seat of the emptiness of all phenomena, in other words, means taking selfless action.

People have the tendency to become attached to or caught up in various things. For example, they may be captivated by fame and social standing; and once they acquire these, they are loath to surrender them. And in some respects, that people behave in this way may be only natural. However, to sit in the seat of the emptiness of all phenomena means daring to overcome these egoistic attachments and selflessly exert oneself in faith, to devote one's life to *kosen-rufu*. The ultimate meaning of "emptiness" or "nonsubstantiality" is found in such faith.

This, of course, doesn't mean treating your life carelessly or thoughtlessly. Rather, it means using your precious life ungrudgingly for the sake of Buddhism.

Saito: From such a dedicated, selfless spirit arises the wisdom to help people become happy.

Ikeda: Exactly. A person of selfless dedication is one who can help others. I once asked President Toda, "When we do *shakubuku*, are we in a sense doing *shakubuku* to ourselves?" He replied:

The point is that Nam-myohorenge-kyo is the very wellspring of our lives. Unless we have that

realization, we cannot do true *shakubuku*. There isn't any special technique or method for doing *shakubuku*. In the Latter Day, *shakubuku* is a matter of determining: "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the sum and essence of my being!"¹¹

He also once said, "The ultimate *shakubuku* is to determine that one's life itself is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo." President Toda spoke these words with a resolute tone; it was the voice of someone who deeply wanted to help young people understand the truth.

"Determining that one's life is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo" beautifully expresses the principle of the emptiness of all phenomena and the spirit of not begrudging one's life.

I hope that all of you, with these words as your guide, will earnestly pursue the essence of faith. For it is this pursuit that constitutes true Buddhist study.

The Practice of Compassion, Forbearance and Wisdom

Suda: We have discussed the three rules of preaching of robe, seat and room. The fact that the teacher of the Law dwells in the room of the Thus Come One, wears the robe of the Thus Come One and sits in the seat of the Thus Come One suggests that the teacher of the Law is equal to the Thus Come One.

Also it seems that, just as an ambassador of a country enacts that country's will, we could consider the actions of the "envoy of the Thus Come One" as equivalent to those of the Buddha.

Ikeda: That's a good analogy.

Saito: Don't these three rules also express virtues of the Buddha that teachers of the Law acquire by dedicating themselves to the great wish for the Lotus Sutra's propagation?

Ikeda: We can indeed understand the three rules in those terms. Nichiren Daishonin says:

The robe, seat and room represent to the Buddha's three bodies of the Dharma body, the bliss body and the manifested body; the three truths of nonsubstantiality, temporary existence and the Middle Way; and the three categories of action of deed, word and thought. (GZ, 737)

The Dharma body, bliss body and manifested body are the Buddha's virtues. Simply put, they correspond to truth, wisdom and compassion. Teachers of the Law are endowed with these virtues.

The Daishonin also says, "Now Nichiren and his followers who chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo are fulfilling the three rules [of preaching represented by robe, seat and room] each moment of their lives" (GZ, 737).

In other words, through the practice of chanting and propagating the daimoku of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we attain the Buddha's virtues. We acquire these virtues through our determination in faith.

Even if we have no special ability, the important point is that our hearts brim with the joy of chanting the Mystic Law and the joy of sharing the Mystic Law with others.

Such joyful faith incorporates the rules of robe, seat and room, as well as the virtues of compassion, gentleness and wisdom.

Saito: The "Teacher of the Law" chapter stresses the importance of "for a moment thinking of the Lotus Sutra with joy" (cf. LS10, 160). It goes so far as to say that all people can attain Buddhahood if they simply hear about the Mystic Law and feel delight.

It also states, "these persons [teachers of the Law] delight in expounding the Law. And if one listens to them for even a moment, he will immediately attain the ultimate *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*" (LS10, 162). *Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* is a Sanskrit term meaning the Buddha's enlightenment.

Ikeda: A teacher of the Law is originally a person who has heard the Lotus Sutra and felt delight. Others hear that teacher of the Law expound the Lotus Sutra and they, too, delight. The eternal path of attaining Buddhahood is thus a kind of chain reaction of joy.

Nichiren Daishonin says:

When I, Nichiren, first took faith in the Lotus Sutra, I was like a single drop of water or a single particle of dust in all the country of Japan. But later, when two people, three people, ten people, and eventually ten thousand billion people, come to recite the Lotus Sutra and transmit it to others, then they will form a Mount Sumeru of wonderful enlightenment,¹² a great ocean of nirvana! Seek no other path by which to attain Buddhahood! (MW-3, 172-73)

The SGI is taking action in exact accord with these words.

Saito: At the start of this discussion, you described the teacher of the Law as a spiritual leader who illuminates society in an age lack-

In many established religions, the members of the clergy carry out propagation. Religious propagation often takes place at large gatherings; I hear in the United States, there is a great deal of proselytizing on television.



ing philosophy. I think it's wonderful that in the SGI we believe that the people themselves are teachers of the Law.

Endo: In many established religions, the members of the clergy carry out propagation. Religious propagation often takes place at large gatherings; I hear in the United States, there is a great deal of proselytizing on television.

By contrast, the way of the SGI is "propagation *by* the people and *for* the people." Small gatherings such as discussion meetings are the main avenue for spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism, and the method is that of one-on-one dialogue. I think that this will become the pattern of propagation for religions in the twenty-first century.

Suda: Dr. Bryan Wilson, former president of the International Society of Religion, remarked in his dialogue with you, President Ikeda:

Personal contact certainly appears to be the most effective

technique of mission [i.e., propagation of faith],... In a world in which everyone learns to grow cynical, for example, about advertising, the fact of personal genuineness may in itself be so refreshing that the message is more adequately communicated even by a relatively ignorant missionary than by a technically adroit media advertisement with absolutely authoritative information.¹³

Ikeda: That's right. It comes down to authenticity. Eloquence is not what matters. The important thing in propagation is genuine sincerity. President Toda often said, "When you do *shakubuku* you create lasting trust."

Those Who Spread the Mystic Law Are Noble

Endo: When we consider the teachers of the Law in this light, we see that they deliberately seek to be born in an evil age out of their compassion.

Ikeda: The "Teacher of the Law" chapter says that these envoys of the Buddha "freely choose where they will be born" (LS10, 163).

Nichiren Daishonin explains that someone who attains Buddhahood immediately returns to the realm of the nine worlds and again freely engages in efforts to lead people to enlightenment.

In "The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future," the Daishonin says:

"Reaching the supreme Land of Tranquil Light unimpeded, in the space of a moment one will return to the midst of the dream of birth and death in the nine worlds. One's body pervades the Dharma worlds in the ten directions and one's mind enters the lives of all sentient beings. Impelled from within and drawn from without, in the harmony of [internal] cause and [external] relation, one freely exercises the transcendental power of com-

“Someone who is too exemplary from the outset cannot go among the people. In order to spread Buddhism, we intentionally chose to be born as people who are poor or sick.” “Life is like appearing in a play,” he would say.



passion and widely brings benefit to living beings without any impediment.” (GZ, 574)

We ourselves willed to be born in this world of suffering. The Daishonin says, “Now Nichiren and his followers who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are great teachers among teachers” (GZ, 736). SGI members who make the Daishonin’s spirit their own and dedicate themselves to achieving kosen-rufu are “great teachers of the Law among teachers.”

When our present lives come to an end, we are reborn in this world “in the space of a moment.”

We might picture it something like this: We struggle hard in this life, and then go to Eagle Peak. There, somewhat winded after the journey, we report to the Daishonin: “I’ve come having fulfilled my mission!” The Daishonin commends us: “Good work! You really

did a fine job!” He then asks, “Well, where do you want to go next?” There’s no time to even think about taking it easy for a while. Of course, those who really want to relax can do so! We’re completely free.

As the Daishonin indicates where he speaks of our freely exercising the “transcendental power of compassion,” out of compassion, in an instant we return again in vigorous spirits to a new sphere of mission. Death and rebirth are like going to sleep one day and waking up the next morning.

Suda: Out of pity and sympathy for those suffering, the teachers of the Law yearn to be born in an impure world. The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China calls this “deliberately creating the appropriate karma.” The teachers of the Law are people who, because of the benefit they have accumulated from their Bud-

dhist practice, could by rights be born in a “good land.” But they deliberately create the negative karma to be born in a world rife with evil so that they can spread Buddhism.

Ikeda: President Toda often said: “Someone who is too exemplary from the outset cannot go among the people. In order to spread Buddhism, we intentionally chose to be born as people who are poor or sick.” “Life is like appearing in a play,” he would say.

He also said, “I lost my wife, and my daughter died. My business failed. Because I have known such suffering, I could become president of the Soka Gakkai.”

People who have not experienced painful struggles or suffering cannot understand the hearts of others. Only if one has tasted life’s bitterness can one lead people to happiness.

To simply view your sufferings as “karma” is backward-looking. We should have the attitude: “These are sufferings I took on for the sake of my mission. I vowed to overcome these problems through faith.”

When we understand this principle of “deliberately creating the appropriate karma,” our frame of mind is transformed; what we had previously viewed as destiny, we come to see as mission. There is absolutely no way we cannot overcome sufferings that are the result of a vow that we ourselves made.

Saito: Nichiren Daishonin comments on the passage, “such persons ... have fulfilled their great vow, and because they take pity on living beings they have been born in this human world. . . . where they may broadly expound . . . the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law” (LS10, 161). He says:

The “great vow” refers to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. “Living beings” refers to all beings in the country of Japan.

The persons who “are born in this human world” are Nichiren and his followers. “Broadly” means to expound the sutra throughout the southern continent of Jambudvipa [i.e., the entire world]. “This sutra” refers to the daimoku. Now it is Nichiren and his followers who chant the daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. (GZ, 736)

The SGI members who are spreading the Mystic Law throughout the world truly accumulate immeasurable good fortune. They are genuine followers of the original Buddha born in this world to accomplish their mission for kosen-rufu.

Ikeda: Therefore, we should all respect one another as noble beings each with a profound mission to fulfill.

At the outset we talked about India. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), the father of modern India, once said:

I do not want to be reborn, but if I have to be reborn I should be

reborn an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts leveled against them in order that I may endeavor to free myself and them from their miserable condition.¹⁴

In these sentiments, I sense something akin to the spirit of “deliberately creating the appropriate karma.” It’s a matter of compassion, of living for and together with others. It is the desire to be born among those who are suffering the most.

The Buddha is to be found among those who are suffering the most. Buddhism exists to enable those suffering the most to become the happiest. The “Teacher of the Law” chapter explains the sublime temperament of spiritual leaders who devote themselves to, and live out their lives among, the people.

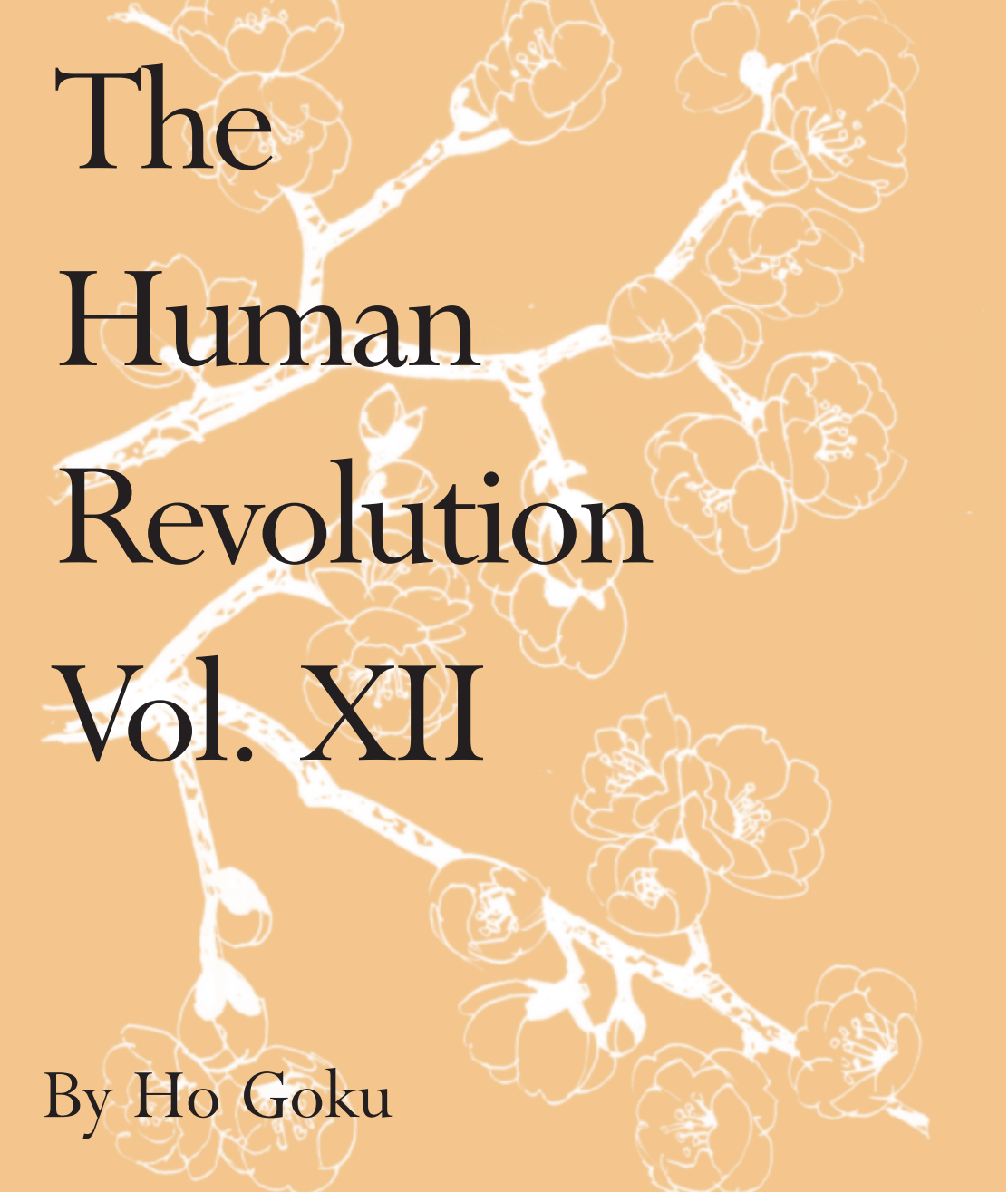
Illustrations by Larry Ashton

(To be continued)

1. “Address to the Joint Session of the Japanese Diet (Parliament),” Tokyo, November 29, 1985.
 2. Nikken: Current high priest of Nichiren Shoshu.
 3. *Kalpa*: An extremely long period of time deriving from the ancient Indian tradition. The length of a kalpa is defined in various ways. According to one method of reckoning, a medium *kalpa* would equal nearly sixteen million years.
 4. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1982), vol. 2, p. 466.
 5. Four great voice-hearer disciples: Maudgalyayana, Mahakashyapa, Katyayana and Subhuti.
 6. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, p. 120.
 7. This episode and related dialogue are trans-

lated from Japanese. *Nanden Daizokyo*, ed. Junjiro Takakusu (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanko-kai, 1971), vol. 10, pp. 140–156. cf. *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikaya)*, vol. II, trans. I. B. Horner (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1994), pp. 38–49.
 8. Jainism: An Indian religion that stresses nonviolence and not killing any forms of life, and teaches the liberation of the soul by right knowledge, right faith and right conduct.
 9. This episode and related dialogue are translated from Japanese. *Nanden Daizokyo*, ed. Jujiro Takakusu (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanako-kai, 1971), vol. 12, pp. 276–77. cf. *The Book of Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta-Nikaya)*, Part I, trans Mrs. Rhys Davids (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1993), pp. 201–02.

10. Jetavana Monastery: A monastery in Shravasti where Shakyamuni is said to have lived and taught during the rainy season for the last twenty-five years of his life. It was built as an offering by Sudatta on land provided by Prince Jetri. Along with the Bamboo Grove Monastery in Rajagriha, it was once one of the two main centers of the Buddha’s propagation activities.
 11. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, p. 466–67.
 12. Wonderful enlightenment: *Myogaku*, the last of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice, indicating the state of Buddhahood.
 13. Daisaku Ikeda and Bryan Wilson, *Human Values in a Changing World* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart Inc., 1987), p. 132.
 14. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1950), p. 144.



The Human Revolution Vol. XII

By Ho Goku

The Human Revolution is a novel based on fact, written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda under the pen name Ho Goku. It recounts the early days of the Soka Gakkai in Japan under the second president, Josei Toda, President Ikeda's mentor. The character of Shin'ichi Yamamoto represents Daisaku Ikeda. The theme of the novel is summed up in the foreword, as the author writes, "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." The following is an excerpt from "Tranquil Light" and "New Dawn" chapters, volume twelve.

It was already dark by the time the final cleanup was complete and he had returned to the Gakkai Headquarters. Shin'ichi went upstairs to the main hall and sat down before a framed photograph of President Toda. He felt infinitely alone.



Tranquil Light 31

NEXT, General Director Takeo Konishi, chairman of the funeral planning committee, rose to speak:

"I extend my deepest thanks to High Priest Nichijun, who is here from the head temple to attend this Soka Gakkai funeral for our late president, Josei Toda. On behalf of all the members of the Soka Gakkai, I would like to express my profound gratitude." After bowing to the high priest, Konishi continued as if making a personal pledge:

"Now that our mentor is gone, everything hinges on whether we maintain strong unity. We therefore vow to fight on, solidly united, even after we achieve a membership of 900,000, one million, or several million households, resolutely upholding our mentor's will until we achieve his greatest dream — kosen-rufu. Thank you all very much for attending today."

The funeral service proceeded smoothly, and soon the emcee,

Shin'ichi Yamamoto, announced the final item on the program: "We will now close by singing 'A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on Wuchang Plain!'"¹ With this, the brass band and fife and drum corps began a solemn accompaniment and everyone sang:

The autumn wind, with
deepening sorrow,
Blows from Mt. Ch'i,
Gloomy clouds gather over
the battleground
Of Wuchang Plain. . . .

Those gathered outside the funeral hall joined in with the singing that could be heard coming from within. Josei Toda had loved this song and often asked the youth to sing it. It had moved him to tears each time he heard it. But now Toda was gone.

The world's troubles, like raging
swells on stormy seas,
Have yet to be quelled,
And the people suffer, while
heaven weeps. . . .

Savoring each word and fighting back tears, the disciples pictured Toda as they sang.

Now, one thousand years later,
Chuko Liang's² renown has
yet to fade.

The funeral service was over, but a long line of people still waiting to offer incense stretched outside. It was 3:00 p.m. before all of them had finished. More than 250,000 people had attended the ceremony. Shin'ichi Yamamoto, who had been in charge of running the event, felt great relief that this final farewell to his mentor had been carried off successfully, without a single accident or mishap. Yet the extreme tension that had gripped him since the day of Toda's death would not let up. After making one last round of the funeral hall and surrounding area to see that all was left in order, he was assailed by a sense of fatigue so overwhelming that his head began to reel. It was already dark by the

Shin'ichi reflected to himself that President Toda's most cherished ambition had undoubtedly been "the fulfillment of the great desire for kosen-rufu through the compassionate propagation of the great Law."



time the final cleanup was complete and he had returned to the Gakkai Headquarters.

The Headquarters building was quiet. Shin'ichi went upstairs to the main hall and sat down before a framed photograph of President Toda. No longer would he be able to see his mentor's compassionate smile, or hear his stern, yet warm, admonishments. He felt infinitely alone. An intense wave of loneliness washed over him.

Tranquil Light 32

SHIN'ICHI Yamamoto quietly lost himself in his thoughts.

He had reached the limits of exhaustion, both mentally and physically. But a relentless tension — like that of a drawn bow — ran through him.

Since that fateful evening on April 2 when he received the phone call informing him of Toda's death, something had begun to change inside him. While many of the leaders close to Toda had been devastated by grief, Shin'ichi did not

allow his sorrow to consume him but instead turned it into a determination to move forward.

As heir to Toda's legacy, Shin'ichi was painfully aware of his inescapable destiny to take full responsibility for the Soka Gakkai's future and advance along the noble path of oneness of mentor and disciple. Deeply fatigued as he was, he could not help but feel the heavy burden of responsibility now resting on his shoulders. It was an almost intolerable amount of pressure for a young man of 30.

To encourage and energize himself, he faced the Joju Gohonzon in the main hall and began to chant, his sonorous daimoku resounding in the empty room: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. . ."

As he chanted, the inscriptions down both sides of the Joju Gohonzon — "For the Fulfillment of the Great Desire for Kosen-rufu Through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law" on the right, and "To Be Eternally Enshrined at the Soka Gakkai" on the left — seemed to glow in the light

of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

More keenly than ever before, Shin'ichi felt the deep significance of the Soka Gakkai's mission, and of his own mission as Toda's disciple.

Shin'ichi reflected to himself that President Toda's most cherished ambition had undoubtedly been "the fulfillment of the great desire for kosen-rufu through the compassionate propagation of the great Law." The widespread propagation of the Mystic Law is both the wish of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, and the Soka Gakkai's profound mission. The original Buddha summoned and entrusted the Soka Gakkai, under the leadership of presidents Makiguchi and Toda, with this mission.

With a powerful determination welling up inside him, Shin'ichi clearly realized the path he must proceed along as Toda's disciple.

"I will dedicate my life to kosen-rufu," he vowed in his heart. "The torch that Sensei lit to illuminate the darkness and lead humanity toward happiness must never die out. I will fight on! I will keep

advancing, moving ahead, always pressing forward!"

At that moment, he felt a surge of joy and courage. His first priority, he thought, would be to encourage and inspire his fellow members, many of whom were still forlorn and grief-stricken over Toda's death.

Shin'ichi wanted to put an arm around each person, squeeze their hand in reassurance, and dry their tears. He firmly vowed to support each member, to pave the way to a peaceful world and help all establish happiness that would endure eternally.

Toda's dignified expression in the photograph was stern, yet kindly; his gaze seemed firmly fixed on the future — on the struggles his disciples would wage for the sake of the Law.

It was around this time that all of Toda's disciples began to focus their attention on Shin'ichi Yamamoto and follow his actions with great interest. They seemed to have found in him a source of hope and reassurance that did much to dispel their anxiety over the organization's future.

(This concludes "Tranquil Light," Chapter 5 of volume 12 of The Human Revolution.)

(Chapter 6)

New Dawn 1

THE sun of a new day was about to rise. But the night is never darker than before the dawn.

Now a single shaft of light penetrated that darkness, heralding the solemn arrival of a majestic new dawn.

Many members remained deeply saddened over the loss of their valiant leader for kosen-rufu, Josei Toda. Moreover, certain segments of the media began to launch blistering attacks on the Gakkai, seeming to take a vicious delight in ridiculing the members' grief. Day after day, derisive headlines appeared, such as: "Living Buddha Suddenly Ascends to Heaven"; "Leaves Soka Gakkai on Shaky Ground"; "Rival Religious Groups Rejoice"; "Soka Gakkai on the Verge of Collapse"; "A Miserable End for Errant Religious Group"; and

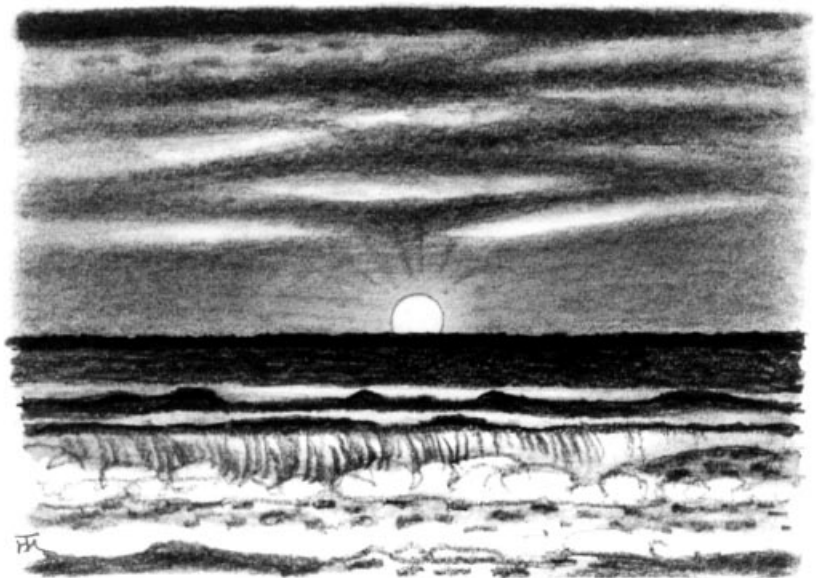
"Demon Star Falls"; "Magical Powers Lost."

Articles by religious commentators predicted that the Gakkai would "split" or "disintegrate in mid-air." There was even one newspaper article that went so far as to deride Josei Toda's Soka Gakkai funeral, under the headline: "Religious Leader's Death Antagonizes Lovebirds"; "Commotion Over 'Buddha's Passing' Disturbs Sunday Peace of Outer Gardens"; "300,000 Kneeling, Chanting Followers Take Over Lawn."

Other religions eager to see the Gakkai's demise also took advantage of the situation to intensify their attacks.

After Toda's death, the overall administrative responsibility for the Soka Gakkai had fallen to General Director Takeo Konishi, but a sense of emptiness stemming from Toda's death prevailed within the organization, which began to lose some of its former explosive energy. The members had yet to find a ray of hope to light the way ahead, to dispel the clouds of anxiety and sorrow that hung over them.

**The sun of a new day
was about to rise. But
the night is never darker
than before the dawn.
Now a single shaft of
light penetrated that
darkness, heralding the
solemn arrival of a
majestic new dawn.**



Shin'ichi Yamamoto was gravely concerned about this; it was now imperative, he felt, to kindle a fresh flame of hope in the heart of each member. Hope would give rise to courage, energy and strength.

He ruminated deeply over the idea of making the upcoming spring general meeting on May 3 — the celebration of which had now become a Gakkai tradition — a day of fresh departure, a day to turn toward a great new goal for their future development.

Prior to that, Shin'ichi would travel to Osaka for four days beginning on April 25 for the Kansai regional study department examination.

Given the intense succession of events over the past few weeks — the monthlong commemorative pilgrimage in March to mark the completion of the Grand Reception Hall, Toda's death and the ceremonies and services that followed — Shin'ichi was extraordinarily fatigued. Finally, on the morning of April 29, he was struck with a high fever that left him without enough strength to get out of bed. He was bitterly frustrated and ashamed at his own weak health — it was his mission, after all, to carry on his mentor's work and exert himself for kosen-rufu. As he lay in bed, his body leaden with exhaustion and burning with fever, he continued to think about what would be needed for the Gakkai to make a fresh start.

He vividly recalled the words his mentor had uttered just that past February 10, the day before his last birthday: "Shin'ichi, do you think you can accomplish a membership of three million households in the next seven years?"

These words, more than any others, constituted the goal Toda

had set forth for the Gakkai's future. Seven years, Shin'ichi thought; President Toda had envisioned seven years as the time required for accomplishing their next goal. There had to be some unfathomably deep meaning behind this.

New Dawn 2

SHIN'ICHI knew that Toda had often mentioned that "the Gakkai should advance a major step every seven years." He also remembered Toda saying, "Let's sound a bell every seven years to mark our progress toward kosen-rufu. Let's aim to strike seven bells!"

Shin'ichi tried to recall what had happened in the Gakkai's history each seven years since its inception.

The organization had originally begun as the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda on November 18, 1930. Then, seven years later, in 1937, it had kicked off its activities in earnest with a formal inauguration ceremony being held to mark the occasion. Seven years further on, on November 18, 1944, President Makiguchi had died in prison. And seven years after that, on May 3, 1951, Josei Toda had become the Soka Gakkai's second president. Finally, after seven more years, having completely fulfilled all of his lifelong objectives, Toda had passed away.

This mysterious pattern moved Shin'ichi deeply and he pondered its significance:

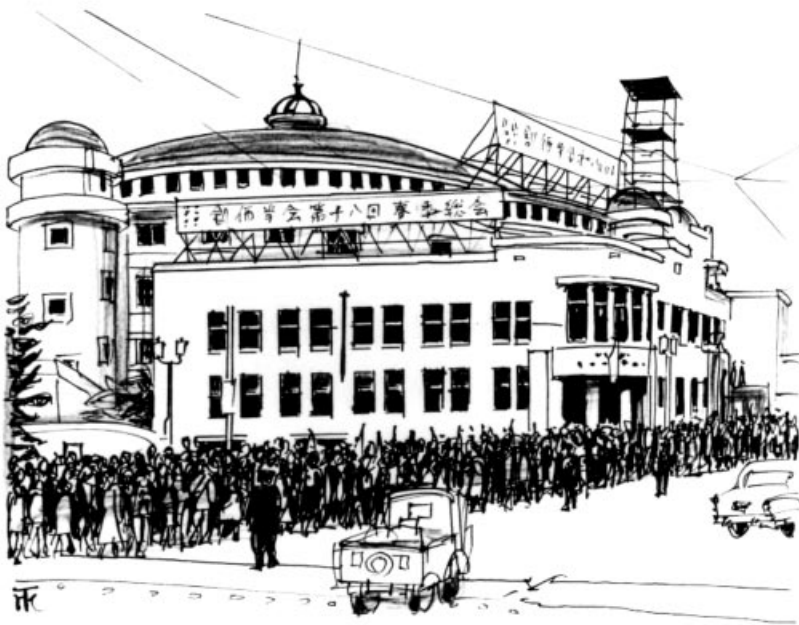
If the Gakkai's first bell for kosen-rufu had tolled in 1930, with the organization's initial formation, then the ringing of the fourth bell — the fourth seven-year period —

would now have come to an end. If this was the case, then the forthcoming spring general meeting should initiate the loud and clear sounding of the fifth bell.

Within the ensuing seven-year period, he would see to it that a membership of three million households was achieved without fail, as President Toda had envisioned. The goal for the seven years following that — the period of the sixth bell's tolling — would in all likelihood be to achieve a membership of 6 million households. After that, they would have to realize the construction of the Sho-Hondo — the Grand Main Temple in which the Dai-Gohonzon would be enshrined — by 1972, the beginning of the seventh bell. This seventh bell, Shin'ichi mused, would finish tolling twenty-one years from now, in 1979, signaling the completion of a total of seven seven-year periods. By that time, he vowed, he would make kosen-rufu in Japan a tangible reality. This completion of seven bells would also mark the dawn of the full-fledged worldwide spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Shin'ichi would then be 51. If his health would just hold out, then a new century, with all of its grand possibilities, would be awaiting him.

Shin'ichi's hopes and dreams for kosen-rufu were infinite. As he envisaged the brilliant future ahead of them, Shin'ichi decided to share his ideas for the Gakkai's future goals, based on the concept of Seven Bells that Toda had so often spoken about, at the upcoming general meeting. He couldn't help sensing that his own lifetime mission lay in realizing these long-range goals.

Many Soka Gakkai leaders were senior to him. Nevertheless, he had been unable to find anyone among his comrades whom he could rely



The 18th Spring General Meeting was held on May 3, 1958, at the old Ryogoku National Sports Arena, which later became the Nihon University Auditorium.

on as a solid pillar for the future of kosen-rufu.

On this day, Shin'ichi made an entry in his diary, his heart pounding with excitement:

May 3, that significant day, is just around the corner. Will this be the day on which I effectively take leadership of the Gakkai? My heart is heavy — a pressing weight. I will powerfully strike the Fifth Bell. I will fight — to prove my mentor's greatness to the world. I will advance straight ahead. Resolved to exert my all, overcoming onslaughts of obstacles and hindrances. I am now beginning the most essential period of my youth.

New Dawn 3

THE 18th Spring General Meeting was held on May 3, 1958, at the old Ryogoku National Sports

Arena, which later became the Nihon University Auditorium. Above the royal box hung a large photograph of President Toda and calligraphy for the word *unity*. On either side hung long banners bearing poems written by Toda, reproduced in large, bold brush strokes:

With the roar of the lion king
A life dedicated
Over seven years,
To saving the masses —
How wondrous!

And:

As you make your ascent
Of a still steeper mountain,
Set your mind firmly
On the journey for kosen-
rufu.

After opening words, the meeting continued with an announcement of new leadership appointments: Tokie Tani was named young women's division chief,

replacing Hideyo Morikawa.

The formation of ten new corps for the young men's division and twelve new corps for the YWD was also announced. This news testified eloquently to the fresh progress being made by the youthful heirs who had struggled so diligently alongside Shin'ichi Yamamoto under Toda's tutelage.

The vibrant spirit generated by the youth seemed to send a fragrant breeze of hope into the participants' hearts still clouded with a tinge of sadness over Toda's death. After words from several Gakkai directors and some representatives sharing their experience in faith, Shin'ichi Yamamoto rose to the rostrum. Embracing with his gaze the tens of thousands of Bodhisattvas of the Earth assembled before him, he began to speak powerfully:

"It was Nichiren Daishonin's advent that gave credence to Shakyamuni Buddha's prophecies. And it is not going too far to say that



“It was Nichiren Daishonin’s advent that gave credence to Shakyamuni Buddha’s prophecies. And it is not going too far to say that Nichiren Daishonin’s will and intent have been actualized by the appearance of President Toda, by the Soka Gakkai.”

Nichiren Daishonin’s will and intent have been actualized by the appearance of President Toda, by the Soka Gakkai.

“President Toda devoted his entire life to making kosen-rufu a reality. He fought and continued to proclaim this ideal until he had fulfilled every one of his cherished objectives and returned to the treasure land of Tranquil Light. President Toda’s sole intent and purpose was accomplishing kosen-rufu, and this, too, is the eternal spirit of the Soka Gakkai.

“It is now up to all of us, as President Toda’s disciples, to unite solidly behind General Director Konishi and boldly redouble our efforts to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism. We have taken faith in the Gohonzon and been taught and trained by President Toda, the great leader of propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. If we move ahead together, pooling our strength and energy, then I am confident that we can absolutely accomplish the reli-

gious reformation known as kosen-rufu.

“In his writings the Daishonin states: ‘This sutra [the Lotus Sutra] is superior to all other sutras. It is like the lion king, the monarch of all creatures that run on the ground, and like the eagle, the king of all creatures that fly in the sky’ (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 249). Then let us also, as individuals dedicated to spreading the True Law, advance like courageous lion kings!”

Shin’ichi’s appeal to the tens of thousands of assembled members expressed the boiling passion and monumental conviction for kosen-rufu that were coursing through his being.

Next, he touched on Toda’s vision of Seven Bells and traced the Gakkai’s history of having made a substantial leap forward every seven years since its founding in 1930. The participants listened with rapt attention to what Shin’ichi was saying:

“Then, in 1951, Mr. Toda was inaugurated as the second president, and over the next seven years revealed to us everything we need to know to achieve kosen-rufu, while building for us a firm foundation upon which to accomplish that goal.”

New Dawn 4

SHIN’ICHI continued with even greater intensity:

“Starting today, the curtain finally opens on the fifth bell—our fifth seven-year period of development. After that, two more seven-year periods will remain before completing the seventh bell in 1979, 21 years from today. Let us make it our goal to firmly solidify the foundation and overall structure of the our kosen-rufu movement by the time these seven bells finish tolling.

“As the Daishonin said, ‘Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it. What we should aspire to, after

all, is the Buddha land' (MW-5, 132). In this spirit, why don't we make today's meeting our first step in a new period of powerful progress and begin a fresh advance toward kosen-rufu, filled with hope, courage and confidence!"

With the lion king now departed, Shin'ichi's speech constituted the powerful roar of the young lion destined to succeed him. The entire auditorium shook with thunderous applause. Every face was beaming. Shin'ichi's cry had cleared any remaining clouds of sorrow from people's hearts, illuminating them with the bright light of hope.

They now stood on the threshold of a new dawn that would dispel the darkness of grief and sorrow that had engulfed them.

As the participants listened to Shin'ichi's words, it was as if a new path to kosen-rufu had suddenly become visible to them; in the distance that represented their future, they could see majestic golden and silver peaks glistening in the morning light.

At the meeting that day, High Priest Nichijun lauded Toda's magnificent accomplishments:

"President Toda dedicated himself to propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism with the aim of accomplishing a membership of 750,000 households. I think that the number 750,000 has profound significance. By this, I mean, of course,

my conviction that it corresponds to the five or seven characters of Myoho-renge-kyo³....

"As you know, in the assembly on Eagle Peak described in the Lotus Sutra, the four great bodhisattvas,⁴ with Bodhisattva Jogyo in the vanguard, arrived one after another. They, in turn, were followed by great bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers, who also gathered at Eagle Peak. There, they made a resolute vow to propagate Myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law....

"I believe that the Soka Gakkai, with President Toda in the vanguard, summoned them forth. In other words, I believe President Toda called forth these people in the number of 750,000, representing the seven or five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo.

"There is not the slightest doubt that, if every single one of these 750,000 men and women throughout Japan earnestly dedicates themselves to spreading the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we will see the accomplishment of kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law just as Shakyamuni prophesied long ago....

"I believe the fact that you have just renewed your pledge toward the future in perfect unison can only signify that the assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed⁵

— or put another way, that the Soka Gakkai represents the true pure land of Eagle Peak and an incomparable assembly of Buddhas. As such you have my deepest respect."

Just as the high priest implied, it was as if the assembly at Eagle Peak had moved to this age and its participants were pledging together anew to achieve kosen-rufu. Now these sons and daughters of the Buddha were rising to the call of the intrepid young general who was heir to this task and preparing to embark together on a fresh new advance.

Illustrations by Teikichi Miyoshi

(To be continued)



1. "A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on Wuchang Plain": (Abbr. "Wuchang Plain.") A song about the death of the great Chinese minister Chuko K'ung-ming, the hero of the epic saga, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

2. Chuko Liang: Another name for Chuko K'ung-ming.

3. The five or seven characters of Myoho-renge-kyo: This refers to the fact that Myoho-

renge-kyo is written with five Chinese characters: *myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo*; and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, with seven: *nam-mu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo*.

4. The four bodhisattvas: Jogyo (Superior Practices), Muhengyo (Boundless Practices), Jyogyo (Pure Practices) and Anryugyo (Firmly Established Practices). They are the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth

described in the "Emerging from the Earth" (fifteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

5. "The assembly on Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed": Words of Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. Also discussed by Daishonin in the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings), *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 757.

Thomas Rebek: Going With the Flow

Boston Watercolorist

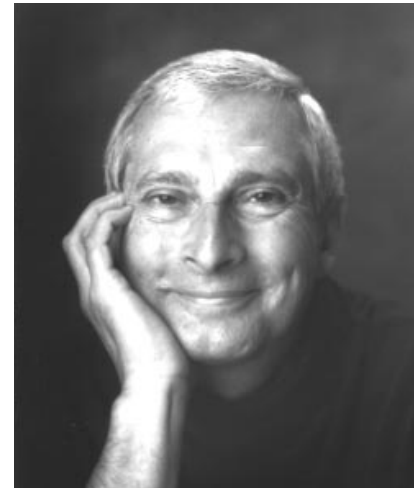
Photographs by Bill Kipp

IN June this year, I will celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of receiving the Gohonzon. I remember that when I started chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in 1972, President Daisaku Ikeda asked that we try this practice for twenty years to truly see the great effects it can bring to us. I thought it a difficult challenge but prayed earnestly that I would be able to practice that long to see what he really meant.

In my case the practice has truly changed my life for the better. My bitter cynicism, originating from a

deep insecurity, has changed to compassion for others and hope for the future.

My lack of confidence to pursue an art career was challenged twelve years ago when I just couldn't fake enjoying my job as an interior designer any longer. I wanted to be an artist since I first painted watercolors as a boy of 14. My dream then was that I could paint all I wanted to when I retired at age 65 because I believed that I couldn't make a living at it. Until I began practicing Buddhism, I had no way



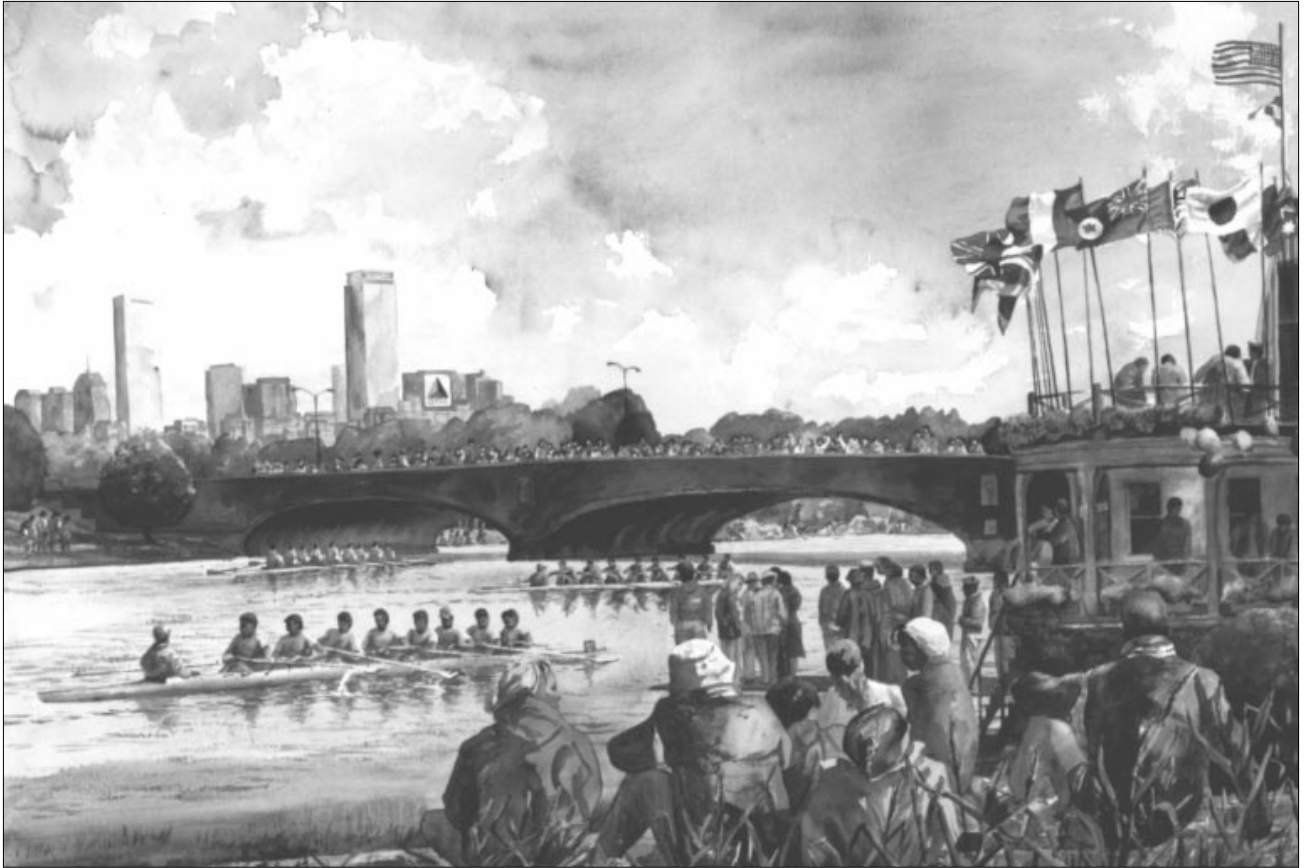
of overcoming this insecurity. Of course I painted in my "spare time" — weekends and on vacations. Deep inside I knew I could accomplish wonderful paintings if I were to devote full time to it. The more I practiced, the more I could see how I was wasting my talent and that I needed to correct this situation.

Twelve years ago, in 1985, I was asked to give my Buddhist experience at one of our monthly meetings at the Boston Community Center. As I prepared my story, I could see this glaring void of unfulfillment in my life. I decided that I would show my appreciation for fifteen years of accomplishments and finish with my sincere determination to become an artist to the best of my ability, giving up the lucrative interior design practice I had been involved with since before I started practicing Buddhism.

Within a year I was able to fulfill my obligations to my interior design clients and concentrate on my true love — painting watercolors. Many of my clients supported



(Left) *Durgin Park Snowfall*, 1990, transparent watercolor, 22 x 29 in.



(Above) *Regatta Race*, 1990,
transparent watercolor, 28 x 40 in.

my new career and bought some of my early work.

I knew that I had made the right decision. Everything about this work feels right to me. I'm so very happy getting up every morning to prepare for the challenge of painting; it's then that I face the Gohonzon and show appreciation for making me confront what I really wanted to do early on in my life.

Places That I Love

MY landscape and cityscape paintings are of places that I love. I try to make the viewer reflect upon each environment in an enlightened way—to make it a meaningful and somewhat happy experience. No matter the weather: rain, shine, cold, hot, snow, and so on. I want the viewer to be one with

the environment.

I am particularly known for my watercolors of Boston. I hope that people who live in Boston really appreciate this city more after seeing my Boston paintings and that people outside Boston who see my scenes will fall in love with the city so much that they will definitely want to visit here; very much like people who see a Monet painting of Paris, find Paris romantic and would like to visit Paris. My style of painting has been influenced by the Impressionists, as well as by Winslow Homer, John Singleton Sargent, Maurice Prendergast and Walt Disney.

I do my work on site, weather permitting, but I mostly paint in my home studio since I like to do many rainy and snowy scenes. My smaller paintings take me a few days to complete and the large ones five or

(Below) *Skaters at the Bridge*, 1990,
transparent watercolor, 28 x 22 in.





(Left) *Ducklings in the Boston Public Garden*, 1989, transparent watercolor, 22 x 29 in.

six weeks depending on the detail.

Whenever I look at a scene, I think of many ways I can paint it from so many different angles, times of the day or night, in so many different light conditions and at so many different times of the year. This way no matter how many times I may paint the same scene, it is always fresh in my mind.

I almost never repeat my color palettes. I'm constantly learning new ways of putting colors together. I draw the image lightly with lead pencil on the watercolor paper first until I feel it has the right composition and drama; then I begin the painting stage, slowly working from light to dark. I paint onto a fine acid free 300-pound cold press Arches watercolor paper from France. The technique is transparent watercolor. It is a difficult method since the artist does not generally use white paint pigment to produce the white and light areas of the painting. This way I must think of what to leave white in the planning stages before I start the actual painting. It is this specific thought process that lured me to watercolor painting in the first place. This and the immediacy of the medium are the joys of watercolor.

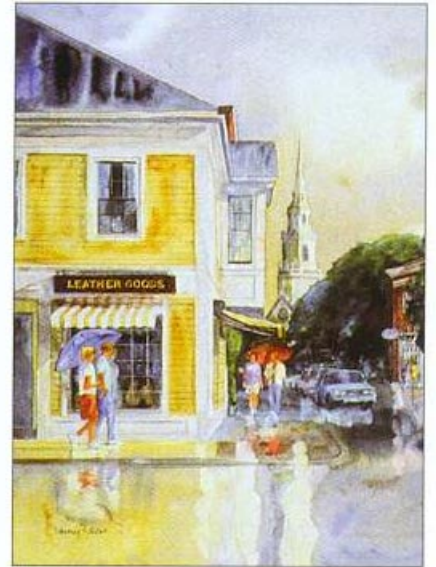
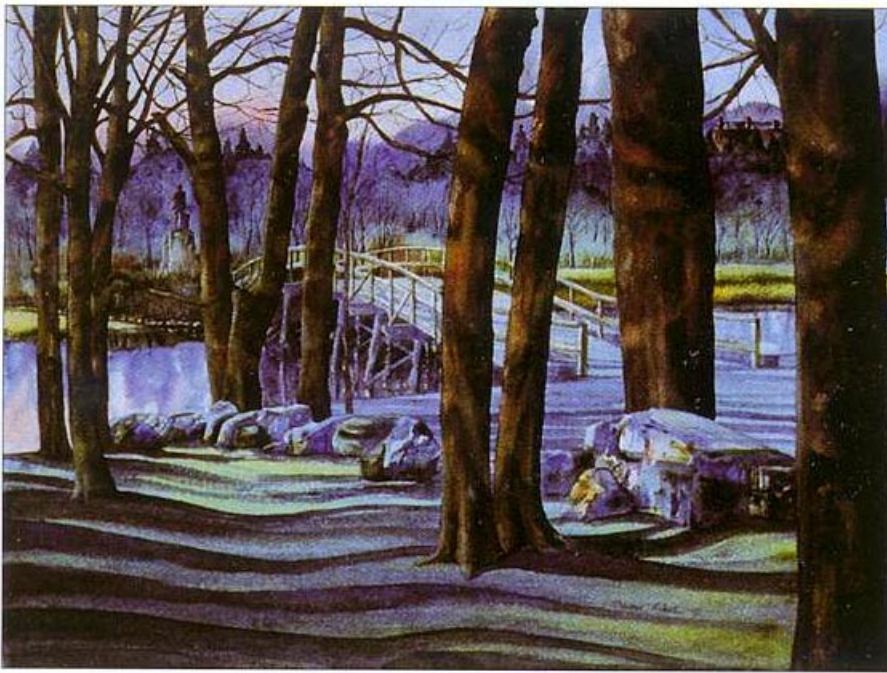
Many sudden changes occur when wet paint flows into wet paint whereby the artist must be willing to work and think through what is happening to the image at the moment in order to make a statement about the images outcome. The watercolor artist must "go with the flow." I have a constant communication with the process of painting as I'm experiencing it. It can be frustrating but many times is exhilarating.

I have maintained a close association with many nonprofit art organizations in New England since many of the artist members are very giving of their time to teach their art techniques to one another. I have been able to continually show my work through these organizations, winning many awards.

My favorite is the New England Watercolor Society. For the past eight years, I've been on its board of directors; in 1996, the members voted me their president for a two-year term. I'm putting my early SGI-USA leadership training to good use here. Every one of the twenty-three artists on the NEWS board of directors takes responsibility to produce our three major watercolor shows each year.

My paintings have become so popular that I've produced prints of them for the general market. They are being sold through many local galleries and gift shops. Many images have been produced into holiday greeting cards by Townhouse Press in Boston and Century Greetings in Chicago. Pimpernel Company in England is producing my Boston images on placemats and coasters that are being sold in the finer gift shops under the name American Artist Signature Series Boston Scenes.

I wish to sincerely thank Steve Potoff for introducing me to this philosophy one June evening in front of Boston's famous Symphony Hall. He was a stranger then but as I grew more and more into this practice, I realized that we had made a commitment to be together as friends, in some near or distant past, to do our part for world peace. I also feel so fortunate that Daisaku Ikeda has been alive and healthy and active during my entire practice. I thank him for the encouragement he gave me to stick with it for twenty years or more to experience the true meaning of it all. I look forward to my next twenty-five years of practice and good fortune. □



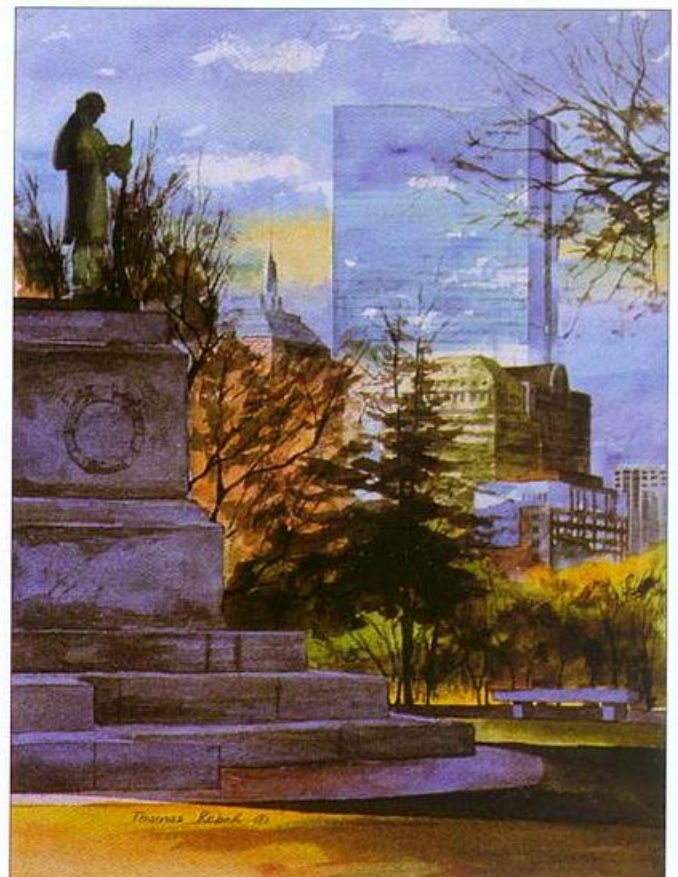
above left, *Trees at the Bridge*, 1994,
transparent watercolor, 21 x 29 in.

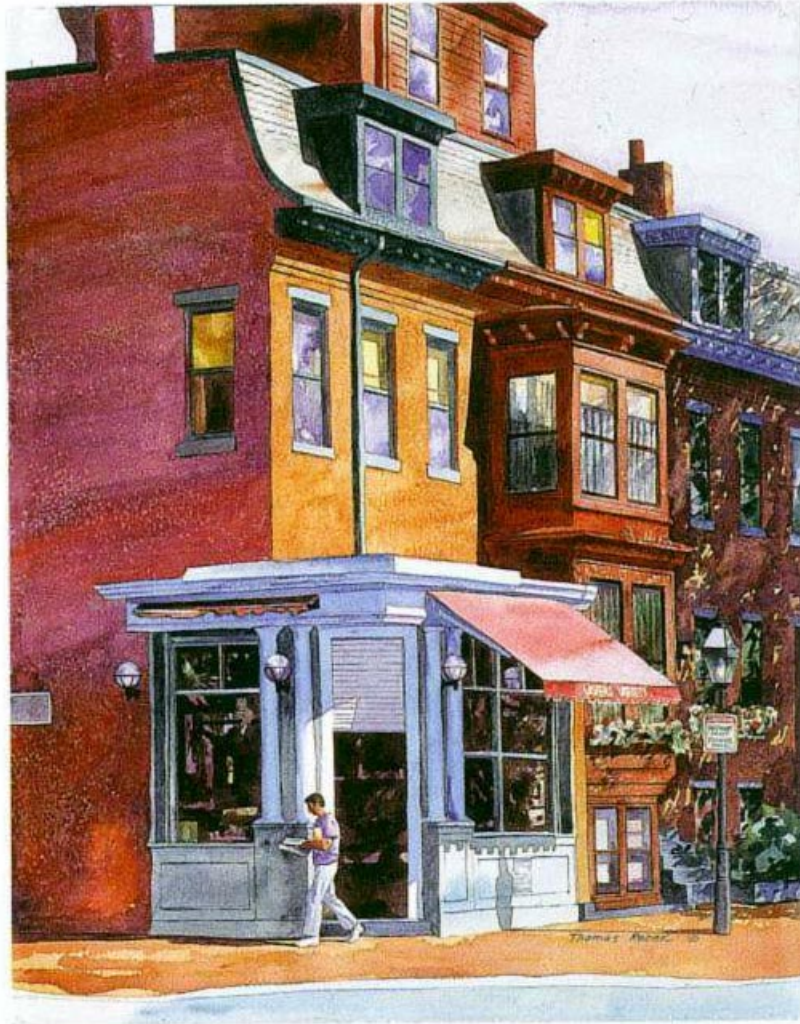
above right, *Main Street Concord Mass.*, 1994,
transparent watercolor, 23 x 17 in.

left, *Moonlight Lilies*, 1989,
transparent watercolor, 28 x 22 in.

below left, *Newbury Street Snowfall*, 1994,
transparent watercolor, 18 x 24 in.

below right, *War Memorial*, 1988,
transparent watercolor, 23 x 17 in.





Laskers Variety Store, 1995,
transparent watercolor, 24 x 18 in.
by Thomas Rebek

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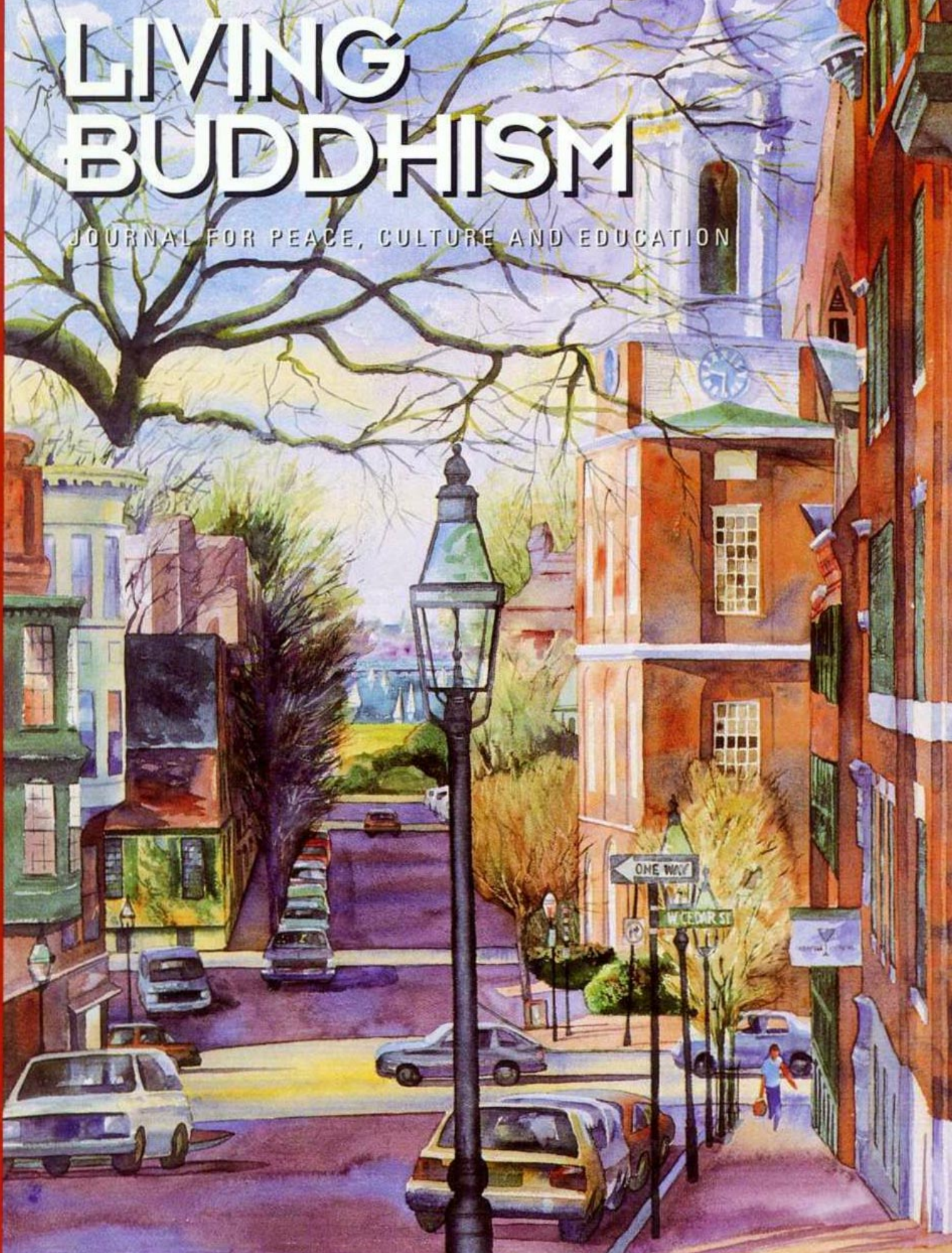
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Thomas Reinak

Singapore Soka Culture Center



THE opening ceremony of the Singapore Soka Culture Center in Tampines on January 1, 1993, was officiated by the Honorable Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and given wide coverage in the local press and evening news. The prime minister congratulated the Singapore Soka Association (SSA) for its consistent efforts in promoting social, cultural and educational activities for the benefit of all Singaporeans. The ribbon-cutting took place in the Friendship Hall and a grand meeting held in the Ikeda Culture Auditorium.

Since the first district was officially formed

in 1967, SSA's membership has blossomed to 16,000 individuals who reflect the multiracial population of 3 million in Singapore. They have earned the appreciation and respect of Singapore's citizens through their far-reaching activities, which include celebrating Singapore's National Day, involving thousands of members in mass display performances and televised nationwide. In 1992, the Singapore Soka Kindergarten was established. In 1996, SSA's Youth Choir won first prize in the group singing competition at the Singapore Song Festival.