

LIVING BUDDHISM

September • 1997
Vol. 1 • No. 9

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 Daishonin's Buddhism.



2 From Our Readers

4 Publisher's Commentary

6 This Person Will Practice Among the People:
Study Material for September and October
From The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin

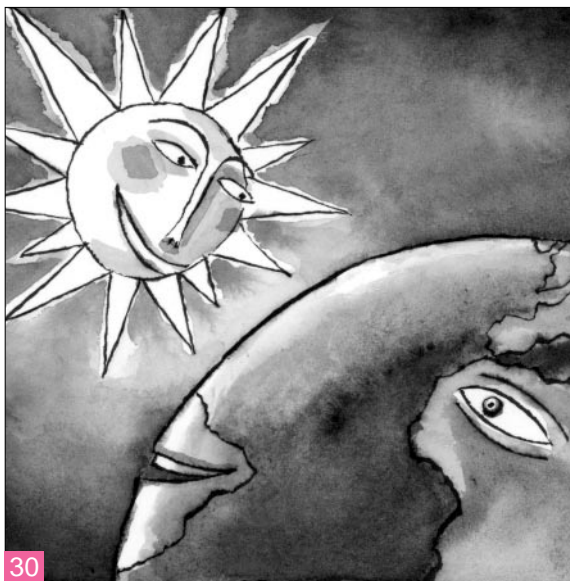
14 Lights, Camera, Encouragement!—Feature
on Encouraging Others, by Claude Lomden

28 Topics for Discussion—Primary and
Secondary Practices

30 Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (22): A Discussion
of Religion in the Twenty-first Century

46 Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World
Figures: Josep Maria Bricall Massip — Vice
President of the Standing Conference
of Rectors, Presidents and Vice Chancellors of
the European Universities

52 Expressions: Arzu Tittus



On The Cover: *My Spirit*, story quilt, 1995, 61 x 50 in.

LIVING BUDDHISM (USPS 385-750) (ISSN: 1093-5169)

Formerly *Seikyo Times*. Published monthly by SGI-USA Publications, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Periodicals postage paid at Santa Monica, CA, 90401 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster—send address changes and returns to *Living Buddhism*, SGI-USA Subscriptions, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA, 90401-1427. Copyright© 1997 SGI-USA. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rate: \$50.00 per year, \$90.00 for two years, \$125.00 for three years. RETURN POSTAGE GUARENTEED.

LIVING BUDDHISM

EDITORIAL STAFF:

Publisher: Fred M. Zaitso
Executive Editor: Ted Morino

Managing Editor: Margie Hall
Asst. Managing Editor: Dave Baldschun
Art Director: Gary Murie
Contributing Translators: Jeff Kriger, Shinsuke Yatomi
Volunteers: Tobie Marsh, Patti Brundige, Marianne Winfield, Alice Ross, Kitty Scalzo, Lisa Chune

BUREAU CHIEFS:

Atlanta: Sam Harris
Boston: Anne Hudson, Beth Zimmerman
Chicago: Bill Endsley
Florida: Terry Ellis
Hawaii: Joanne Tachibana
Los Angeles: Tesfaye Abagaz, Kathleen Slattery, Laura Aved
Midwest: Jim Celer
New York: Nikki Amdur, Brigid Witkowski, Steve Piontek, Leslie Wines, Paul Grossman
Philadelphia: Claude Lomden
Rocky Mountain: Rodney Richards
San Diego: MJ Frazier
San Francisco: Ron Baird
Seattle: Aaron Franklin
Texas: Nellida Gallagher
Washington, D.C.: Patricia Elam Ruff

DOMESTIC SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES:

\$50 per year, \$90 for two, \$125 for three
Subscriptions Department: (800) 835-4558
Subscriptions: SGI SUBS@aol.com

INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Canada, Mexico & Caribbean: U.S. \$65 per year
Latin America: U.S. \$75 per year
Europe and Africa: U.S. \$83 per year
Asia, Oceania and India: U.S. \$90 per year
Send money order in U.S. funds to:
525 Wilshire Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90401

WRITTEN/ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS:

Send all written, photographic or fine art submissions to your local Living Buddhism Bureau Chief or to the above address or e-mail:
LivingB1@aol.com

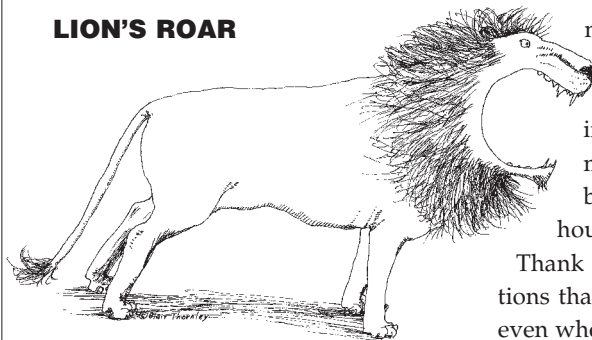
Contributors assume liability for all copyrighted material. All written submissions become property of SGI-USA.



FROM OUR READERS

Due to the volume of letters we receive, not all can be printed, and all letters are subject to condensation. Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the SGI-USA or *Living Buddhism*. 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

LION'S ROAR



THE illustrations throughout your July issue were wonderful. Blair Thornley and Larry Ashton both did an incredible job to make the articles they were illustrating come to life! While I had hoped to illustrate more for your magazine as I had done in the past, I have found that being home with two small children keeps me so busy that I can no longer sit at my drawing table! Yet, the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is so profound that I have been able to channel the art that I wish to express from my heart into music. While running around the house chasing little Austen, I have so far composed the music and words for twelve songs!

Last week I stood up on a stage at a local art opening and sang two of the songs, despite my nervousness and fear. I kept imagining the image of Blair Thornley's lion with the state-

ment, "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion." Thank you for that image because I sang with my whole heart, and incredibly (after chanting many hours) I'm no longer afraid! Thank you also for your publications that continue to encourage me, even when on the run.

AMY SADANAGA
Langhorne, Pa.

PEACE PROPOSAL CORRECTION

FIRST let me thank all of you for a first-rate magazine. I really enjoy and appreciate the letters, articles (both from SGI and outside scholars), the art, "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" —everything. Please keep up the good work.

Thank you especially for printing President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal. It is a profound and demanding essay, but if we are to solve the problems facing our planet, we must tackle profound and demanding issues.

Recognizing the depth, scope and complexity of his proposal, I created

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>

an outline, with page references, to help members in my area get a handle on it. In the process, I ran across two things which for the life of me I cannot understand.

The first is the word *aporia*, which appears in line 18 of the first column on page 8.

The second is clearly a lacuna: line 22 of the first column on page 20 reads "... back in 1972, and tof policy."

I hope you will pardon my peskiness, but I am determined to grasp President Ikeda's proposal deeply and put it into action.

EDWARD B. RIPPY
Oakland, Ca.

Editor's reply: We had a hard time finding the word aporia as well, but the two thousand-plus-page Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines aporia as "in rhetoric, an affectation of being at a loss where to begin, or what to say."

The following is a corrected version of the paragraph on page 20 of the peace proposal in the April Living Buddhism:

"The United Nations Environmental Programme was established back in 1972, and the founding of the CSD will contribute immensely to the coordination of policy in this field. Already the CSD is involved in follow-up activities for implemented projects by theme.

"However, as symbolized by the complicated debate over finances in the United Nations, there are many hurdles to overcome. In addition, even if the CSD is able to achieve a well-coordinated U.N. environmental policy, it will take considerable executive power to assure that it can be transmitted into action."

DRAGON GIRL

THANK you so much for printing President Ikeda's enlightened dialogue on the Dragon Girl in the July 1997 issue ["Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra"], and thank you also to President Ikeda and the members of the Study Department for initiating and participating in such a necessary discussion. As always, I am incredibly moved by President Ikeda's wisdom and vision and the power of the SGI to be in rhythm with the most important issues emerging in the organization today.

I initially wanted to write to point out certain problems within the dialogue itself that I found troubling—such as the fact that no women actually participated—but instead I wanted to respond to its superior spirit and not dwell on its limitations.

The Dragon Girl represents the true humanity that women bring to Buddhism and to the SGI. Sometimes I feel that within our organization, we don't always speak about the very human feelings that accompany a true human revolution. While we strive to have the courage of the lion, we also experience the sadness and softness and moments of repose that go hand in hand with struggling along toward our victories. Without these moments, we wouldn't be carrying out a "human" revolution but rather a revolution of tin soldiers or machines, relentless and hard, without the power to change and "yield," as President Ikeda describes it in his Harvard speech on soft power.

Women, who are not necessarily the sole repositories of softness or

fluidity, nevertheless seem to fight with a strength that also employs their senses, intuition and emotions. For example, in the recent movie "Courage Under Fire," a female captain begins crying in front of her troops in the middle of a battle. A male soldier screams at her in disgust: "Oh great! Now you are crying!" She replies, "It's OK! It's only tension!" and then goes on to make prudent, courageous decisions, earning the Medal of Honor for her service.

Her fight is a fight like the one carried on by our mothers. Her weapons: strength AND sensitivity.

For myself, I owe a lot to the women in my life. I, along with my younger sister, was raised solely by my mother and grandmother. I am proud of the history of the women in my family, from all the business-savvy grandmothers who worked through wars to my own mother who continues to grow personally in ways I never dreamed possible. These women are Buddhas. I am lucky to come from a family of Buddhas and to practice in a new family of SGI women and young women who are also Buddhas, excelling with each other above all else.

Anyone who doubts that women can exhibit Buddhahood hasn't had a mother, or a girlfriend, or a sister. They haven't practiced side by side with our women's division, and they haven't grasped the sensitive power of the lotus flower that opens with each tender feeler stretching out to embrace the world even amongst the harshest of conditions.

Laura Recht
New York

Frequently Cited Sources

For purposes of convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:

- *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*: MW, followed by the volume and page number.
- *Gosho Zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese): GZ, followed by the page number.
- *The Lotus Sutra*: LS, followed by the chapter and page number.

THE CHALLENGE TO CARE FOR OTHERS

LAST month a group of SGI-USA young men from around the country gathered for a conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. I was there as well. Observing how open they were with one another and the thoughtfulness and earnestness of their questions, it made me feel even more confident that the future of American kosen-rufu is in good hands.

We spent much of our time discussing the basics of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We explored the significance of developing a practice for oneself and for others, focusing on what it means to pray for the happiness of another person. As is the case with many of us, such concepts make sense in the abstract. But what these young men wanted to know is how, on a practical level, they should pray for others—especially those who give us the biggest headaches. They shared examples of people they encountered at school, at work and in their communities with whom they had strained relationships.

The difficulty of seriously praying for the happiness of another person was apparent to all of us. It was also apparent that therein lies our challenge. At the same time, experience tells us that when we accept the challenge of truly praying for another's happiness—in spite of feelings such as "they deserve to suffer"—we find how quickly and immeasurably our own state of life expands. These are the times when the profound meaning of such a prayer becomes apparent to us. Our lives

become stronger, more humanistic and more inclusive. That, I think, is the crux of the change promised in undertaking human revolution. You might say that human revolution means "I'll change." It has nothing to do with whether the other person changes.

That is why it is so crucial for me to change my view when I'm thinking less than flattering thoughts about someone else. When I chant, I try to imagine their virtues and humanity as I offer prayers for their happiness.

Chanting is the physical part of my prayer. It's where I exercise the voice of the Buddha. The content of my prayer is the spiritual part, the heart of the Buddha. This is where I must get down to business. President Ikeda always stresses this passage from "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," "Faith (the heart of the Buddha) is what really matters" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246).

As we continued our discussion, we realized something very basic; a variety of problems each of us might be facing is why we chant in the first place. But the blessing goes two ways. For instance, because I attended this conference, I could perhaps encourage another person. Not only would that benefit the recipient, the benefit also accrues to me. Nichiren Daishonin makes the point in the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings). He writes: "When Bodhisattva Fukyo bowed irreverence to the four categories of people, the Buddha

nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 769).

AS you might well imagine, as general director, I encounter all kinds of people with all kinds of problems and life-conditions. I enjoy pleasant relationships with the vast majority; however, I've learned to use all of my relationships, especially those that cause me discomfort, as the impetus for me to confront those aspects of my character that still need development. It has taught me to embrace everyone's opinion as warmly as possible.

President Ikeda tells us that:

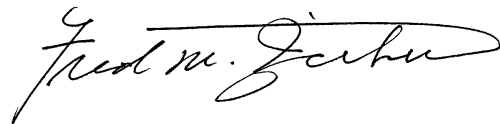
Capable people are the greatest treasure. Without capable people the eternal establishment of the Law cannot be achieved. First of all, you must find capable people. Just as a miner searches for gold ore in ordinary rocks, you have to look for members who possess great potential, and then work to develop their ability with your heart and soul. Prayer is most fundamental in raising capable people. You should pray earnestly to the Gohonzon that the person you have found will become an able person. And then, with this prayer, you take the utmost care to help that person develop (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 9).

Concern for others is the heart of the Soka Gakkai. The world of Buddhism is a world of

human harmony woven from the thread of mutual consideration. Accordingly, concern for others is the foremost requirement of leaders. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 105)

It takes effort by all of us to develop the imperative of the bodhisattva and learn to exercise humanism in our relationships. In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood" (MW-2, 205). Notice that the Daishonin says, "I and my disciples." He doesn't say, "Because *you* may encounter difficulties." In a true mentor-and-disciple relationship, it can never be that one stands over the other.

Now is the time to focus on the sanctity of life, to build a new age that shines with the glory of humanity and culture.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

Sept and Oct

STUDY OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS

THIS PERSON WILL PRACTICE AMONG THE PEOPLE

THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN IS MATERIAL FOR THE SGI-USA
STUDY MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER.

AFTER I had not heard from you for some time, your letter arrived. In addition, I have received the quilted robe with a blue lining, a hat, a sash, one *kan*¹ of coins and a basket of chestnuts.

The present time corresponds to the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law.² The text of the sutra clearly states that at this time, Bodhisattva Jogyo³ will make his advent and bestow the five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo⁴ upon all the people of Japan. It also makes clear that he will face exile and execution. I, Nichiren, am like the emissary of Bodhisattva Jogyo, because I am spreading this doctrine.

The "Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One" [21st] chapter [of the Lotus Sutra] states: "Just as the light of the sun and moon illuminates all obscurity, this person will practice among the people and dispel the darkness of all beings." In this passage, in the statement, "this person will practice among the people," to whom do you think "this person" refers? I believe that it must indicate the person who is the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyo. The sutra states, "After I have passed into extinction, [a person of wisdom] should accept and uphold this sutra. Such a person assuredly and without doubt will attain the Buddha way."⁵

You, too, are surely assisting Bodhisattva Jogyo's efforts of propagation.

Nichiren

The third day of the twelfth month in the second year of Koan (1279), cyclical sign *tsuchinoto-u*⁶

(The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 6, pp. 285–86)
(Gosho Zenshu, [The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, in Japanese], p. 1102)



The basic characteristic of any Buddha is to practice among the people,
struggling alongside them to share their sufferings and joys
to enable them to become happy.

**Background: Father's
Opposition Strengthens
Brothers' Faith**

NICHIREN Daishonin wrote this letter in 1279 at age 58 while living at Mount Minobu, about three years before his death. The title, "This Person Practices Among the People," is based on a quote from the Lotus Sutra. The recipient was Ikegami Munenaka, who took faith around 1256, three years after the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

His younger brother, Munenaga, took faith soon after.

The brothers' father, Ikegami Saemon-no-tayu Yasumitsu, was the director of the Office of Construction and Repair of the Kamakura shogunate government. An earnest supporter of the priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple, the father conspired with government officials to instigate numerous persecutions of the Daishonin and his followers. He strongly opposed his sons' Buddhist practice for more than twenty years.

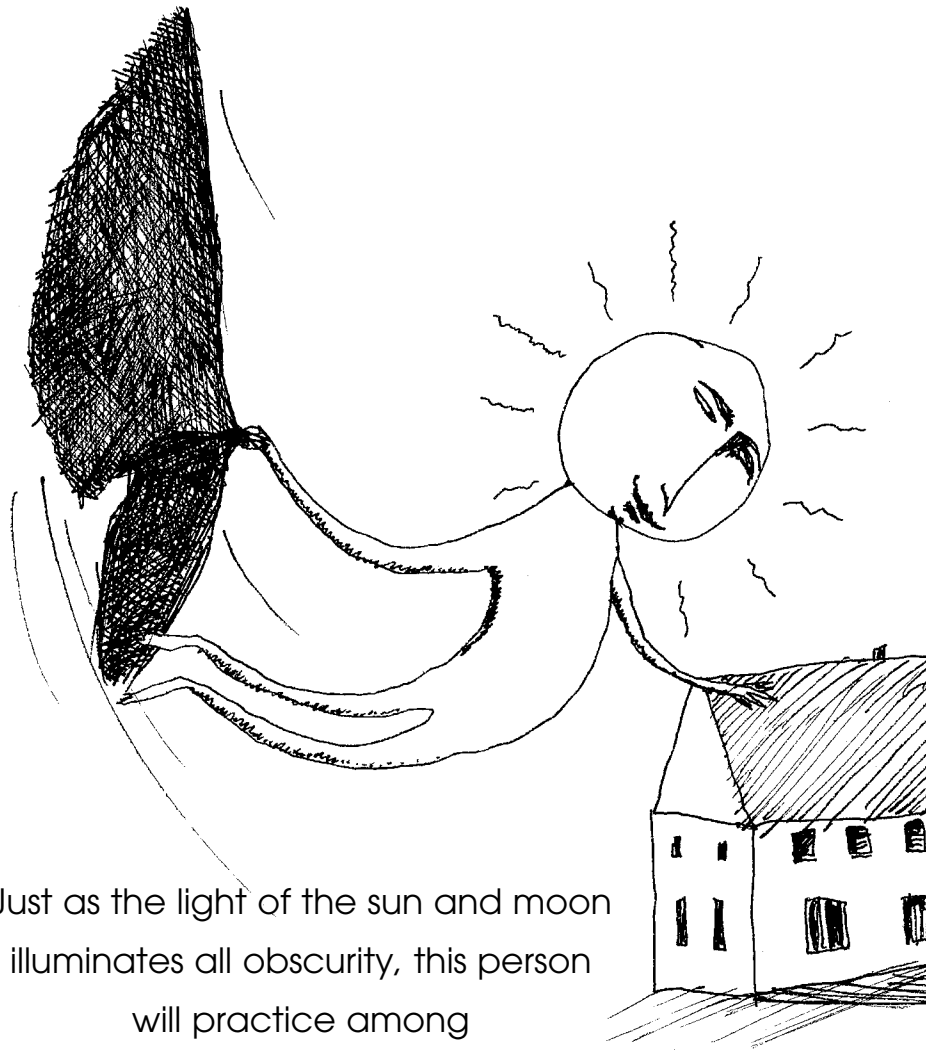
When the elder brother, Munenaka, refused to renounce his faith, he was disowned by his father—once in 1275 and again in 1277. Behind the father's actions were the machinations of Ryokan. The Daishonin writes to the brothers: "Ryokan and other priests, inspired by devils, deceived your father Saemon-no-tayu and attempted to destroy the two of you..." (MW-6, 239). In thirteenth-century Japan, if one were disowned, he suffered devastating economic and social conse-

quences, losing not only all rights to the family estate, but essentially becoming a non-person, with virtually no social or civil rights.

The first time Munenaka was disowned, the Daishonin sent "Letter to the Brothers," encouraging both brothers to persist in their faith through mutual support. Around 1276, Munenaka was forgiven, only to be disowned again a year later. Although he faced this courageously, the younger Munenaga wavered for a while. With his elder brother disowned, Munenaga stood to inherit the family's estate as well as the father's prominent government position. The situation worried the Daishonin and prompted him to write frequently to Munenaga.

Supported by the Daishonin's continuous encouragement, the Ikegami brothers and their wives grew stronger in faith during these hardships. As a result, their father not only pardoned the elder brother, but took faith in the Daishonin's teaching in 1278, shortly before his death.

By the time he received this letter in 1279, Munenaka had experienced many difficulties while remaining a staunch disciple of the Daishonin. He also witnessed the persecution of his mentor time and again by the alliance of the political and religious powers. Munenaka must have seen profound significance in this letter in which the Daishonin mentions "exile and persecution," and quotes the Lotus Sutra: "This person will practice among the people." And no doubt the Daishonin's praise, "You, too, are surely assisting Bodhisattva Jogyo's efforts of propagation," gave Munenaka a great sense of joy and pride as a disciple.



Just as the light of the sun and moon
illuminates all obscurity, this person
will practice among

Commentary

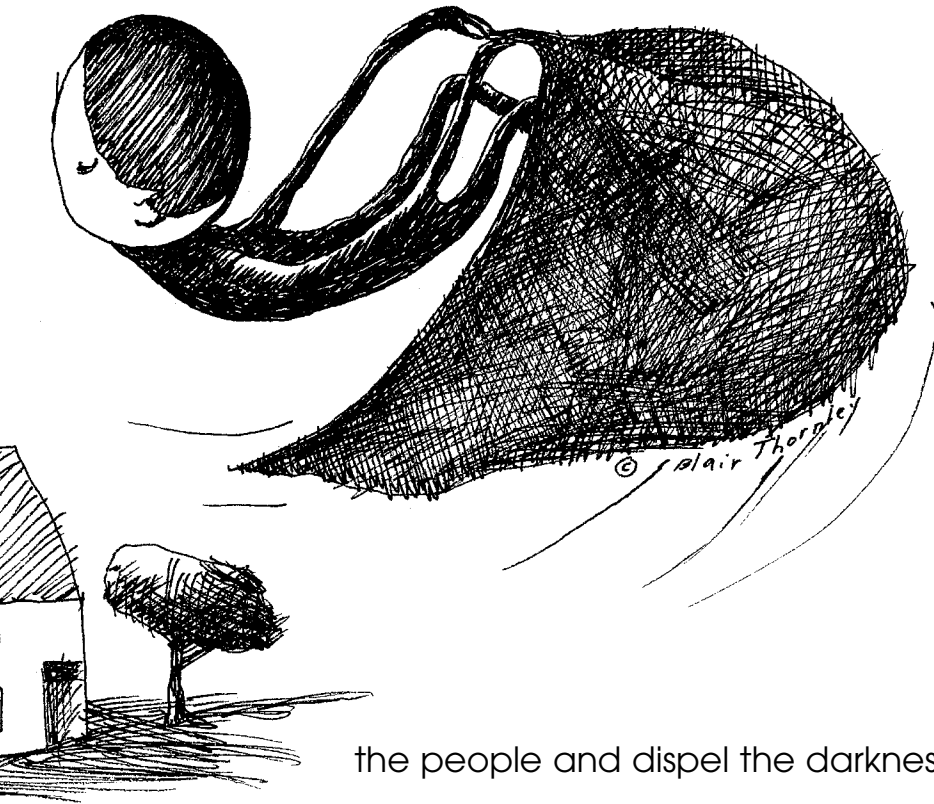
THIS letter, although relatively short, explains a fundamental principle of Buddhism—that the basic characteristic of any Buddha is to practice among the people, struggling alongside them to share their sufferings and joys and to enable them to become happy.

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin states that he is "like the emissary Bodhisattva Jogyo." Citing the sutra passage, "this person will practice among the people," he also states that "this person" refers to the "reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyo."

In the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter (15th) of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni's disciples and

various Buddhas and bodhisattvas from throughout the universe pledge at the Ceremony in the Air to spread the sutra after Shakyamuni Buddha's passing. But the Buddha rejects their offer. Instead he summons forth innumerable bodhisattvas who leap forth joyfully from beneath the earth. They are led by four great bodhisattvas, headed by Bodhisattva Jogyo (Bodhisattva Superior Practices). The Buddha entrusts them to protect, read, recite and widely preach the Lotus Sutra. Bodhisattva Jogyo, therefore, represents, in a general sense, those who will spread the teachings after the Buddha's death.

The Ceremony in the Air, the Treasure Tower, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas from throughout the



the people and dispel the darkness
of all beings.

universe and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who gather at the Ceremony—all are expressions of the profound ceremony that took place within the Buddha's life. In this way, Shakyamuni communicated to the world the grandeur of the state of life to which he had awakened. Thus Bodhisattva Jogyo should not be viewed as a historical person who appeared at a particular place or time, but as a function of the Buddha's life. When Nichiren Daishonin refers to the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Jogyo, he is, in one sense, referring to a "rebirth" of that important function—the function of the Buddha to spread the teaching that can save humankind from suffering. By equating himself to Bodhisattva

Jogyo, Nichiren Daishonin expresses his conviction that he is the first to fulfill that function in the Latter Day of the Law.

THE Daishonin set forth his own "Ceremony in the Air," in the form of the Gohonzon, in order to communicate his state of life as the Buddha of absolute freedom to all people of the Latter Day of the Law; and to allow them to bring forth the very same life-condition.

SGI President Ikeda explains:

The Ceremony in the Air ... does not occur in a specific historical time or place. For precisely this reason, we can attend the Ceremony in the Air

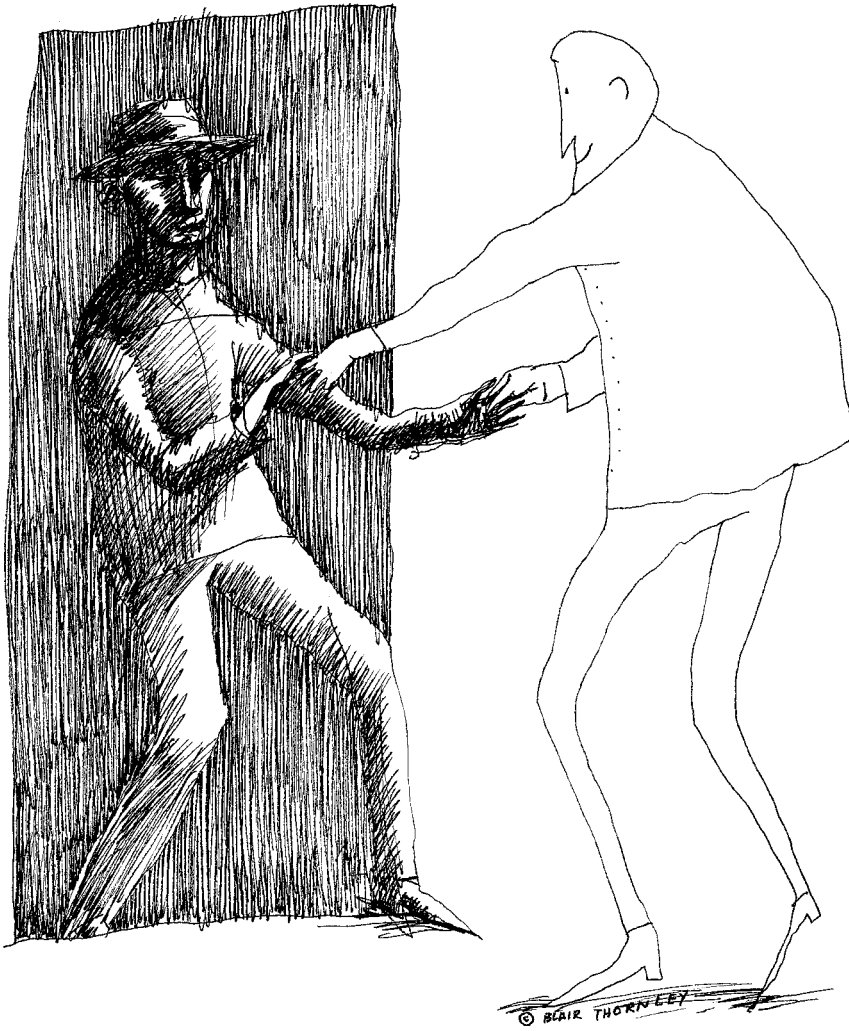
at any time and in any place.

When we pray to the Gohonzon, which depicts the Ceremony in the Air, in the present moment, we become one with the eternal and universal life; and, right where we are, we manifest the vast state of life to be able to survey the entire universe.

In that sense, our daily practice of gongyo and chanting daimoku is a "journey of life" of an even grandeur scale than that of an astronaut looking down on Earth from outer space. (March 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 35)

The main theme of the five chapters of the Lotus Sutra, beginning with "The Teacher of the Law" (10th) chapter to the "Peaceful Practices" (14th) chapter, focuses on to whom Shakyamuni will entrust with the mission to spread the Law after his passing. And, as previously mentioned, in the fifteenth chapter, innumerable bodhisattvas emerge from the earth. They are unlike the gods or other heavenly deities participating in the Ceremony in the Air who descended from heaven. Their emergence from the earth is symbolic of their being ordinary people. In one sense, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai interprets the "earth" as life's fundamental principle from which all phenomena of the universe derive. Nichiren Daishonin revealed this to be the Mystic Law or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In other words, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are ordinary people who manifest the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and fulfill their mission to propagate the Law to others.

Regarding the role of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the Daishonin cites the following passage from the "Supernatural



This person will practice among the people and dispel the darkness of all beings. The darkness of all beings signifies delusions—such as greed, anger and foolishness.

Powers of the Thus Come One” (21st) chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “Just as the light of the sun and moon illuminates all obscurity, this person will practice among the people and dispel the darkness of all beings.” “The darkness of all beings” signifies delusions—such as greed, anger and foolishness—that obscure the truth of people’s lives, leading them to confusion and suffering. On a societal level, “the dark-

ness” refers to misleading ideologies and religions or mistaken ideas that deny or trivialize the nobility and strength of the human potential rooted in the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In other words, the role of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to help people rid themselves of delusions and awaken to their inherent nobility and strength while refuting thoughts and ideas that obscure human potential.

Since the mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to empower the lives of ordinary people, they invariably experience resistance and oppression from those who benefit from maintaining an ignorant and docile populace. The “Encouraging Devotion” (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra predicts the physical and verbal abuse that those who spread the Law after Shakyamuni’s passing will experience. The chapter also explains how those in religious authority will try to incite the government and public to oppress the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

IN this letter, the Daishonin explains how his life has fulfilled the predictions in the Lotus Sutra confirming his identity and mission as Bodhisattva Jogyo, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Just as Bodhisattva Jogyo “will practice among the people and dispel the darkness of all beings,” the Daishonin lived among the people, unlike other Buddhist monks who lived in seclusion, apart from the people.

The Daishonin’s letters written to lay believers and his continuous effort to teach the wisdom and self-reliance of Buddhism to ordinary people are testament to his “practicing among the people.”

The Daishonin also states in this letter that the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra “will face exile and execution.” Here the Daishonin refers to the passages from the “Encouraging Devotion” (13th) chapter: “Again and again we will be banished to a place far removed from towers and temples” and “There will be many ignorant people who ... will attack us with swords and staves” (LS13, 193-195). Exactly as predicted in the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin was exiled to Izu from

1261 to 1263, and to Sado Island from 1271 to 1274. Furthermore, he was nearly beheaded in 1271 during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. These persecutions were the reactions from religious and political authorities to his popular movement for the spiritual empowerment of the people.

A chief conspirator behind the persecutions was the priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple (1217–1303). He was revered by many as a saint because he contributed to the construction of bridges and built facilities for lepers. But beneath the mask of a benevolent priest, Ryokan exploited his powerful political influence. He secured the right to levy taxes on travelers at highway checkpoints and amassed a fortune. He also profited from a money-lending business.

When the Daishonin revealed this hypocrisy, Ryokan and other prominent priests of Kamakura demanded that the Daishonin be banished. He even requested that the government execute the Daishonin. Also, it was Ryokan who schemed to sever the relationships of the Ikegami family members, who were leading followers of the Daishonin.

Such a malicious nature, when cloaked in priestly authority, is difficult to discern. The Daisho-

nin clearly saw that the religious authority of his day was conspiring with the government to oppress the populace and profit from their spiritual dependence. The Daishonin revealed these priests' duplicity and refuted their teachings, awakening people to their own inherent nobility and strength. It was, therefore, only natural that the Daishonin suffered numerous persecutions from the power structure.

Throughout these persecutions, Ikegami Munenaka stood by the Daishonin and remained true to his faith. His final victory was converting his father from being a follower of Ryokan, to a follower of the Daishonin, despite his having been disowned twice. In this letter, the Daishonin praises Munenaka's courageous faith, saying, "You, too, are surely assisting Bodhisattva Jogyo's efforts of propagation."

THE SGI has always been dedicated to the spiritual empowerment of ordinary people through the Daishonin's Buddhism and, as a result, has gone through numerous persecutions. In order to protect freedom of religion and the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, Makiguchi, and the second president, Toda, were

imprisoned during World War II. The founders of the SGI movement fought against the powerful Japanese military regime while the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood abandoned them and supported the government authority. Recently the SGI has suffered malicious attacks by Japan's politicized tabloid media. The onslaught of misinformation against the SGI can be viewed as a modern-day equivalent of being attacked by "swords and staves," as mentioned in the sutra. When the priesthood excommunicated SGI members in 1991, it was as if, as the sutra says, they were "banished to a place far removed from towers and temples."

Despite all these obstacles, the SGI has continued to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism. Presently, in 128 countries, people are enjoying the benefits of spiritual empowerment and self-reliance achieved through their faith. Each SGI member striving to uphold the Law deserves to be called a person who is "surely assisting Bodhisattva Jogyo's efforts of propagation." □

(Background and commentary by
SGI-USA Study Department)

Illustrations by Blair Thornley

1. *Kan*: An old monetary unit of coins that had a hole in the middle. One *kan* consisted of 1,000 coins strung together with a cord. During the Daishonin's time, one *kan* of coins could buy about five bushels of rice, enough to feed an average adult for a year.
2. First five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law: The last of the five five-hundred-year periods following Shakyamuni's death. It corresponds to the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. According to the Sutra of the Great Assembly, this period is one of

contention and strife in which the power of Shakyamuni's Buddhism will wane.

3. Bodhisattva Jogyo: Leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appears in the "Emerging from the Earth" (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and vows to propagate the sutra along with other Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the Latter Day of the Law.
4. Five characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The five characters are *myo*, *ho*, *ren*, *ge* and *kyo*. In Nichiren Daishonin's writings, Myoho-renge-kyo is often

used synonymously with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which consists of seven Chinese characters.

5. Lotus Sutra, chapter 21. Please note that this quotation of the Lotus Sutra is from Burton Watson's translation (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 276). Volume six of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* uses an earlier tentative translation.
6. Cyclical sign: One of the sixty calendar signs, which are based on the twelve animal signs of the Chinese zodiac and the ten elements of nature according to the old Chinese traditions.

THE DATE OF SHAKYAMUNI'S DEATH: WHEN DID THE LATTER DAY OF THE LAW BEGIN?

IN “This Person Will Practice Among the People,” Nichiren Daishonin states, “The present time corresponds to the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law” (MW-6, 285). He is referring to the concept of the three time periods of Buddhism—the Former, Middle and Latter Day of the Law (or Shakyamuni’s teachings). These are the three consecutive stages into which the time after Shakyamuni Buddha’s death is divided.

During the Former Day of the Law, the pure spirit of Buddhism remained intact, and people could attain enlightenment through its practice. During the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism became firmly established in society. However, the emphasis was on formalities and fewer people could benefit from it. In the Latter Day of the Law—the present age—the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness taint people’s lives and Shakyamuni’s Buddhism has lost the power to lead them to happiness.

There are several views on the length of the three periods. The Daishonin adopted the explanation found in the Sutra of the Great Assembly (Jp. *Daishutsu Sutra*), which describes five consecutive five-hundred-year periods following the Buddha’s death.

The first two five-hundred-year periods are regarded as the Former Day of the Law, and the following two five-hundred-year periods as the Middle Day of the Law. The fifth five-hundred-year period is regarded as the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, which continues indefinitely. The concept of the three time periods explains that as time passes, the conditions and capacity of the people also change and an appropriate teaching must be spread for each of the three periods.

THERE are several views regarding the date of Shakyamuni’s death and when the Former Day of the Law began. Old legends and theories set it somewhere in the range between the eleventh century B.C.E. to the sixth century B.C.E. Chinese historians adopted 609 B.C.E. Recently, scholars have estimated Shakyamuni’s death to have been around 480 B.C.E. or 380 B.C.E. This estimate is based on the discovery of a monument to King Ashoka in India. Inscriptions on the monument indicate the year when King Ashoka was enthroned. Since King Ashoka is believed to have been enthroned either 100 or 200 years after Shakyamuni’s death, there is a 100-year variance in this estimation. Generally, it is now accepted that Shakyamuni lived in

the fourth or fifth century B.C.E.

Nichiren Daishonin adopted the generally accepted view of his day—that of 949 B.C.E.—and estimated his time period, the thirteenth century, as 2,200-some years after Shakyamuni’s death; this was 200-some years into the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. But if we base our calculation on recent findings, the Daishonin’s time would be only 1,600 or 1,700 years after Shakyamuni’s passing.

WHEN examining this discrepancy, it is important to note that the Daishonin took a close look at the conditions of religion and society in light of statements in various sutras. This fact is more significant than simple arithmetic. Therefore, it can be said that the Daishonin was living in the midst of conditions that could best be characterized as those of the Latter Day of the Law. Thirteenth-century Japan presented many characteristics of the Latter Day as described in the sutras—a strife-ridden period when the essence of Buddhism is lost and Buddhist priests become corrupt. The Sutra of the Great Assembly states that it will be an “age of conflict” when monks will disregard the precepts and feud constantly among them-

The Daishonin's view of the Former and Middle days is not simply based on the number of consecutive years following Shakyamuni's death, but rather on the migration of Buddhism through India, China and Japan.

selves, heretical views will prevail and Shakyamuni's Buddhism will perish.

IT was under these circumstances that the Daishonin spread the Law in the Lotus Sutra—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*—and faced numerous persecutions as predicted in the sutra. He spread the Mystic Law in an age of corruption and confusion, following Shakyamuni's injunction in the Lotus Sutra: "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five hundred year period you must spread it abroad widely and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils' people ... to seize the advantage!" (LS-23, 288). In contrast to other sutras, the Lotus Sutra views the Latter Day as the time when the essence of the Lotus Sutra, transferred to *Bodhisattva Jogyo* at the Ceremony in the Air, will be propagated.

It is important to keep in mind that whatever hypothesis we adopt regarding the date of Shakyamuni's passing, the time period in which the Daishonin lived was a reflection of predictions characteristic of the Latter Day. It was under horrific conditions that the Daishonin spread the Mystic Law and established the true object of worship, the *Gohonzon*. In 1273 he wrote, "Now is when the *Bodhisattvas* of the Earth will appear in this country and establish the supreme object of wor-

ship on the earth" (MW-1, 81).

The Daishonin's view of the Former and Middle days is not simply based on the number of consecutive years following Shakyamuni's death, but rather on the migration of Buddhism through India, China and Japan.

In "The Selection of the Time," the Daishonin explains that the Former Day of the Law is the period in which Shakyamuni's Buddhism is spread by the twenty-four successors in India—those who inherited the lineage of his teachings (MW-3, 94–96). It was a time when Buddhism flourished in India—a view in accord with historical records. *Aryasimha*, the last of the twenty-four successors, is believed to have lived in central India during the sixth century. From around the seventh century, Buddhism became more esoteric and began to decline in that country.

IN his discussion about the migration of Buddhism into China in "The Selection of the Time," the Daishonin explains that in the fifteenth year of the Middle Day of the Law, Buddhism was brought to China and that for one thousand years thereafter, it spread in China and Japan (MW-3, 96). Buddhism was imported into China in 2 B.C.E. or 65 C.E. So the beginning of the Middle Day, according to the Daishonin, falls around the beginning of the Common Era. Therefore,

the Great Teacher *T'ien-t'ai* (538–597) lived around the middle of the Middle Day of the Law.

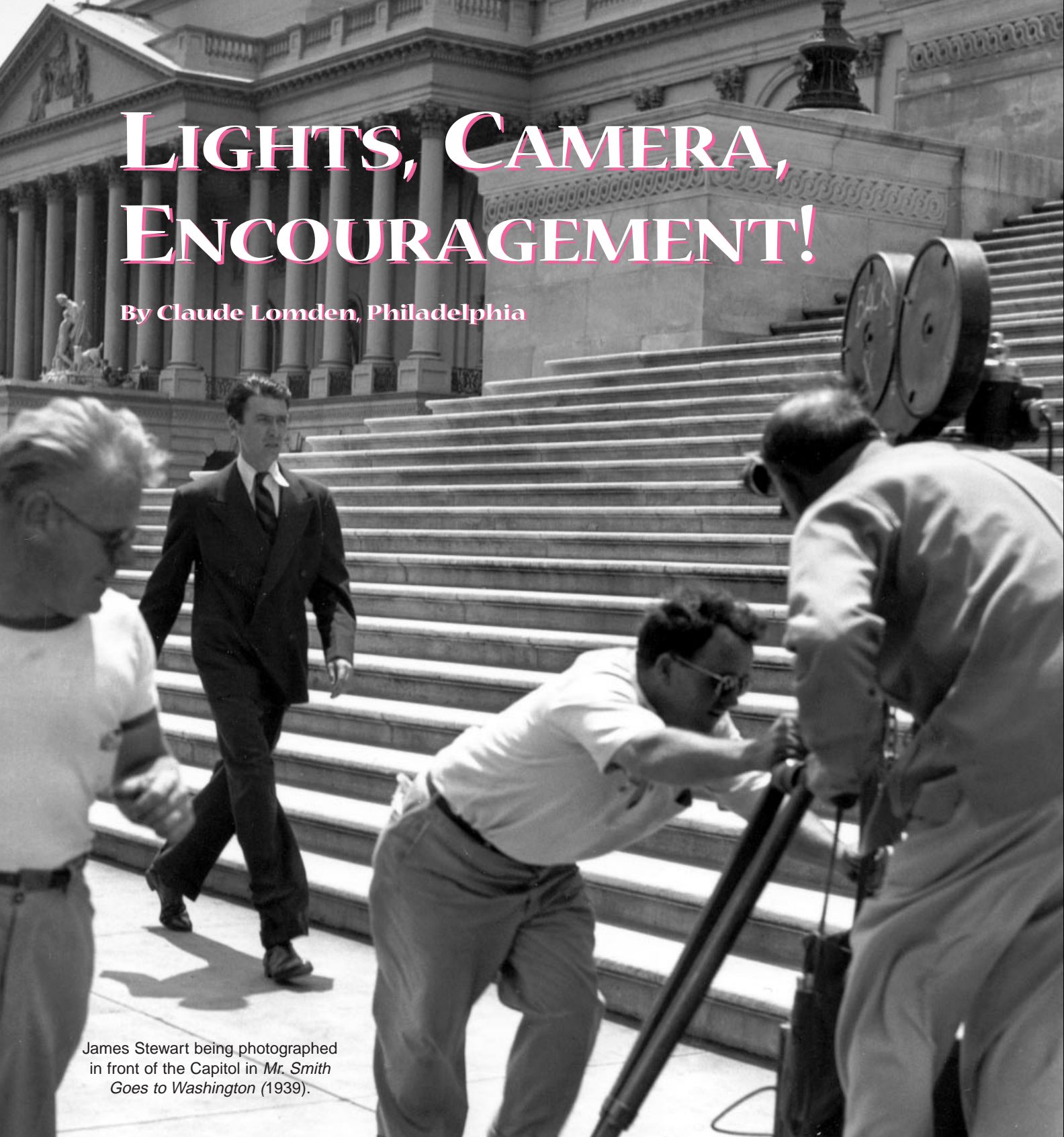
FROM his description in "The Selection of the Time," the Daishonin clearly did not view the transition from the Former to the Middle Day as a simple timeline. Rather, he thought of the Former and Middle days as the migration of Buddhism through India, China and Japan. Although the last several centuries of the Former Day in India and the first several centuries of the Middle Day in China overlap, this does not discount the merit of the Daishonin's view of the 2,000-period of the Former and Latter days.

In "On the Buddha's Prophecy," the Daishonin states: "The moon appears in the west and gradually shines eastward, while the sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism. It spread from west to east in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, but will travel from east to west in the Latter Day" (MW-1, 114). According to the Daishonin, the Latter Day of the Law is when *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* will spread from Japan to the rest of the world. The SGI is fulfilling the Daishonin's prediction for the Latter Day of the Law as its members are introducing Buddhism to their friends the world over. □

(By the SGI-USA Study Department)

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ENCOURAGEMENT!

By Claude Lomden, Philadelphia



James Stewart being photographed
in front of the Capitol in *Mr. Smith
Goes to Washington* (1939).

THE greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism lies in how applicable its principles are to our lives. As we continue to practice and study, we see

how much effect this tremendous life philosophy has in improving our lives and the lives of others.

We can strengthen our understanding of these principles by

identifying them in popular American culture, which is certainly an important part of our daily lives and is a valid reflection of the lives of the common people.



MAGIE BARNES

And what better place to start than Hollywood movies?

A highbrow response might be to dismiss Hollywood movies as superficial or not worth studying, especially compared with other fine arts. However, because Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is so easily applicable to our daily lives, we can watch some of these ideals enacted by compelling characters in dramatic situations.

The subject of this short study is a simple one: Encouraging others. We can illustrate some of SGI President Ikeda's guidance regarding encouragement with scenes from popular Hollywood movies. In this way, we can further understand how crucial this bodhisattva activity is.

Why is encouragement crucial? Practice for others in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is as important as practice for oneself. The two aspects of prac-

tice must go hand in hand if we are to practice correctly. If indeed the Mystic Law is great, and if our own happiness is connected to people in our environment, then it stands to reason that helping others to become happy is as necessary as helping ourselves to become happy. In fact, we cannot make ourselves happy unless we take action to make others happy. If the Mystic Law works, it is only natural that you want to share this great thing with others who are suffering.

President Ikeda said, "The fundamental spirit of Mahayana Buddhism lies in the practice of helping others even if it means making one's happiness a second priority. The Daishonin's Buddhism is the quintessence of Mahayana Buddhism. We are the Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Our mission is to lead others

to happiness. That is why we were born ("Conversations With Youth," pp. 81–82)."

But how do we keep each other going, through the ups and downs, the highs and lows? Do we simply urge one another with: "This is how you practice. Good luck. See yuhhh..."? How do we maintain our own life-condition? By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, offering our sincere prayers and urging others from the heart. In a word, encouragement. Or, as Mark Twain wrote, "The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer somebody else up."

The perennial feel-good classic movie, *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), opens with a series of shots of various streets and buildings in the town of Bedford Falls, somewhere in New York State. The streets are deserted, and snow is falling. It is Christmas Eve. Over these scenes we hear voices praying:



SPRINGEROOR/SIBBIS-BETTMANN

Scene from Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), with James Stewart and Clarence, the Angel, played by Henry Travers.

GOWER'S VOICE

I owe everything to George Bailey. Help him, dear Father.

MARTINI'S VOICE

Joseph, Jesus and Mary. Help my friend Mr. Bailey.

MRS. BAILEY'S VOICE

Help my son George tonight.

BERT'S VOICE

He never thinks about himself, God, that's why he's in trouble.

(We hear several other voices praying for help for George Bailey.)

The camera pulls up from the

Bailey home and travels up through the sky until it is above the falling snow, and moving slowly toward a firmament full of stars. As the camera stops, we hear the following heavenly voices talking, and as each voice is heard, one of the stars twinkles brightly:

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

Hello, Joseph, trouble?

JOSEPH'S VOICE

Looks like we'll have to send someone down—a lot of people are asking for help for a man named George Bailey.

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

George Bailey. Yes, tonight's his crucial night. You're right, we'll have to send someone down immediately. Whose turn is it?

JOSEPH'S VOICE

That's why I came to see you, sir. It's that clock-maker's turn again.

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

Oh—Clarence. Hasn't got his wings yet, has he? We've passed him up right along. (*It has become clear that these are several ranks of angels.*)

JOSEPH'S VOICE

Because, you know, sir, he's got the IQ of a rabbit.

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

Yes, but he's got the faith of a child—simple. Joseph, send for Clarence.

(*A small star flies in from left of screen and stops. It twinkles as Clarence speaks.*)

CLARENCE'S VOICE

You sent for me, sir?

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

Yes, Clarence. A man down on earth needs our help.

CLARENCE'S VOICE

Splendid! Is he sick?

FRANKLIN'S VOICE

No, worse. He's discouraged....¹

FRANKLIN has it right. Discouragement is worse than sickness. The rest of the movie depicts how Clarence, the second-class angel with the IQ of a rabbit earns his wings by encouraging George Bailey, played by the late James Stewart, not to kill himself.

Furthermore, in a clever series of flashbacks, we learn all about his life, and Clarence shows George what the people of Bedford Falls would have been like had he never been born. He teaches George Bailey, through illustration, how to appreciate his life. "Strange, isn't it? Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?" Clarence remarks to George.

And of course, it shows us how our own lives are intricately interwoven with those of others. There is much to appreciate in these bonds among us and those people in our immediate environment.

There is nothing worse than being completely discouraged. That can be called the life-condition of Hell. People love *It's a Wonderful Life* because it is encouraging. Compassion is the hallmark of a bodhisattva, and the most fundamental act of compassion is encouragement. It is impossible to remain in one of the lower life states while you are encouraging someone else.

Soon after the beginning of this movie, as George is about to commit suicide by jumping into a cold river, Clarence jumps in first. This is an act of wisdom, because George jumps in also, not to kill himself—but to save Clarence. What Clarence has done is instantly activated George's bodhisattva life from the condition of hell.

Later, when they are both drying off and George remarks that he just saved Clarence's life, Clarence corrects him. "No, I saved your life."

That is the bodhisattva point. We save our lives by saving others' lives.

Clarence spends the entire movie showing George Bailey how to appreciate his life. Clarence does a thorough job of it, too. We see, illustrated by Clarence, who

finally earns his angel wings, how we also need to take time to thoroughly encourage one another.

Developing a majestic flow of kosen-rufu depends on how thoroughly we can encourage each person we encounter, directing them on the great course of fulfilling their mission in life and achieving happiness. Indeed, this is the key to everything.²—SGI President Ikeda

The unwavering struggle of persevering toward one goal can be encouraging. There are people who may not have a cheerful, optimistic disposition, but nevertheless, because of their steadfast, unyielding perseverance to help another human being in need, they are encouraging.

In *The Miracle Worker*, Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller's teacher, will not give up on her student, who has been living like an animal because she is blind and deaf. In Annie's conversations with Helen's mother and father, she exhibits her unflagging determination to get through to Helen, so that she can come to understand that every thing in the world has a name and a word to go with it (which she can spell only mechanically with her fingers and hands without understanding what they mean).

Annie's unflagging determination is for Helen to learn to communicate with others. Annie is not content with Helen simply being taught how to behave politely. The crucial aim of getting Helen to be able to communicate with others becomes Annie Sullivan's obsession.

KATE

You've taught her so much, these two weeks. I would never have—



A scene from *The Miracle Worker* (1962), with Anne Bancroft as Ann Sullivan and Patty Duke as Helen Keller. Helen discovers the meaning of words by the water pump.

ing herself clean, knitting, stringing beads, meals, setting up exercises each morning, we climb trees, hunt eggs, yesterday a chick was born in her hands—all of it I spell, everything we do, we never stop spelling. I go to bed with—writer’s cramp from talking so much!

KATE

I worry about you, Miss Annie. You must rest.

ANNIE

Now? She spells back in her sleep, her fingers make letters when she doesn’t know! In her bones those five fingers know, that hand aches to speak out, and something in her mind is asleep, how do I nudge that awake? That’s the one question.

THE significance of Annie’s determination to persist with Helen until she can understand how to communicate, is Annie’s faith in Helen Keller’s capability. Annie persisted, racking her brains to figure out how to get through to Helen, confident that Helen had great potential. Likewise, we also persist, encouraging one another to continue practicing, confident that we also possess great potential waiting to be unleashed, just as naturally and instinctively as a bird who learns how to fly.

For years and years, the seeds of the flowers remain embedded in the desert soil waiting for the sporadic downpour. Likewise, in society, many hearts wait for a compassionate rain of encouragement. These hearts must not simply be for-

ANNIE
Not enough. Obedience isn’t enough. Well, she learned two nouns this morning, key and water, brings her up to eighteen nouns and three verbs.

KATE
But, not...

ANNIE
No. Not that they mean things. It’s still a finger-game, no meaning....

KATE
How will she learn it?

ANNIE
It will come.

KATE
How?

ANNIE
How does a bird learn to fly? We’re born to use words, like wings, it has to come.

KATE
How?

ANNIE
All right. I don’t know how. I’ve done everything I could think of. Whatever she’s learned here—keep-

gotten and left to languish in the desert. We have to create a society in which individuals can reveal their true potential and blossom in their lives—whether cherry, plum, peach or apricot. Herein lies the purpose of Buddhism, of the SGI organization, of SGI leaders, and of encouragement.³ —SGI President Ikeda

It is as if Helen's blindness and deafness have become a metaphor for our own innate darkness of life. But if we can all be Annie Sullivans to one another—with unwavering determination to persist until we break through—then the immeasurable joy for ourselves and our friends in faith will be tremendous.

As the world knows, Annie Sullivan did persist, and Helen Keller did finally come to understand what words are and how to use them, even though she could not see or hear. This realization of Helen's is how the movie ends.⁴

In Hollywood movies, according to my own observation, it is usually young women who offer the best examples of giving encouragement to others.

Take Pollyanna Whittier, for instance, the protagonist of the popular Disney movie, *Pollyanna* (1961).

Almost every moment Hayley Mills is on the screen as Pollyanna, we see her attitude toward life—an eternal optimist. But beyond simple optimism, she tries to encourage everyone she meets. In other words, it is not enough for us to look on the bright side of everything, to create value even out of negative situations.

The true value comes in how much we can inspire others to rise up out of their doldrums and in

turn encourage others. Pollyanna does this again and again. Her cheerful expression and attitude are not simpering; what makes her entertaining is that underneath, she is tough; she has a strong self-identity and speaks her mind. She's got courage. She perfectly embodies President Ikeda's guidance that:

Cheerfulness is not the same as frivolousness. Cheerfulness is born of a fighting spirit. Frivolousness is the flip side of cowardly escape. Emerson also said that "power dwells with cheerfulness; hope puts us in a working mood."⁵

Pollyanna is the orphan daughter of a poor missionary from the West Indies, yet her spirit is as rich as anyone's in the town of Harrington. The secret to Pollyanna's optimism? Appreciation. She expresses her appreciation by using the word *glad*.

When you convey your heart, it becomes a source of strength for others. When one brings forth his or her strength, the path ahead will definitely open wide. It is also true that when one encourages others, one becomes courageous and confident oneself. Encouragement changes oneself as well as others.⁶ —SGI President Ikeda

Pollyanna even cheers up old Mrs. Snow, a hypochondriac who pampers herself with medicine and thoughts of dying. In fact, she is in the midst of ordering each part of a custom-made coffin from the morose undertaker, Mr. Murg. Pollyanna has come with patches of different materials so that Mrs. Snow can sew them together to make a patchwork quilt to sell at the

Charity Bazaar to raise money for the orphans' hospital.

MRS. SNOW

Oh, stop frownin' at me like that!

POLLYANNA

You shouldn't think about dying so much. My father used to say a person should think about living, not dying. I don't want you to die!

MRS. SNOW

Oh, bless you for that, child!

POLLYANNA

It just reminded me about my father and the doll. You see, I always wanted a doll but we never had enough money for things like that. My father was a minister.

MRS. SNOW

But surely he could afford a little thing like a doll.

POLLYANNA

Well, he couldn't. We had to have the money for food.... So anyway, my father wrote to the missionary people and asked them to please send us a little second hand doll. Well, there was a funny mistake. When the missionary barrels came, instead of sending a doll, they sent a pair of crutches. Well, of course I was rather disappointed, so my father made up the Glad Game.

MRS. SNOW

The what game?

MR. MURG

She's been pestering folks all over town with this sunshine and happiness thing. Hearts and flowers. Enough to make you sick.

MRS. SNOW

Hush up, I want to hear what she has to say.

POLLYANNA

Anyway, about the crutches. My father said, "Don't let's be gloomy. Let's find something to be glad about." So we made a game of it. The Glad Game.



Hayley Mills made her American screen debut in 1960, playing Jane Wyman's niece in the film *Pollyanna* (1961).

a simple action, will ensure that kosen-rufu will advance forever.⁷

—SGI President Ikeda

How is Pollyanna able to maintain this consistent flow of good cheer and encouragement? That is just the way she is.

Fortunately, we can return to the Gohonzon and chant *daimoku*, and then go forth to fulfill our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Pollyanna influences the entire town that she has come to live in. She encourages each person she encounters. And, with her sincerity and passion, she has persuaded Mrs. Snow to sew the patchwork quilt—to do something constructive for others.

Developing a majestic flow of kosen-rufu depends on how thoroughly we can encourage each person we encounter, directing them on the great course of fulfilling their mission in life and achieving happiness. Indeed, this is the key to everything.⁸—SGI President Ikeda

What is the basis of Pollyanna's philosophy of optimism? She offers Reverend Ford a quotation her father taught her before he died, which she keeps on a paper in her locket. It was written by Abraham Lincoln. She tells Reverend Ford about how her father's attitude toward his own congregation altered.

POLLYANNA

He read something that helped him.

REVEREND FORD

MR. MURG

The Glad Game.

POLLYANNA

So anyway, we played the game, and after a while I forgot about the doll and being gloomy, and you know what? I found a reason for being glad.

MRS. SNOW

Well, there's nothing happy about a pair of crutches.

POLLYANNA

Well, we were glad that I didn't have to use them!

MR. MURG

Why must you bedevil this poor, dying woman with your childish, silly little stories?

POLLYANNA

I just thought you could play the game. You could be glad that you don't need this horrid old coffin! You ought to forget about dying and be glad you're living! You could help others by making the patchwork quilt for the orphans, if you wanted!

Sometimes a single kind word can change a person's whole attitude. Leaders should pray and reflect whether there is anyone they have forgotten to thank or encourage. They should cast a warm spotlight on those they may have overlooked. A single thought,

Scene from the film *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) with actress Millie Perkins portraying Anne writing in her diary.



SPRINGER/COBBIS/BETTMANN

And what was that?

POLLYANNA

“When you look for the bad in mankind expecting to find it, you surely will.” That was written by Abraham Lincoln. He was a President of the United States. From then on he started looking for the good in people.⁹

THIS “guidance” she gives Reverend Ford causes him to reflect on his attitude toward his congregation. There is of course more to the story, but suffice it to say that his attitude and sermons change, and he regains his courage through this encounter with Pollyanna.

By contrast, for those who encourage and nurture others with their whole hearts, all their efforts will be transformed into their own good fortune and benefit. People in their environment, including their juniors in faith, will function as Buddhist gods by working to protect them. This is how the principle of cause and effect in Buddhism works.¹⁰ —SGI President Ikeda

Whoever said that young people lack wisdom?

The Diary of Anne Frank (1957) shows us otherwise. We hear entries from Anne’s diaries as we watch the drama of seven Jews hiding in the Annex in Amsterdam during World War II. We hear her in voice-over:

ANNE

Is it true then that grownups have a more difficult time here than we do? No. I know it isn’t. Older people have formed their opinions about everything, and don’t waver before they act. It’s twice as hard for us young ones to hold our ground, and maintain our opinions, in a time when all ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when people are showing their worst side, and do not know whether to believe in truth and right and God.... It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I

can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquillity will return again.

UNINTENTIONALLY, of course, she gives us encouragement from the heart with an understanding of what it means to take responsibility for one’s own character development.

ANNE

Quite honestly, I can’t imagine how anyone can say: “I’m weak,” and then remain so. After all, if you know it, why not fight against it, why not try to train your character? The answer was: “Because it’s so much easier not to!” This reply rather discouraged me. Easy? Does that mean that a lazy, deceitful life is an easy life? Oh, no, that can’t be true, it mustn’t be true, people can so easily be tempted by slackness ...



SPRINGER/CORBIS/GETTMAN

Scene from *The Diary of Anne Frank*, based on the true story of a young woman's valiant struggle to resist the Holocaust.

and by money.¹¹

WHAT encourages us about Anne Frank is that her simple, youthful words of wisdom, wrought from her struggles in the Secret Annex, resound with fresh vitality and clear-headed honesty. Her words tell us that surely we can accomplish more with our allotted time than she was able to do.

"I still believe people are good at heart." This is the supreme statement of hope and confidence in the

human spirit in the face of unimaginable hatred and suffering. In the movie as well as the book, Anne Frank comes across as a shining spirit of passion and optimism.

The conclusion of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) is humorously out-of-place, considering the previous hour and a half of magic and fantasy. It certainly comes as a surprise to the viewer to see that the little man behind the curtain is indeed the "great and powerful Oz." He says of himself, "I—I'm a very good man—I'm just a very

bad wizard." But in truth, it turns out that he is not so bad a wizard after all. In fact, he does something better than give Scarecrow a brain, Tin Man a heart, Lion, courage, and Dorothy, her home. In response to the demand that he give Scarecrow a brain:

THE WIZARD

Why, anybody can have a brain. That's a very mediocre commodity. Every pusillanimous creature that crawls on the earth or slinks through slimy seas has a brain!



"Don't be afraid, I'm a cowardly lion!" Scene from the movie *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), starring (left to right) Tin Woodman (Jack Haley), Scarecrow (Ray Bolger), Dorothy (Judy Garland), and the Lion (Bert Lahr).

Back where I come from, we have universities, seats of great learning—where men go to become great thinkers, and when they come out, they think deep thoughts—and with no more brains than you have—but! they have one thing you haven't got! A diploma!

THE Wizard did indeed give Scarecrow what he really needed—not a brain, which he already had—but recognition and praise—the encouragement that the potential that he thought he

did not have, he did have after all.

As for the Lion:

THE WIZARD

As for you, my fine friend, you're a victim of disorganized thinking. You are under the unfortunate delusion that simply because you run away from danger, you have no courage. You're confusing courage with wisdom. Back where I come from, we have men who are called heroes. Once a year they take their fortitude out of moth-

balls and parade it down the main street of the city. And they have no more courage than you have—but! they have one thing that you haven't got! A medal!

ONCE again, the Wizard encourages the Lion that he has had courage all along. He opens his eyes to it and gives him recognition of it, which encourages the Lion and us.

And the Tin Man:

THE WIZARD



The Wizard of Oz (Frank Morgan) in a balloon with Judy Garland, Jack Haley, Ray Bolger and Bert Lahr holding the ropes.

As for you, my galvanized friend, you want a heart! You don't know how lucky you are not to have one. Hearts will never be practical until they can be made unbreakable....

Back where I come from, there are men who do nothing all day but good deeds ... and their hearts are no bigger than yours—but! they have one thing you haven't got! A testimonial! Therefore, in consideration of your kindness, I take pleasure at this time in presenting you with a small token of our esteem and affection. And remember, my sentimental friend, that a heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others.

THE Wizard has given recognition to Tin Man's kindness. In each case, he recognized the potential that each already had within and encouraged them to believe in themselves.

(The Good Witch Glinda arrives to

inform Dorothy of something quite crucial.)

GLINDA

You don't need to be helped any longer. You've always had the power to go back to Kansas.

DOROTHY

I have?

SCARECROW

Then why didn't you tell her before?

GLINDA

Because she wouldn't have believed me. She had to learn it for herself.

TIN MAN

What have you learned, Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Well, I...I think that it...that it wasn't enough just to want to see Uncle Henry and Auntie Em...and it's that if I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard; because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with!¹²

WHEREVER you are is the Buddha's land. Wise en-

couragement when a friend is at his or her lowest point can completely turn his or her life around. The most effective encouragement derives from our earnestness, sincerity and compassion. A perfect illustration of this comes near the end of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, another Frank Capra film, starring James Stewart. "You can do it! I know you can do it! I have confidence in you!" Whenever we hear these words from someone we trust, spoken with earnestness, conviction, and a sincere desire to help us, we can push on, past our limitations to greater accomplishment. "You already possess courage, wisdom, compassion! All you need to do is pull it out!"

Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur) rouses Senator Jefferson Smith (James Stewart) out of the depths of despair in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Jefferson, an honest, naive, newly appointed U.S. Senator, has just been double-crossed by Sen. Payne, whom he had always idolized. It turns out that Payne has been taking bribes from the powerful, double-dealing wealthy, corrupt businessman Taylor, and the two have conspired to kick Jefferson Smith out of the Senate for accidentally uncovering their illegal scheme. Jefferson comes to the Lincoln Memorial with his suitcase, sits on it and begins to weep. Clarissa soon shows up, knowing he would be there.

JEFFERSON

No, this is a whole new world to me.... What do you expect me to do? An honorary stooge like me against the Taylors and the Paynes, machines and lies....

CLARISSA

Your friend Mr. [Abraham]



Senator Paine (Claude Rains) hands a stack of telegrams to Mr. Smith (James Stewart), attacking Mr. Smith's fillibuster in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Lincoln had his Taylors and Paynes. Whoever tried to lift his thought up off the ground, odds were against them but didn't stop those men. They were fools that way. All the good that ever came in this world came from fools like that. You know that, Jeff? They aren't all Taylors and Paynes in Washington. They just throw big shadows, that's all. You didn't just have faith in Payne or any other living man. You have faith in something bigger than that. You have faith in plain decent

common everyday rightness. And this country could use some of that. The world could use some of that. Yeah, so could the whole cockeyed world, a lot of it... Remember what you said when you first got here? Remember what you said about Mr. Lincoln? You said he was sitting up there waiting for someone to come along. Well, you were right. He was waiting for a man who could see his job and sail into it, that's what he was waiting for. A man who could tear into the Taylors

and root 'em out into the open. I think he was waiting for you, Jeff. He knows you can do it. So do I.

JEFFERSON

Do what, Saunders?

CLARISSA

You just make up your mind you're not gonna quit. I'll tell you what. I've been thinking about it on the way back here. It's a forty-foot dive into a tub of water, but I think you can do it.

The word *encourage* means to give courage. A "person of

encouragement" is one who unsparingly gives others the jewel of courage and who transforms every place he or she is into a bright flower garden. No way of life is more beautiful.¹³—SGI President Ikeda

THE forty-foot dive into a tub of water—I've always seen that circus trick in old cartoons, and I don't know if anyone in the circus ever attempted it, but the image is perfect. In fact, it's the modern equivalent of the story from the Nirvana Sutra of Sesson Doji who was willing to jump into a beast's hungry mouth in exchange for hearing the Buddha's teachings—in other words, going for it—with courage—and because of your courage and sincerity—the beast and the tub turn out to be the Buddha's truth.

Of course, when we encourage our fellow SGI-USA members, we encourage them toward the Gohonzon. Encouragement takes the form of praise, appreciation, joy, confidence in the Gohonzon, finding one's mission, and so on. But without sincere prayer to the Gohonzon, encouraging statements fall flat. It is our sincere prayers for others that gives our words power to encourage.

President Ikeda has taught us how crucial President Toda considered encouraging others: "No matter how exhausted he was, whenever he found members who were suffering or worn out,

President Toda poured his entire being into encouraging them."¹⁴

Take note that President Ikeda did not just say "Toda encouraged them" but "poured his entire being into" the act of encouragement. How often do we "pour our entire being" into encouraging one another? It's a tall order, one that leads to enlightenment.

That we continue to encourage one another in faith is a necessity if kosen-rufu is to be achieved. It is essential to this Buddhism.

President Ikeda has written to us:

Another well-known poem composed by President Toda says:

"Although the journey toward kosen-rufu
"of the Mystic Law is long and distant,
"Let's encourage one another,
and advance together."

As you know, this poem contains President Toda's will to us. It expresses his eternal direction to us, to encourage one another as we advance together along the supreme path toward kosen-rufu.¹⁵

We are on the cutting edge of popular culture. What types of art are indigenous to the United States? Jazz? Popular music? Computer graphics? Well, there are probably many. But one thing is certain: The twentieth century dawned with the advent of mov-

ing pictures, and the century watched while they became motion pictures, then movies, then cinema—a recognizable art form that is a huge part of America's—and the world's—psyche. As we end this century, movies are a part of us.

What great movies can we produce in the coming years to exemplify the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? And what new art forms will appear in the twenty-first century that can communicate the greatness of the Mystic Law? I hope we can respond to these questions. □

Claude Lomden is an elementary school teacher in Philadelphia and a free-lance writer.

Note: All of the movies that I quote from in this article are available on videocassette. Most of them were derived from another source: a novel, book or play that can be found in most libraries and some bookstores. References at the end of this article will also indicate when the movie was released. In one instance, I've quoted from the book (*The Diary of Anne Frank*), and in a few other instances, I quoted from the screenplay to include pertinent stage directions. Also, when I've quoted more than once from a movie, I've left the footnote until the final quote.

1. "It's a Wonderful Life," released in 1946.
2. August 2, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 6.
3. July 21, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 5.
4. "The Miracle Worker," released in 1962.
5. February 16, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 13.

6. January 1, 1994, *World Tribune*, p. 4
7. May 31, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 11.
8. August 2, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 6.
9. "Pollyanna," released in 1960.
10. January 19, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 11.
11. "The Diary of Anne Frank," released in 1959.

12. "The Wizard of Oz," released in 1939.
13. July 21, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 5.
14. December 29, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 13.
15. *From Today Onward*, no. 1, p. 21.

Personal Reflections

A self-centered life lived solely in pursuit of one's own benefit and fortune is empty and base. A Bodhisattva of the Earth, in contrast, respects others and works for their happiness.¹ — SGI President Ikeda

I HAVE learned that our practice in the SGI doesn't just mean only introducing new people to the Gohonzon and the practice; it means moving from self-centeredness to active concern and caring for others.

A Buddhist teaching states: "If you light a lamp for another, your own way will be lit" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1598). This simple parable teaches us that by sincerely respecting the lives of others, by helping them develop in the fullness of their individuality, we illuminate the way to a brilliant mutual future.² —SGI President Ikeda

I have gained a deeper appreciation for all that I've learned in my practice and in the organization over nineteen years as an SGI member, especially since I began teaching in the Philadelphia public school system this past year. I realize that automatically going out of my way to encourage other teachers, even those more experienced than me, has become second nature to me. Taking action to lift someone's spirits up has been ingrained in my life and is a good habit I've developed through years of responsibility in the SGI-USA.

To have this spirit now engraved in my actions is the greatest treasure for which I am deeply indebted to the SGI and to President Ikeda.

Regarding the American Renaissance, I've been mulling over in my mind something that President Ikeda mentions from time to time. In his 1987 poem "Arise, the Sun of the Century," he writes: "America! Oh Giant America! / Anxiety deepens as the century draws to a close... Beneath the banner of the dignity of man, / The bell heralds the arrival of a new renaissance...."³

"New renaissance," I wondered. What is he saying? In *The New Human Revolution* (vol. 5, pp. 36–37), he writes:

Religion, art and culture are inextricably bound. In ancient times, Buddhism also gave rise to a flourishing of great art and culture. As we continue to advance kosen-rufu, our great movement dedicated to cultivating the inner realm of people's lives, we are sure to see a brilliant new blossoming of art and culture based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. How exciting it will be!

Also, in *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda tells us about an experience Shin'ichi Yamamoto has while viewing Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel:

Looking on the project as his personal mission, Michelangelo had doubtless worked with



Claude Lomden

exuberance, depicting the brilliant cosmic vision in his heart while striving for a mode of expression that would be universal and lasting. It is impossible to calculate the number of people who have been drawn to Christianity through the works of this one artist. Understanding and appreciation for Buddhism's great Law of life will also spread to the extent that there are those who can express its message with creativity and skill. Shin'ichi prayed that many Michelangelos of the Mystic Law would appear among his fellow Soka Gakkai members.⁴

If movies are to the twentieth century what the Sistine Chapel was to the early sixteenth century, then I look forward to a future in which many Michelangelos of the Mystic Law will appear to create great movies. □

1. May 17, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 16.

2. January 12, 1996, *World Tribune*, p. 9.

3. April 1987 *Seikyo Times*, p. 86.

4. *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 5, pp. 126–27.

THE SPIRIT BEHIND OUR DAILY PRACTICE

BY JOHN KASAHARA

NEW YORK #1 JOINT TERRITORY HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION CHIEF

NICHIREN Daishonin's Buddhism consists of three major elements: faith, practice and study. Gongyo and daimoku fall under the category of practice. Daimoku is the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Gongyo is the recitation of a portion of the "Expedient Means" (second) and "Life Span" (sixteenth) chapters of the Lotus Sutra and offering five prayers in the morning and three prayers at

do know is that the Daishonin proclaimed the importance of the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters. These chapters were seen by the Daishonin to be so important because they were the essence of the sutra. He said:

"No chapter of the Lotus Sutra is negligible, but among all the twenty-eight chapters, the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters are particularly

silent prayers, we express the thoughts in our minds to the Gohonzon. If, while silently voicing [the words of the silent prayers], our minds are occupied with other thoughts, then these thoughts become our actual prayer." (*The Collected Works of Josei Toda*, vol. 5, p. 433) Therefore when we are offering our silent prayers, it is important to keep a clear head and express our most heartfelt thoughts to the Gohonzon.

Gongyo itself means assiduous practice. It is easy to view the practice of gongyo as both easy and difficult because at first glance we may feel as though anybody could do it, however to do gongyo every day, morning and night, with an attitude of joy and appreciation is a very difficult task. And yet, for maximum effect it should be viewed as a privilege, rather than an obligation. We have the opportunity to develop a profound state of life and become happy.

At the same time, Buddhism is based on reason, based on common sense. President Ikeda has spoken often on the flexibility of gongyo based on different circumstances. In today's society schedules are increasingly more demanding, exhibited by people working longer hours at their jobs

This "Topics for Discussion Meetings" series is intended to stimulate lively conversations about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

night, one prayer at the end of each recitation of the sutra. The ceremony of gongyo is followed by the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

This form of gongyo was first introduced by the 26th high priest, Nichikan. It was not until President Toda's day that gongyo was introduced to the laity. Nichiren Daishonin himself recited the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters. It is unknown though how many times he did so throughout the course of a day and at what times of the day it was done. What we

outstanding. The remaining chapters are in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters. Therefore, for your regular recitation, I recommend that you practice reading the prose sections of the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p.10)

The words that we silently voice during our silent prayers reflect our genuine thoughts. The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, said: "During the

From Daisaku Ikeda's "Lectures on the 'Expedient Means' and 'Life Span' Chapters of the Lotus Sutra" (Vol. 1)

The benefit from carrying out the primary practice is immense. When you also recite the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters, it has the supplementary function of increasing and accelerating the beneficial power of the primary practice. Our basic way of gongyo is to chant daimoku as its primary component and recite the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters as the supplementary. (p. 17)

When we do gongyo and chant daimoku, we conduct a ceremony in which we praise the Gohonzon and the great Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. On one level, it could be said that gongyo is a paen or a song of the highest and

utmost praise for the Buddha and for Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the fundamental law of the universe. At the same time, when we do gongyo, we also praise the eternal life of the universe, and the world of Buddhahood in our own lives. (p. 21)

Gongyo is an invigorating "ceremony of time without beginning" that revitalizes us from the very depths of our being. Therefore, the important thing is to do gongyo each day filled with a feeling of rhythm of cadence—like a horse galloping through the heavens. I hope you will do the kind of satisfying gongyo that leaves you refreshed and revitalized in both body and mind. (p. 22)

in addition to caring for their families. To push oneself unreasonably to carry out a perfect practice of five prayers in the morning and three prayers in the evening may not always be prudent.

President Ikeda said:

There may be times when, depending on your physical condition, [instead of doing a complete gongyo] it is more valuable to just chant daimoku for a little while, or even just chant three daimoku, and then get some rest. This is something we must determine for ourselves. (*Selected Speeches—On the Basics of Buddhism*, p. 37)

Along the same lines, the Daishonin says: "If you feel so inclined, then dispense with the reading of the sutra and simply recite Nam-myoho-enge-kyo." There will be times when we are ill in bed, or when we are traveling and cannot face the Gohon-

zon. The Daishonin therefore shows the flexibility of the "formalities" of this practice, stating, "Faith alone is what matters." We can say then that the Daishonin is teaching us that rather than getting caught up in the formalities of gongyo, what is essential is the spirit behind it.

It would not be reasonable to force ourselves to do evening gongyo out of guilt and wake up the next day tired, without energy. To chant daimoku even three times and wake up fresh the next day with the determination to do a great morning gongyo would, in such circumstances, make more sense.

This is not to say that we should let our lazy nature allow us to miss gongyo regularly. As this is a practice, ultimately we must strive for perfection.

What then, should be our spirit and attitude when doing gongyo? As the Daishonin states, "The voice does the Buddha's

work." Ideally, therefore, our posture should be one of respect for such an understanding, sitting upright with our hands pressed together. Above all, when we chant to the Gohonzon, we will be most effective if we do so with a joyful and appreciative attitude.

President Ikeda explains: "The voice of gongyo and daimoku directed to the Gohonzon, whether we understand it or not, reaches all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and heavenly deities. They hear it and say, 'Excellent, excellent!' in response, rejoicing and praising us, and the entire universe envelops us in light."

The reason we started this practice is to become truly happy. Only our pure-hearted and steady faith like water allows us to attain this indestructible happiness. The practice of gongyo and of chanting daimoku can be considered the starting point for attaining enlightenment in this lifetime. □

This is the twenty-second 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 November 1996 issue of the Daibyakureng, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

All people seek a peaceful and happy life. But what is true peace or happiness? Is it simply the absence of worry and suffering? Is there such a thing as peace and happiness that can be maintained eternally?

In this installment, they discuss the way of life based on faith in which "encountering difficulties is peaceful"; the two methods of propagation of shoju and shakubuku; the significance of the "four peaceful ways of practice"; the wisdom for creating interfaith dialogue; and other points relating to the "Peaceful Practices" (fourteenth) chapter, which is the final chapter of the theoretical teaching, or first half, of the Lotus Sutra.

Katsuji Saito: In our investigation of the Lotus Sutra, we have at last come to the threshold of the essential teaching. This time we will discuss the "Peaceful Practices" chapter, which is the last of the fourteen chapters making up the theoretical teaching.

Haruo Suda: "Peaceful practices" has the ring of a relaxed and effortless practice.

Daisaku Ikeda: If such a Buddhist practice were possible, it

DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA



would be nice. But, alas, it is not to be.

Nichiren Daishonin clearly says, "When Nichiren and his followers carry out the practice of the Lotus Sutra now in the Latter Day of the Law, difficulties will arise, and these are to be looked on as 'peaceful' practices" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). In other words, the Daishonin is saying that struggling to overcome obstacles is the state of true peacefulness. The basic message of the "Peaceful Practices" chapter is that we

can establish a state of life of such composure that we can even regard the obstacles we encounter as causes for a peaceful life.

[The word *peaceful* (Jp. *anraku*) in the chapter's title is written with two Chinese characters.] The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China interprets the first character of peaceful (Jp. *an*) as meaning "unmoving," and the second (Jp. *raku*) as meaning "free of worry."¹ Peaceful does not mean a state of life free of toil and suffering. Rather it means living without

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



being swayed and without worries, no matter what happens. This is a state of true peace and happiness.

In other words, through practicing the supreme Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we can turn any and all circumstances into causes for “peace” and “happiness.” This is the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment, and it is the practice for attaining Buddhahood in one’s present existence.

Compared to the Buddhist

teachings that hold that to attain Buddhahood one must practice for a period of countless *kalpas*, this is truly a “peaceful” practice. It is deceptively easy as well. We can say that embracing the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the Gohonzon, is itself the true “peaceful practice.”

**To Be Able To Take Action
Is Good Fortune**

Takanori Endo: The history of the Soka Gakkai certainly proves the

principle that peacefulness can be found in encountering hardships. The Soka Gakkai was built by the all-out struggles of ordinary people. Every time I glimpse this history, I am filled with a profound solemnity. November (1996) will mark the sixty-sixth anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

Saito: I heard the following experience from a couple who have marked their fortieth year since taking faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

When they began practicing (in 1956), they were unimaginably poor. After taking faith they were given the advice that by doing *shakubuku* they could accumulate good fortune. They enthusiastically began telling people about Buddhism, beginning with their siblings and relatives.

They initially supposed that when people heard what they had to say, they, too, would gladly begin practicing, but what actually happened was just the opposite. People completely broke off relations with them. Next, they went to people suffering from poverty or illness, as they themselves were, to talk about Buddhism. But even at the homes of such people, countless times they had salt thrown at them [a gesture meaning: “Go away!”] or bathwater dumped on them.

They were a family of five living in a storeroom that they rented in someone’s house. But when the owner found out that they were members of the Soka Gakkai, they were forced to move. On top of everything else, they suffered from night blindness; perhaps because they were practically starving themselves in



Peaceful does not mean a state of life free of toil and suffering. Rather it means living without being swayed and without worries, no matter what happens. This is a state of true peace and happiness.

order to keep their children fed.

Endo: Night blindness is a typical symptom of malnutrition.

Saito: Once, after visiting a friend to talk about Buddhism, the mother made her way home in a drizzling rain, carrying one child on her back and leading another by the hand. A kindly bus driver pulled up at the side of the road for them, even though they were not at a bus stop; but they couldn't accept his offer for a ride because they didn't have the fare. They had to walk in the rain more than an hour. While chanting daimoku, the mother thought, "Some day I will come home down that road in a taxi."

Suda: She must have been mortified by her inability to respond to the bus driver's kindness.

Saito: The couple went on to introduce more than a hundred families to the Daishonin's teaching. A leader had told them that the greater people's worries, the greater the benefit they would receive through faith in the Mystic Law.

No matter how destitute they became, they always thoroughly exerted themselves in faith. As a result, they eventually became healthy. They opened a food shop with a small amount of capital they had managed to scrape together, and it began to prosper. This benefit filled them with appreciation, which enabled them to receive still greater benefit. In this way, their lives developed steadily.

Today, in addition to operating stores of their own, they have a large factory and distribute goods nationwide. They reportedly have

a customer base of 3,600 households and receive new orders daily. They built a large home with the strong desire to open it up as a place for chapter meetings. It has a parking lot for up to sixty cars, and the tricolor flag of the Soka Gakkai flies from a pole in the front.

Endo: That's wonderful actual proof.

Saito: "Nothing is more joyful than Gakkai activities," they say with complete earnestness. There was a period when they weren't able to do many activities because they had been encouraged to make overcoming their economic difficulties their first priority. Of that time they say, "Nothing was more painful. To work for kosen-rufu, that has been our greatest happiness."

When conniving priests of the Nikken sect, attracted by the couples' wealth, approached them and tried to entice them to leave the Soka Gakkai, they were firmly rebuffed. "We're fine!" the priests were told in no uncertain terms. "We will continue to advance with the Soka Gakkai and President Ikeda."

Suda: The path of SGI activities truly is the path in which "encountering difficulties is peaceful."

Ikeda: I know that couple very well. I never forget those who exert themselves behind the scenes to support the Soka Gakkai. They neither stand out particularly, nor do they enjoy great status in society. Yet, while battling difficulties in their own lives, they have silently supported the Soka Gakkai and wholeheartedly exerted themselves for kosen-rufu and their fellow members. Seen from the eye of Buddhism, none are more worthy of respect than these people.

I would like to scour the earth in search of such people and give them due recognition, repay their efforts. These are my true sentiments.

I want people to be able to say, "I'm so glad I'm a member of the SGI," "I'm so glad I have struggled hard." That is the world of faith I want to create. Though we have the Buddhist principle that encountering difficulties is peaceful, unless leaders have the spirit to guide all members to attain a state of peace and happiness without fail, it is all nothing more than theory.

Since my youth, my constant prayer has been to open a path of boundless hope for the Soka

Gakkai and for all fellow members.

Spread the Law With Wisdom and With the Spirit Not To Begrudge Your Life

Anyone who reads this sutra
will at all times be free of
worry and anxiety;
likewise he will be without
illness or pain,
his expression fresh and bright.

He will stroll about without fear
like the lion king.

The brilliance of his wisdom
will be like the shining of the
sun.... (LS14, 209-10)²

Endo: In summary, the "Peaceful Practices" chapter is mainly concerned with explaining the four peaceful ways of practice. They can also be thought of as the four "rules" of practice. They describe the action, speech, thought and vow proper for bodhisattvas. The Daishonin designates these practices as *shoju*.³

Suda: Yes. The practice that T'ien-t'ai established during the Middle Day of the Law,⁴ the Daishonin explains, was based on the "Peaceful Practices" and "Bodhisattva Universal Worthy" (twenty-eighth) chapters, and falls into the category of *shoju*. By contrast, the practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law is the practice of *shakubuku*, and is based on the "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) and "Bodhisattva Never Disparaging" (twentieth) chapters.

Endo: The Daishonin says that someone who carries out the four peaceful ways of practice during

the Latter Day is like a rooster that crows at dusk rather than in the morning (cf. MW-1, 105). That's because the Latter Day of the Law is the time for the practice of *shakubuku*.

Saito: On that basic premise, the Daishonin teaches that one should decide which method to make primary in a given situation depending on the conditions of the land and the people.

He says:

When the country is full of evil persons without wisdom, then *shoju* is the primary method to be applied, as described in the *Anrakugyo* ["Peaceful Practices"] chapter. But at a time when there are many persons of perverse views who slander the Law, then *shakubuku* should come first, as described in the *Fukyo* ["Bodhisattva Never Disparaging"] chapter....

In the Latter Day of the Law, however, both *shoju* and *shakubuku* are to be used. This is because there are two kinds of countries, the country that is passively evil,⁵ and the kind that actively seeks to destroy the Law. (MW-2, 183-84 [208-09])⁶

It Becomes a Question of How We Interpret *Shoju* and *Shakubuku*

Ikeda: First, as the major premise, all efforts to teach people about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day constitute *shakubuku*. Basing ourselves on the spirit of *shakubuku* to teach others about the Mystic Law without selfish concern, at times we might strictly refute a person's mistaken

views, while at other times we might explain the truth with a broad-minded spirit of tolerance for the other person's beliefs.

Suda: The words *shakubuku* and *shoju* are not exclusive to Buddhism. They reportedly were in common use in ancient Indian society. *Shakubuku* is the translation of the Pali term *niggaha*, meaning to reproach, and the Sanskrit term *abhibhava*, meaning to defeat through superior strength. And *shoju* is the translation of the Pali term *paggaha*, which means to extend help or shower blessings.

Endo: Both terms point to one's conduct and attitude.

Ikeda: It is important to have the wisdom to use each of them correctly. As we discussed in connection with the "Teacher of the Law" (tenth) chapter, *shakubuku* in essence means to declare the truth. All our efforts to explain Buddhism with a sincere and earnest desire to help others become happy are *shakubuku*.

Saito: Being coercive is not *shakubuku*.

Ikeda: In a situation where the other person has been poisoned by erroneous views and vilifies the Mystic Law, efforts to refute the person's mistaken beliefs should naturally come to the fore. Someone who forgets the "refutation" aspect is no disciple of Nichiren Daishonin. The spirit of the Soka Gakkai does not exist in those who have lost the spirit to refute evil.

On the other hand, the manner of explanation will naturally be

quite different in the case of someone free of such bias.

Endo: Asserting that "Nembutsu leads to the hell of incessant suffering!" will be completely incomprehensible to someone who knows nothing about Japanese Buddhism. We should, of course, explain the Mystic Law in a manner that is easy to understand based on the culture and way of life of the particular country we are in.

Saito: It seems to me that the "Peaceful Practices" chapter explains a number of "cautionary points" for bodhisattvas who are novices at propagating the Lotus Sutra to ensure that they do not denigrate the Law by getting enmeshed in senseless quarrels, or become confused and deviate from the path of attaining Buddhahood.

Ikeda: From our standpoint, this means that even when we are spreading the Law "without concern for our lives," we absolutely must not do anything that would reflect badly on the Law.

Because we have the highest concern for the Law, we need to fully exercise our wisdom in propagating it. This is the heart of the "Peaceful Practices" chapter. It explains the spirit: "How can I help all people receive the benefit of the Mystic Law?" The "Peaceful Practices" chapter, therefore, finds full expression in our efforts to pray earnestly for the happiness of friends, and to use our wisdom to tell others about Buddhism.

While teaching his followers the *shakubuku* spirit of not begrudging one's life, Nichiren Daishonin also emphasized the

importance of showing people genuine courtesy and respect, and of conducting oneself with wisdom.

Endo: The members of the SGI have been selflessly leading people to happiness just as the Daishonin taught. Such all-encompassing wisdom, I believe, is the product of serious, determined dedication to the Law.

Saito: This truly amounts to a revolution in propagation. High Priest Nichijun (1898–1959) praised the Soka Gakkai highly for propagating the Daishonin's teaching in a manner according with the times. The Soka Gakkai's appearance, he said, marked the transition from an "age of protection [of the Mystic Law]" to an "age of transmission and widespread propagation."⁷

Ikeda: The "Peaceful Practices" chapter says that those who practice the Mystic Law will "stroll about without fear like the lion king," and possess wisdom brilliant as the sun (cf. LS14, 209–10).

Kosen-rufu is a religious movement to illuminate the world with great wisdom just as the sun illuminates the earth. The idea is for each person to become a light of wisdom; when there are many such lights, the entire world will be illuminated. Kosen-rufu could be described as the grand "art" of revolutionizing the inner state of one's life. In concrete terms, it comes down to the expansion of peace, culture and education.

Saito: The other day (October 1, 1996), a certificate of commendation was received from the City of

Kosen-rufu is a religious movement to illuminate the world with great wisdom just as the sun illuminates the earth. The idea is for each person to become a light of wisdom; when there are many such lights, the entire world will be illuminated.



Douque de Caxias in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, praising you, Mr. Ikeda, as a “hero of peace.”

In explaining your nomination, the certificate states: “The SGI president is a ‘light of hope’ who is teaching people that it is possible to accomplish peace. May the Soka Gakkai continue to advance and expand. We hope that you fill Caxias, a city of the people, with light and hope.” [Along with the commendation, the Brazil SGI was officially recognized as a “philanthropic organization” of the city.]

Throughout the world people look to the development of the SGI with heartfelt expectation. They bid us to accomplish kosen-rufu. When I learned of this message, I was profoundly impressed that we have in fact entered such an age.

“Peaceful” Means Embracing the Fundamental Law

Endo: The “Peaceful Practices” chapter begins with Bodhisattva Manjushri asking Shakyamuni how the Lotus Sutra should be taught in the “evil age” to come.

In response, Shakyamuni explains the concepts of “peaceful action,” “peaceful speech,” “peaceful thought” and “peaceful vow,” which together make up the four peaceful ways of practice.

Suda: Simply put, “peaceful action” means to quiet the body, avoid evil influence and practice in a place of peace and tranquility. “Peaceful speech” means to expound the Lotus Sutra calmly, without thoughtlessly disparaging or praising other persons or sutras. “Peaceful thought” means

to uphold, read and expound the sutra without harboring jealousy, arrogance or a fawning attitude, and avoiding doctrinal disputes. And “peaceful vow” means to make a deeply compassionate vow for the salvation of all beings and practice accordingly.

Endo: T’ien-t’ai says that these four peaceful ways of practice concern “method.”⁸ In other words, they explain the method for spreading the Lotus Sutra without allowing oneself to be troubled physically and spiritually by the various negative influences that accompany an evil age.

Saito: T’ien-t’ai says that while no explanation is necessary for seasoned bodhisattvas (i.e., those who have attained profound practice), novice bodhisattvas (those whose practice is still shallow), unless

One person may pursue “treasures of the storehouse,” while another pursues “treasures of the body” such as status or health. But true happiness lies in accumulating “treasures of the heart.” And the substance of the treasures of the heart is a great state of life totally dedicated to faith.



Shakyamuni instructed them in method, would be incapable of completing their practice either for themselves or for others. These peaceful practices, therefore, could be likened to a “lifeboat” for the practice of novices.

Ikeda: If the “Peaceful Practices” chapter is a discourse on method, then the immediately preceding “Encouraging Devotion” chapter is an explanation of spirit; namely, the spirit of not begrudging one’s life. It is the spirit to prize the Law more highly even than one’s life. Unless we interpret “Peaceful Practices” based on this spirit, we may be left with the impression that all we need to consider is the shallow question of “How can I carry out a peaceful practice?”

“Peaceful,” in “four peaceful ways of practice,” fundamentally

means practicing the Mystic Law in thought, word and deed—the three categories of action—that is to say, with one’s entire being. By carrying out such a practice, one’s life becomes saturated with peace and happiness. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Law of true peace and happiness.

Saito: For us, the important question is what specifically we must do in order to carry out these “peaceful practices” and experience such peace and happiness. The “Ongi Kuden” (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) says, “The entity of these peaceful practices is this [teaching of] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that is transmitted by Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Jp. Jogyo)” (GZ, 798). In other words, the primary component of peaceful practice is the teaching of Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws transmitted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices in the Lotus Sutra and spread by Bodhisattva Superior Practices in the Latter Day of the Law.

Ikeda: Here, the Daishonin is explaining this from the standpoint of the implicit teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In a lecture on the portion of the “Ongi Kuden” dealing with the “Peaceful Practices” chapter, my mentor, the second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, said:

There are four peaceful ways of practice, each of which is actually quite troublesome.... But the Daishonin broke down this form, saying in effect, “Since by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo everyone can attain peace and happiness, that alone is



sufficient.”

The “Peaceful Practices” chapter of Shakyamuni’s Buddhism sets various conditions: we are told to think certain thoughts, say certain words, take certain actions and make certain vows. But the Daishonin’s “Peaceful Practices” chapter is far simpler. It says, “If you are having troubles, then chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon.” When we do so, don’t we experience peace and joy? Why should we need to do anything else?

The “Ongi Kuden” says: “Since they [all things and phenomena of the world] are the true entity of all phenomena, there are none of them that are not peaceful practices” (GZ, 798). President Toda also said:

The true entity of life permeates all existences and phenomena of the world. There’s no need to do something particular to get close to it. We should do what we are inclined to do. The true entity of life exists for a dog as a dog, and for a human being as a human being. Whether beings manifest their true entity depends entirely on whether they chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.... When we are living honestly and true to ourselves, we are reading the “Peaceful Practices” chapter.⁹

Faith means living true to ourselves, as we are, and realizing a state in which we can genuinely say, “Ah, this is true satisfaction,” “My life is a great victory.” This is “peace and happiness.”

Everyone without exception seeks happiness and peace. One

person may pursue “treasures of the storehouse,” while another pursues “treasures of the body” such as status or health. But true happiness lies in accumulating “treasures of the heart.” And the substance of the treasures of the heart is a great state of life totally dedicated to faith.

Nichiren Daishonin says: “There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.... There is no greater happiness than having faith in the Lotus Sutra” (MW-1, 161). And he exhorts us to “regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 161).

This is not happiness that can be gained through the satisfaction of cravings or desires. It’s a matter of “experiencing the boundless joy of the Law”—of freely

receiving and enjoying the happiness deriving from the Law that wells forth from our lives. Each one of us can definitely attain such a state of peace and happiness. And because this peace and happiness comes from our own lives, it is enduring.

In reference to such a state of peace and happiness, a sutra passage speaks of “peace and security in [the] present existence” (LS5, 99). Nichiren Daishonin says that the appearance of the three powerful enemies is proof of the passage “peace and security in the present existence” (GZ, 825).

Suda: This is all the exact opposite of the usual view of “peace and security.”

Ikeda: It’s not a matter of leading a timid and weak existence, seeking to avoid obstacles and difficulties. Rather, we should have the spirit: “Come what may, I will survive!” “I will climb another mountain! And the more I climb, the more I can enjoy my life, and the more people I can help become happy.”

The Daishonin’s Buddhism is the teaching for leading the ultimate “active life.”

The Four Peaceful Ways of Practice

Ikeda: With all of this as the premise, why don’t we look at the specific content of the four peaceful ways of practice?

Suda: Certainly. First, “peaceful action” explains how bodhisattvas should behave, in other words, their “actions” and how they should conduct themselves with others or their “associa-

tions.” In terms of their actions, it says that a bodhisattva “takes his stand on perseverance, is gentle and compliant, never violent, and never alarmed in mind”; and that he “observes the true entity of phenomena without ... making any distinction” (LS14, 197). Each of these is important.

In terms of associations, it explains that bodhisattvas should not go any place where they might be tempted to stray from Buddhism and lose their spirit of practice; and that they should not consort with powerful people or go to places of amusement. It also says that men, in explaining the teachings of Buddhism to women, should not harbor ulterior motives or base intentions.

The basic attitude underlying these practices, it explains, is the understanding that, because all phenomena are nonsubstantial, they should be viewed neither as having any absolute or fixed nature, nor as nonexistent; and should not become objects of attachment (cf. LS14, 198).

Saito: In rough terms, this teaches a certain code of conduct for people, a common sense or etiquette. It is cautioning practitioners to avoid “evil influences” and getting caught up in biases and erroneous views.

Suda: Next, “peaceful speech” cautions against certain types of speech. It says that practitioners, among other things, “should not delight in speaking of the faults of other people or scriptures. ... should not display contempt for other teachers of the Law ... [and] should not refer to them by name and describe their faults, or name them and praise their good

points” (LS14, 201). This certainly sounds like the method of *shoju*.

Endo: It emphasizes that one should “employ expedient means and thereby cause all listeners to aspire to enlightenment, and gradually enter the Buddha way”; “preach the Law with a compassionate mind”; “day and night one should constantly expound the teachings of the unsurpassed way, employing causes and conditions, similes and parables to instruct living beings and cause them all to be joyful”; “reply to questions not in terms of the Lesser Vehicle, but ... solely in terms of the Great Vehicle so that people will be able to acquire all-embracing wisdom”; and “desire to enable all people to complete the Buddha way” (cf. LS14, 201–03). It seems to me that these are all relevant to the conduct of Buddhist leaders today.

Ikeda: A leader has to consider what to impart to others. Even just a few words may be enough: “You seem tired. Have you been very busy?” “How is your husband doing? Please dress warmly to avoid catching cold.” “Thank you for allowing us to use this wonderful room for our meeting.” You might bring a snack like a rice cracker or piece of fruit for members to enjoy on their way home.

What you choose to do is up to you, but a leader should always ponder the question, “What can I do to raise everyone’s spirits?” “How can I give people hope and peace of mind?”

Suda: Next is the practice of “peaceful thought.” Here, Shakyamuni teaches that in preaching

Most people rate others as “great” or “unimportant” on the basis of education, fame or wealth. Particularly in Japan, the tendency to rank people on the basis of such externals has in recent years become quite pronounced.



the Lotus Sutra one “must set aside jealousy, hatred, arrogance, a mind that is fawning, deceitful and false.” Also, he indicates that one must not treat those desiring to learn about Buddhism with contempt, or arouse in them worries or doubts; and should revere and respect those who spread the Law (cf. LS14, 203–05).

Saito: This, too, is an important attitude for leaders.

Ikeda: I find particularly noteworthy the statement:

To all living beings preach the Law in an equitable manner. Because a person is heedful of the Law, that does not mean one should vary the amount of preaching. Even to those who show a profound love for the Law one should not on that

account preach at greater length.” (LS14, 204)

Many people are so busy with their work or raising children and looking after their families that they have a hard time attending activities. Also, some people continue practicing faith but for some reason find it difficult to connect with the organization. Broadly interpreting the above passage in modern terms, I think it means that leaders should warmly embrace such individuals, become close to them and listen to what they have to say, and try to encourage them.

Suda: The last rule of practice is “peaceful vow.” Here Shakyamuni says that those who embrace the Lotus Sutra should arouse a mind of great compassion toward others and think to

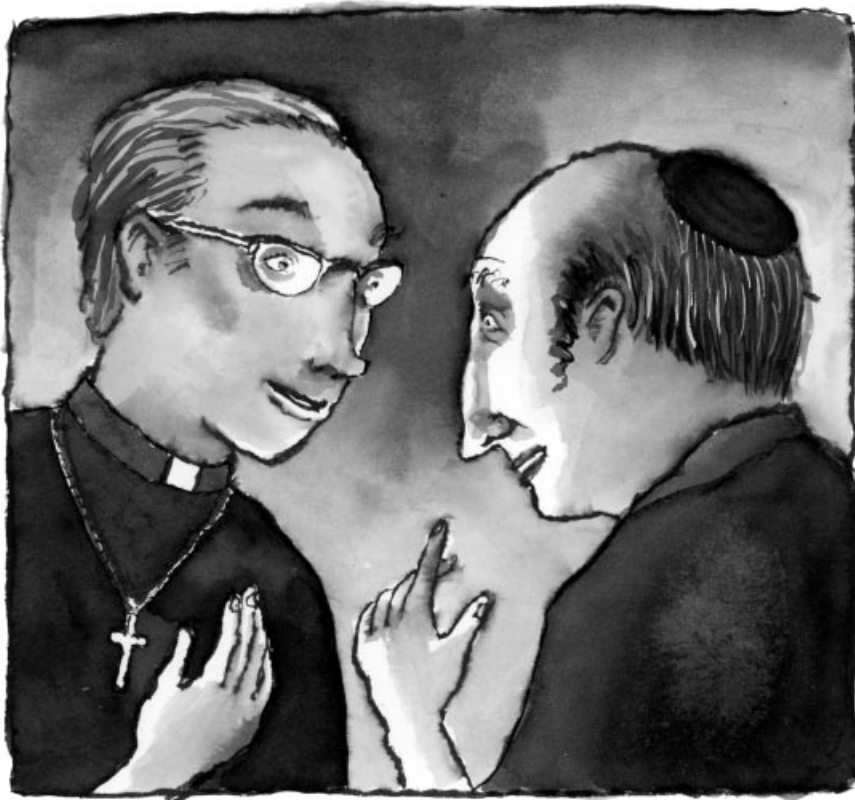
themselves:

Though the Thus Come One as an expedient means preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, they do not listen, do not know, do not realize, do not inquire, do not believe, do not understand. Even so, when I have attained *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* [supreme enlightenment], wherever I may happen to be, I will cause them to abide in this Law. (cf. LS14, 205)

Saito: In other words, this is saying that no matter how obstinate people may be, we must absolutely never abandon them.

Our Vow Is To Lead People to Happiness

Ikeda: Regarding this “vow,” President Toda said:



“If the founders of the great religions got together, they would very quickly move beyond any differences. Since they were all earnestly concerned with helping all people become happy, they would immediately see eye to eye.”

This vow [of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter] is extremely easy-going. It says that one should make the vow, “If I attain Buddhahood, then I will help others.” That’s a peaceful practice all right—it means that you don’t have to do *shakubuku* any time soon. The idea is, “If I become a Buddha, then at that time I will help those with whom I have formed a relationship.”¹⁰

To only try to help others after you become a Buddha yourself is definitely lacking in compassion.

Endo: The passage describing the vow states that they will help other people when they “have attained *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*,” or supreme enlightenment. This is talking specifically about helping those who neither seek

nor believe in the Lotus Sutra.

Saito: Originally, a bodhisattva is one who maintains the ardent vow: “I will not attain Buddhahood until I have done everything I can to lead all other people to happiness.”

Endo: Those practicing in this way are certainly our fellow SGI members who are carrying out a great practice far surpassing the vow of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter. During the pioneering stage of our movement, members—no matter how poor they were, and no matter how difficult their own lives—would go around earnestly teaching others about the Law.

Saito: Even though they would assure people that through this

faith they could definitely become happy, they faced being ridiculed, mocked and driven away: “The day you become rich, I’ll give it a try!” Undeterred, they never ceased proclaiming the truth.

Ikeda: The nobility of such efforts is beyond words. Members, setting aside their own worries and concerns, wholeheartedly devoted themselves to helping those who were suffering. People burned with a keen sense of pride in carrying out the practice of true bodhisattvas, in embodying the spirit of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

As a result, even if they were poor, in their hearts they were wealthy. In their state of life they possessed immense riches. By fully devoting themselves to the

compassionate practice of *shakubuku*, they experienced fundamental “peace and happiness” even greater than that of the people to whom they were talking.

Saito: The great SGI organization of today has been built by the dedicated bodhisattva practice of these members.

Ikeda: The French author Romain Rolland (1866–1944) declared: “Preoccupation with salvation postpones salvation. If you want to save yourself, then the best thing is to forget yourself among others. Then all things will come to you.”¹¹

We, the fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth, are carrying out precisely this ultimate practice. Soka Gakkai members in the early days of our movement, though widely reviled as a gathering of the poor and the sick, possessed the hearts of kings and queens of humankind. The truth is that while fundamentally Buddhas, they took on this guise (of sickness and poverty) to prove the Mystic Law.

Neither social status, nor academic background nor wealth in itself counts for anything in the world of the Soka Gakkai. The world of the Soka Gakkai is a world where human greatness is pursued.

Endo: In the SGI it is not uncommon to find people of little formal education confidently lecturing university professors on Buddhism.

Suda: Most people rate others as “great” or “unimportant” on the basis of education, fame or wealth. Particularly in Japan, the tendency to rank people on the basis of such

externals has in recent years become quite pronounced.

Endo: The same psychology would seem to be at work in Japanese politicians who make disparaging and arrogant statements about developing countries.

Ikeda: In the world of children, that kind of “discriminatory spirit” manifests as bullying, which casts a dark shadow over many young people’s lives.

Suda: The movement of the Soka Gakkai has begun to fundamentally change the entrenched hierarchical character of society.

Saito: One scholar cites the deep-seated irreligiosity of the Japanese as one reason for the emergence of a rigid social structure in which so much depends on educational background. He postulates that the present hierarchical society would not have developed if Japan had had a religious tradition in which all people were seen as equal before, for example, a deity.

Endo: That’s a profound insight into the social significance of religion.

Ikeda: The human being is the central concern of Buddhism. Buddhism focuses on the heart and on life.

From the perspective of the Buddha and the Law, there are people who, even though they are not Buddhists, manifest the state of life of a bodhisattva. On the other hand, among Buddhists there are those who qualify as “non-Buddhists”; who on the surface appear to have faith, but

whose hearts are in the world of Hunger or Animality. Buddhism does not ask “What religion does this person follow?” but “What is this person’s state of life?”

Buddhism exists to enable all people to cultivate and manifest the world of Buddhahood in their lives. Human society is a realm of “discrimination” or “difference.” But Buddhism transcends all superficial differences and focuses directly on life.

Religious Dialogue for True Peace and Happiness

Saito: Shouldn’t it be possible for any two religions to surmount their differences and carry on a dialogue by adhering to the prime point of a common humanity?

Ikeda: That’s right. The nucleus of the Buddhist philosophy of peace lies in a recognition of the commonality that all people share as human beings. As long as religion does not enable people to respect one another’s dignity and carry on dialogue as human beings, it will only cause people misery.

Saito: The SGI Charter that was enacted last year (in 1995) proclaims, “SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity.” This expresses that fundamental spirit. Of course, the overarching premise is that those participating in such dialogue are not motivated by private interests or the desire for self-promotion; but that, as human beings, they



SGI members put this into practice daily. Turning the “wheel of the Law” of discussion, they engage in the work of creating value in society. They go from house to house encouraging members. And in the process they are accumulating eternal good fortune.

are sincerely pursuing the happiness of humankind.

Ikeda: The founders of the various world religions were all fundamentally individuals of towering humanity. Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) said: “The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad—they all stood alone....”¹² All of them, including Gandhi himself, resolutely stood up for the peace and happiness of humankind. They waged a struggle of great sincerity.

President Toda remarked: “If the founders of the great religions of the world all got together and held a conference, they would very quickly move beyond any differences. Since they were all

earnestly concerned with helping all people become happy, they would immediately see eye to eye.”¹³ With this spirit, I am doing everything I can to promote intercivilizational dialogue.

Suda: On that point, it is sad that religion is frequently used as a pawn in political struggles.

Endo: In Japan, too, certain elements, including religious figures, have branded the Soka Gakkai as self-righteous and exclusivist, and, acting in collusion with powerful politicians, are threatening people’s basic religious freedom. While preaching “tolerance,” they are lending their support to religious oppression, which is a form of supreme intolerance. This is an appalling contradiction.

Saito: That’s symptomatic of the extremely shallow view of religion of most Japanese. When religious figures become involved in conspiracies and acts of violence, they are committing religious suicide; such actions betray an utterly bankrupt humanity.

Suda: Superiority or inferiority in matters of religion, while fundamentally a question of the profundity of the teaching, ought to be reflected in the actions and character of the religion’s practitioners. The extent to which they actually prize human rights, protect life and encourage humanity will increasingly become the focus. As the Daishonin says, “even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (MW-6, 111).

Ikeda: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai founding president, predicted that the age of military, political and economic conflict would eventually give way to an age of “humanitarian competition.”

In other words, he foresaw the arrival of a time when more importance would be placed on “power of spirit” and “power of character” than on military, political and economic power. Increasingly, conditions in the world make any alternative to such a course less and less tenable.

Suda: One cannot help but feel awed by President Makiguchi’s tremendous foresight.

Ikeda: He was our predecessor. We should take pride in having had such a person for our founder.

The names of presidents Makiguchi and Toda will doubtless come to shine with increasing brilliance; rather, it is the mission of a disciple to see to it that they do. Toward that end, we need to show splendid actual proof by producing many humanitarian and globally minded individuals.

At any rate, the key point is to transcend factionalism and ideology and work to bring all people to a state of peace and happiness. And to do this, we have at our disposal the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra.

Our efforts to achieve peace must be based on dialogue. Our advance is a great movement to fundamentally transform the destiny of humankind, which has experienced endless strife. Taking pride in this great mission, let us advance with our chests high toward the twenty-first century.

Turning the “Wheel of the Law” of Dialogue

Endo: The final passage of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter explains the parable of the priceless gem in the topknot. It goes as follows: There is a wheel-turning sage king who rewards soldiers who have won distinction in battle by giving them arms, fields, houses, treasures and various other things. However, he does not give away to anyone the bright jewel that he keeps in his topknot. That’s because “this one jewel exists only on the top of the king’s head, and if he were to give it away, his followers would be certain to express great consternation and alarm” (LS14, 206). However, when the wheel-turning king sees someone who has gained truly great distinction, he is delighted and gives the person the brilliant jewel in his topknot, something he would never do recklessly.

Shakyamuni explains that the Buddha is like this wheel-turning sage king, and has long concealed the foremost teaching of the Lotus Sutra in his heart, never imparting it to anyone. “Through the long night I have guarded and protected it and have never recklessly propagated it. But today for the first time I expound it for your sake” (LS14, 207).

Suda: Wheel-turning sage kings are ideal rulers of Indian mythology. This parable explains just how great and rare the Lotus Sutra is. Just as the wheel-turning sage king had never before bestowed the bright jewel on anyone, Shakyamuni had never expounded the true teaching, but

had all along continued to expound provisional teachings.

Ikeda: A wheel-turning sage king possessed a wheel made of jewels.

Saito: Yes. He was said to destroy evil and govern the world by turning this wheel. The “treasure wheel” was also supposed to be a weapon, like the wheels of war chariots or something one would cast into enemy forces.

Ikeda: Just as the king turns the “treasure wheel,” the Buddha turns the “wheel of the Law.” If the king’s treasure wheel may be likened to “hard power,” we can say that the Buddha’s wheel of the Law is “soft power” effected through discussion and dialogue.

Saito: Because the Buddha turns the wheel of the Law, his preaching is termed “turning the wheel of the Law.” Shakyamuni, in giving his first sermon, is said to have “begun turning the wheel of the Law.”

Ikeda: Buddhism is fundamentally a religion of vigorous and free dialogue. We have to “fight” for peace with the “weapons” of dialogue and discussion.

Nichiren Daishonin says, “The wheel-turning king can travel throughout the entirety of the four continents in an instant” (MW-7, 95). Time and again the Buddha turns the wheel of the Law and freely expands its flow from one friend to another, from here to there, from one country to the next. At the same time he bravely fights to refute evil. This is the Buddha’s struggle.

Dr. Johann Galtung, the founder



“This Mount is not like others: at the start, it is most difficult to climb, but then, the more one climbs the easier it becomes; and when the slope feels gentle to the point that climbing up would be as effortless as floating down a river in a boat—”

of peace studies, once compared Buddhist philosophy to a “wheel.” He observed that from the beginning Buddhism has been an open religion and—like a wheel that rolls ever forward—has throughout its history generated new insights and wisdom and addressed the current problems of society.

Endo: This certainly describes the movement of the SGI.

Suda: In his dialogue with you, President Ikeda [in October 1990, in Kyoto], Dr. Galtung noted that you, like a wheel that is always turning, were always promoting diverse activities based on Buddhism. He declared that by turning the wheel of Buddhist thought, you had created a force uniting East and West.

Ikeda: The teaching of Buddhism is certainly not stiff and rigid. It is free of narrow dogmatism and is open to society. Dr. Galtung places great emphasis on this point.

Suda: Buddhism is a religion that pulses vibrantly in society.

Ikeda: Our fellow SGI members put this into practice daily. Turning the “wheel of the Law” of discussion, day in and day out they engage in the work of creating the value of peace in society. This is most noble.

They tirelessly go from house to house encouraging members. They talk with one friend after another about Buddhism. Such activities certainly amount to “turning the wheel of the Law.” This is the action of “wheel-turn-

ing sage kings of kosen-rufu” who are “turning” and expanding the flow of the Mystic Law throughout the world. And in the process they are accumulating eternal good fortune.

The “Ongi Kuden” says, “To go round and round unendingly in the cycle of birth and death over the three existences of past, present and future is what is called being a wheel-turning sage king” (GZ, 733). To the extent that in the present we take action, in our next lives and the next, and the ones after that, we will be reborn as great leaders of society, as great scientists, great writers, people of wealth, great scholars, as anonymous champions of the people. Assuming all kinds of appearances, we will lead people to enlightenment based on the Mystic Law.

The curtain has begun to rise on the brilliant “century of Soka.” I hope all members, without exception, will follow the unsurpassed path in life and scale the mountain of kosen-rufu, attaining the brilliant “throne” of a state of life of unshakable “peace and happiness.”

The Daishonin says, “With these peaceful practices, let us proceed to the Pure Land of Eagle Peak” (GZ, 798). Both while we’re alive and after we die, we can make our way to the pure land of Eagle Peak filled with joy. It is a state in which being alive is itself a joy; in which life as well as death is a joy.

To realize such an existence, we must achieve a state of life to be able to enjoy chanting dai-moku to the Gohonzon and telling friends about Buddhism. If doing gongyo is a painful ordeal for you, then you are not in that state of life yet. Unless we really adore and cherish the Gohonzon from the bottom of our hearts, our faith is not genuine.

Saito: When we possess such joy in faith, we truly experience boundless “peace and happiness.”

Endo: The Daishonin’s teaching that encountering difficulties is itself peaceful is the royal road to constructing a great state of life that will endure throughout eternity.

Ikeda: By fighting to overcome great difficulties, we can thoroughly polish our lives and create a towering self. Therein lies true “peace and happiness.”

In the *Divine Comedy*, which describes Dante’s transformation of his state of life, we find the lines:

This Mount is not like others:
at the start
it is most difficult to climb,
but then,
the more one climbs the
easier it becomes;

and when the slope feels
gentle to the point
that climbing up would be as

effortless
as floating down a river in a
boat—¹⁴

He is crying out: “At the crucial moment, climb! You are a hero!”

When we climb a mountain, our state of life expands. Descending into a valley might be easy, but when we reach the bottom, our lives will be full of misery.

The curtain has begun to rise on the brilliant “century of Soka.” I hope all members, without exception, will follow the unsurpassed path in life and scale the mountain of kosen-rufu, attaining the brilliant “throne” of a state of life of unshakable “peace and happiness.” This is my ardent prayer.

(To be continued)

Illustrations by Larry Ashton

1. *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 8.
2. Editor’s note: All quotations from the *Lotus Sutra* are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
3. *Shoju*: Propagating Buddhism by gradually leading a person to the supreme Buddhist teaching without refuting his or her attachment to lower or erroneous teachings. *Shoju* was generally employed during the Former and Middle Days of the Law.
4. Middle Day of the Law: The second thousand-year period following Shakyamuni’s death.
5. This indicates a country populated with people who conceive no desire to seek the Buddhist way.
6. Editor’s note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the revised edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
7. *Nichijun Shonin Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichijun Shonin) (Tokyo: Nichiren Shoshu Bussho Kankokai, 1960), part 2, p. 1620.
8. *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 8.
9. *Daibyakurenge*, November 1957, pp. 18–19.
10. *Ibid.*, *Daibyakurenge*, p. 18.
11. Romain Rolland, *Le Voyage Intérieur* (Voyage Within) (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959), p. 366.
12. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1970), vol. 41 (June–October 1929), p. 465.
13. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1983), vol. 3, p. 289.
14. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Purgatory, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), vol. 2, p. 43.

Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures



Josep Maria Bricall
Massip — Vice
President of the
Standing Confer-
ence of Rectors,
Presidents and Vice
Chancellors of the
European
Universities

SOMETIMES a simple phrase powerfully encapsulates the drama of countless struggles. At our first meeting in Tokyo in May 1990, Dr. Bricall, then rector of the University of Barcelona, Spain, declared, “Liberty illuminates all — that is the spirit of our university.” His words rang with deep sentiment and conviction.

Barcelona is the capital of Spain’s autonomous Catalonia region—an area full of light, nurtured by the sun and breezes of the Mediterranean. It is a region of grape arbors, olive groves, rich birdlife, fields of waving golden wheat and mountain ranges capped with brilliant white snow. It is also the home of the famous Catalan round dance, the *sardana*,



SGI President Ikeda meets with Josep Maria Bricall Massip, vice president of the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice Chancellors of the European Universities, in Tokyo, May 1990.

SEIKYO PRESS

where all join hands in a circle like a beautiful flower.

Perhaps because of its natural wealth, Catalonia's history has been one of resisting successive invasions. The people of Catalonia have had to fight to preserve their culture and their homeland. Sometimes they fought against France; at other times, they battled against other regions of Spain.

The University of Barcelona was founded in 1450. From its inception, it has been a stronghold of Catalan culture. The university was shut down in 1714, however, because it resisted the Spanish Bourbon central government, which did not recognize Catalan autonomy. After a fourteen-month resistance struggle that had involved all of Catalonia, Barcelona fell to the outsiders and the University of Barcelona was forcibly removed to a tiny village in the mountains. The university did not return to the city for 130 years.

We only realize how precious

liberty is after we have lost it. But by then it is too late.

Perhaps the worst times that Catalonia has faced were during and after the Spanish Civil War of 1936–39—a military revolt against the new democratic Spanish Republic, which had been established after the fall of the monarchy. The Second Republic of Spain, which had begun with such high hopes, was destroyed by the fascist troops led by Francisco Franco (1892–1975), with military assistance from Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and Fascist Italy's Benito Mussolini. They crushed the young republic that had pulsed with a vibrant culture.

AS I'm sure many of you will recall, the 1992 Olympic Games were held in Barcelona. But perhaps less well known today is another Olympics half a century earlier—the legendary Barcelona Olympiad organized to protest the Berlin Olympic Games

hosted by Nazi Germany. It was proposed by people who opposed the exploitation of the world of sport by nations who discriminated on the basis of belief or religious faith—like Nazi Germany. They were determined to purify the noxious atmosphere that had been created, by planting millions of fragrant blooms of peace and goodwill throughout the world.

On July 18, 1936, on the eve of the Olympiad's scheduled opening, the great cellist and conductor Pablo Casals (1876–1973), a native of Barcelona, was leading the final rehearsal of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in preparation for the ceremonies the following day. During the rehearsal, a messenger handed him a note informing him that a fascist military revolt was expected in the city that night. He was instructed to cancel the rehearsal and to allow the musicians to leave immediately. Casals made this announcement to his musicians. He asked them whether



MACQUILLÉ EVERSON/ORBIS

The undulating lines of Spanish architect Antonio Gaudí's Casa Mila on Passeig de Gracia, in Barcelona.

they wanted to leave or remain to finish the rehearsal. Indeed, they might never meet again. As the chorus sang the well-loved lyrics, "All mankind are sworn brothers where thy gentle wings abide," Casals' eyes filled with tears and he could no longer see the score. Outside, meanwhile, citizens were building barricades.¹

The republic believed in the power of culture, but its principles were about to be crushed under the boots of soldiers. What a tragedy!

The influential Spanish philosopher, educator and author Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936) had initially supported the military revolt, but later came to bitterly regret his

stance after experiencing firsthand the fascists' inhumanity. During a ceremony at the University of Salamanca, of which Unamuno was rector, a military general shouted, "Down with intellectuals!" Rector Unamuno replied quietly from the lectern:

This is the temple of the intellect. And I am its high priest. It is you who profane its sacred precincts. You will win, because you have more than enough brute force. But you will not convince. For to convince, you need to persuade. And in order to persuade, you would need what you lack: Reason and Right in the struggle."²

Unamuno was placed under house arrest and died two months later.

The ability to gain people's support and understanding is the pride of intelligence, while force and power are the tools of barbarianism. When a university permits even the slightest hint of authoritarianism to taint its organization, the university itself becomes the violator of its very own "temple of the intellect."

This is not only true of universities. All leaders have a responsibility to explain things explicitly to the people and to win their acceptance. The leader who has not grasped that truth is already out-of-date.



Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) was inspired by the bombing of the city of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War.

The entire world watched as the war between brute force and culture was being waged. Many famous writers went to Spain. André Malraux, with whom I carried on dialogues, recorded his experience in Spain in his novel *L'Espoir* (Hope). He voiced his protest against everything that crushed the hopes of the people, especially the attempt of politicians to extend their dominion even to the human spirit.³ Simone Weil scrutinized human destiny amid the tragic bloodletting, and George Orwell, while exposing the deceptions of political leaders, spoke of creating a crystalline spirit that refused to despair.

YOUNG people also came from many countries to fight on the Republican side against Franco's Nationalist forces, moved by a great progressive cause that concerned all humanity. This international brigade of volunteers was praised as being as heroic as the warriors of Homer's *Illiad*. But as the days went by, defeat loomed. Even so, the Republic looked to

the future. French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry came upon a little "school" not far from the Madrid front, in the shade of a small wall on a low hill a half-mile from a trench.⁴ A corporal stood there with a poppy in his hand, teaching a group of unshaven soldiers a lesson in botany. The hope that a new dawn of human history could be created through education shone brightly there, in the very midst of the war. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Ernest Hemingway wrote: "We cannot destroy them [the fascists]. But we can educate the people so that they will fear fascism and recognize it as it appears and combat it."⁵

The fall of Barcelona grew near. Air strikes continued mercilessly, and people began to evacuate the city. In such desperate times, what did the University of Barcelona do? It decided to pay tribute to outstanding cultural achievement by conferring an honorary doctorate on Pablo Casals. The faculty gathered for the award ceremony at the risk of their own lives, while sending their families to safety. There

was no time to have the diploma printed, so it was written by hand. It was a modest ceremony, observed against a background of exploding shells. But it was a solemn ceremony of great historical importance, because it marked the refusal of the University of Barcelona to submit to brute force.

The city fell. In January and February of 1939, the refugees from Barcelona crossed the snow-bound Pyrenees to reach safety in France. Between 400,000 to half a million people are thought to have fled along that route. It was like a journey, one poet wrote, from one death to another. In the early phase of the evacuation, there was no proper food and water in the hastily arranged refugee camps, and the weak soon died. Some died grasping a handful of earth from the villages they had left behind.

To these Catalan people, the soil of their native land represented their beloved homeland itself.

Lluís Companys i Jover (1882–1940), the president of an autonomous Catalonia, was among the



A park in Barcelona, Spain, with La Sagrada Família featuring Gaudí's architecture in the background.

that they were determined to keep alive, even if it meant dying to do so. It is a land that has produced many creative geniuses—Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Antoni Gaudí. The blooms of a rich humanity open to all the world—not a narrow nationalism—were nourished in the earth of Catalonia.

Education is to ignite a flame. When teachers burn with a passion for the truth, the desire to learn will be ignited in their students' hearts. When teachers are excited about culture and beauty, the creativity of their students will leap up like a bright flame. What is vital is whether teachers have something in their hearts that they really want to teach their students beyond all other considerations—even if they receive no remuneration, social recognition or special privileges. And also whether the students have a thirst for knowledge and learning within themselves.

CREATIVE individuals capable of directing the course of the future are born out of truly challenging and inspiring teacher-student relationships. If all we do is cram fragmented lumps of information into students' heads, we'll only produce specialists with no human character, like robots. The chaos of our society today is a clear testament to, and a warning of, the terrifying consequences of such a soulless education conducive only to the creation of a select intellectual elite.

After the Civil War, the people of Catalonia were even forbidden to

exiles. Later, when France was invaded and occupied by the Nazis, he was turned over to the fascist authorities of the homeland from which he had fled. He was tortured and condemned to death. As he stood before the firing squad, he quietly removed his shoes and socks. He wanted to die with both feet touching the ground of his homeland. When the white hand-

kerchief at his breast had been dyed red with his blood, he collapsed. With his last breath he whispered, "For Catalonia!"

Who, at that moment, was the victor, who the vanquished? The murdering dictator or the patriot who was shot?

The people of Catalonia have a passionate love for their land, which had given birth to a culture



Snow-covered mountains drop away to a valley, near Viella, Lerida, Catalonia, Spain.

speak their own language, Catalan, in public. When an entire people are not permitted to use their own words, their very humanity is being denied. The long, long winter of Catalonia continued.

In 1977, when limited autonomy was granted to Catalonia, the 78-year-old Josep Tarradellas (1899–1988), one of the leaders of the exiled government, returned to his country forty years after he had crossed the Pyrenees. The city of Barcelona rang with cheers, and the Catalan flag waved in its streets. He assumed the post as president of the provisional government of Catalonia.

Before becoming rector of the University of Barcelona, Rector Bricall was a director of the same provisional government. He appreciated the new spring of liberty.

Among the members of the

international volunteer brigades was a young British poet called John Cornford, who fought and lost his life in the Spanish Civil War. In one of his poems, he cries out: “O understand before too late / Freedom was never held without a fight.”⁵

In Japan, our liberty may not be threatened by a specific dictator; rather, it is threatened by the cowardice of our leaders who merely follow the status quo without making any effort to change it. That is why we need to foster people with backbone who do not passively follow events but actively create the future.

Dr. Bricall is vice president of the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents, and Vice Chancellors of the European Universities. “At our conference,” Dr. Bricall commented, “we agreed that today’s universities

are a miniature of what our nations will be like in the future. It is in the universities that the society of the future is projected.”

What can we see in our present universities? Are the creative fires burning in them? Is love for the people burning there? □

-
1. Cf: Robert Baldock, Pablo Casals (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1992), p. 154.
 2. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., 1961), p. 355.
 3. André Malraux, *L'Espoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 464.
 4. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Terre des hommes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 176.
 5. Ernest Hemmingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 208.
 6. *Understand the Weapon, Understand the Wound: Selected Writings of John Cornford*, ed. Jonathan Galassi (Manchester: Carcanet New Press Ltd., 1976) p. 40.

Quilts' Messages Speak to the Heart

By Arzu Tittus, New York

My work is about the evolution of women, who are the givers of life and love. In our many roles as friends and lovers, mothers and sisters, we laugh, cry, contemplate, support, suffer, struggle and through all this, we continually develop and grow. All of my pictorial quilts are freeze frames that capture the moment when this evolutionary process actually occurs. The prevalent scene throughout my work is women discovering the dignity in their lives as they undergo the experiences of seeking, loving, losing and winning. In many ways, my quilts reflect my own spiritual path and evolution as a woman. My style is a collaborative work between my creative energy and the inherent will of the fabric. The results are pieces that emit a life beyond the ability of the fabric to do alone. —Arzu Tittus

IN late 1993, someone I knew from the beginning of my practice told me that he was dying from AIDS. Not knowing what to say or do, I decided to make him a quilt. After all, that was the thing to do at the time. The only problem was, I didn't know how to quilt. I didn't even know how to use a sewing machine.

When I told a couple of my friends who are artists that I had decided to make a quilt and needed help, one of them gave me fifty pounds of fabric and the other

took me to quilting shops and loaned me books on how to quilt. "Just make the quilt and stop talking about it," they said.

At the time I was serving as a law librarian to the district attorney in Queens County, N.Y. I was appointed to design and build the law library, which was an overwhelming, time-consuming job. I really had no time to quilt, but by now I had developed a burning urge to do it. I had a lot of supplies but I still did not know what I was doing or where to begin.

My mother helped me convince my sister, a Fashion Institute of Technology student at the time, to help me with the selection of fabric. My mother also agreed to talk me through my first quilt. She began by telling me that I had made a beautiful, embroidered twelve-panel quilt when I was 7; that it had taken me a whole year to do it.

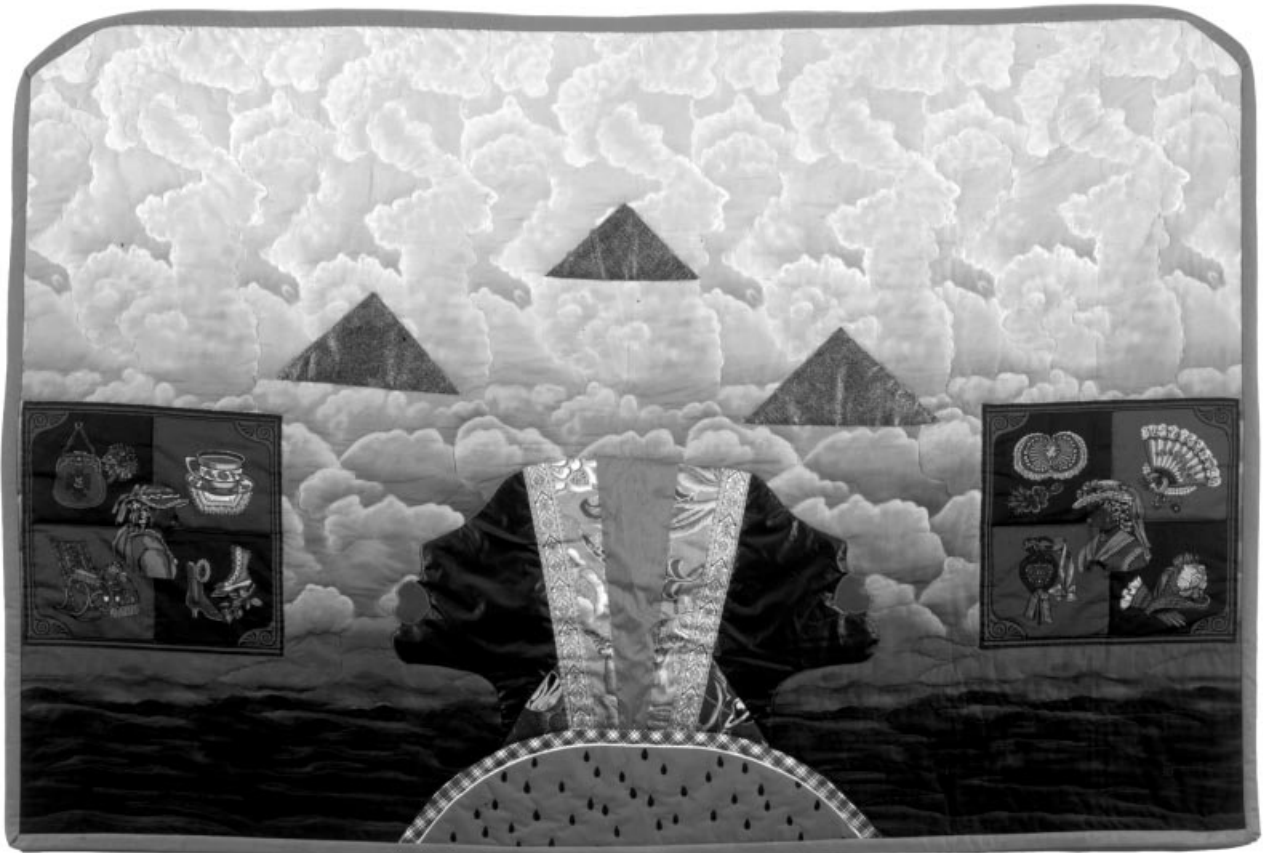
My mother also taught me a method of communicating with the fabric as though it were an entity. We laid all the fabric pieces on the floor and I would stare at them until I felt they told me where they wanted to go. I would hear the story in my mind and would then arrange them as they requested, creating a picture. The last part of the task would be to sew the pieces together by any means necessary. I chose to sew by hand since I did not own a sewing machine.

I would work all day at the dis-



trict attorney's office and then come home and stare at fabric all night. I was chronically late getting to work and sleeping only one or two hours, but I did not care. I absolutely had to do this because in my entire life, there had never been anything that had given me so much joy. I would drag myself to work day after day and could not wait for the day to be done so that I could get home to my quilting. I couldn't have done all this without the tremendous support from my husband, Edgard, and our sons Nicholas, now 16, and Sammy, 15.

IBEGAN to create several pieces at a time. By the time I had created fifteen pieces, I realized that each quilt was telling me something crucial about my life. Every piece was not just telling a story. It was telling me a story. The first one told me it was time to leave the district attorney's office because I had grown miserable there. I was more than accomplished in my field: I was head law librarian, I had designed my own law library, I was a lecturer for the American Association of Law Libraries and the Special



Visions in Creole, 64 x 42 in., story quilt. "I came here from Honduras in 1967 with nothing but the clothes I was wearing," Arzu explains. "I do everything to keep from crying every time I think about it. I thought we were coming right back but we never did. What I remember most of that day is my sister and me on the plane together talking and envisioning what life would be like in America. We would finally see our mother after having been separated for so many years. We had nothing but our culture and the legends my grandmother had bred into us. Some of them true, we thought. My grandmother made us wear our hair natural, and she insisted we be proud about it. She would make us wrap it up at night. She believed that straightening our hair would cause evil spirits to enter our heads and we would go insane because "You will forget who you are." She said that's what was wrong with Americans. They straighten their hair. Until that day, we never questioned her. That day we saw many Americans at the airport with their hair exposed, straightened and unwrapped. And they were not insane. And they seemed to know who they were. Could my grandmother have been wrong?"

Libraries Association. I lectured on the mutually beneficial relationships of law librarians and MIS (management information systems) personnel at Yale University. I wrote and taught my own graduate course called "How to Find the Law." I recently rewrote it and called it "How to Find the Law on the Internet." My theories on multicultural curriculum reform in the library and information sciences were pub-

lished by Haworth Press and widely accepted by curriculum developers nationwide. I had a perfectly secure career, and I just walked away.

Not knowing how I would support myself or what I would do, I decided to sell my quilts. The first one was purchased by an assistant district attorney and so was the second. Then a friend gave me a small loan so that I could, as she said, "Just quilt."

She told me I had to make more quilts. She also helped me purchase my first sewing machine. Someone else gave me fabric from India. I began meeting people who just happened to have some rare and unique fabric they wanted to give me. One friend invited me to her house just so that I could select the silks I liked, which she then gave to me. I also began receiving boxes in the mail containing beautiful fabric pieces



In Somebody's Shadow, 54 x 72 in., story quilt. "I made this piece in honor of same sex relationships," Arzu says. "I believe that if the universe sends you love, you should take it. And that the vessel matters not, if the love is pure. This piece depicts two women looking toward a future together and ready to face it all."

from people I did not know. In a way you could say that the fabric began to find me.

I continued to make more quilts until they piled up in my closet. None of the quilts I made had been good enough, I felt, to give to my friend who was dying from AIDS. Every time I sat down to make him a quilt, it would turn into something else. It was now the end of 1995 and my friend called and asked me where his quilt was. I

told him it was not finished and that he could not die yet.

By now I had amassed over twenty quilts, each telling its own story.

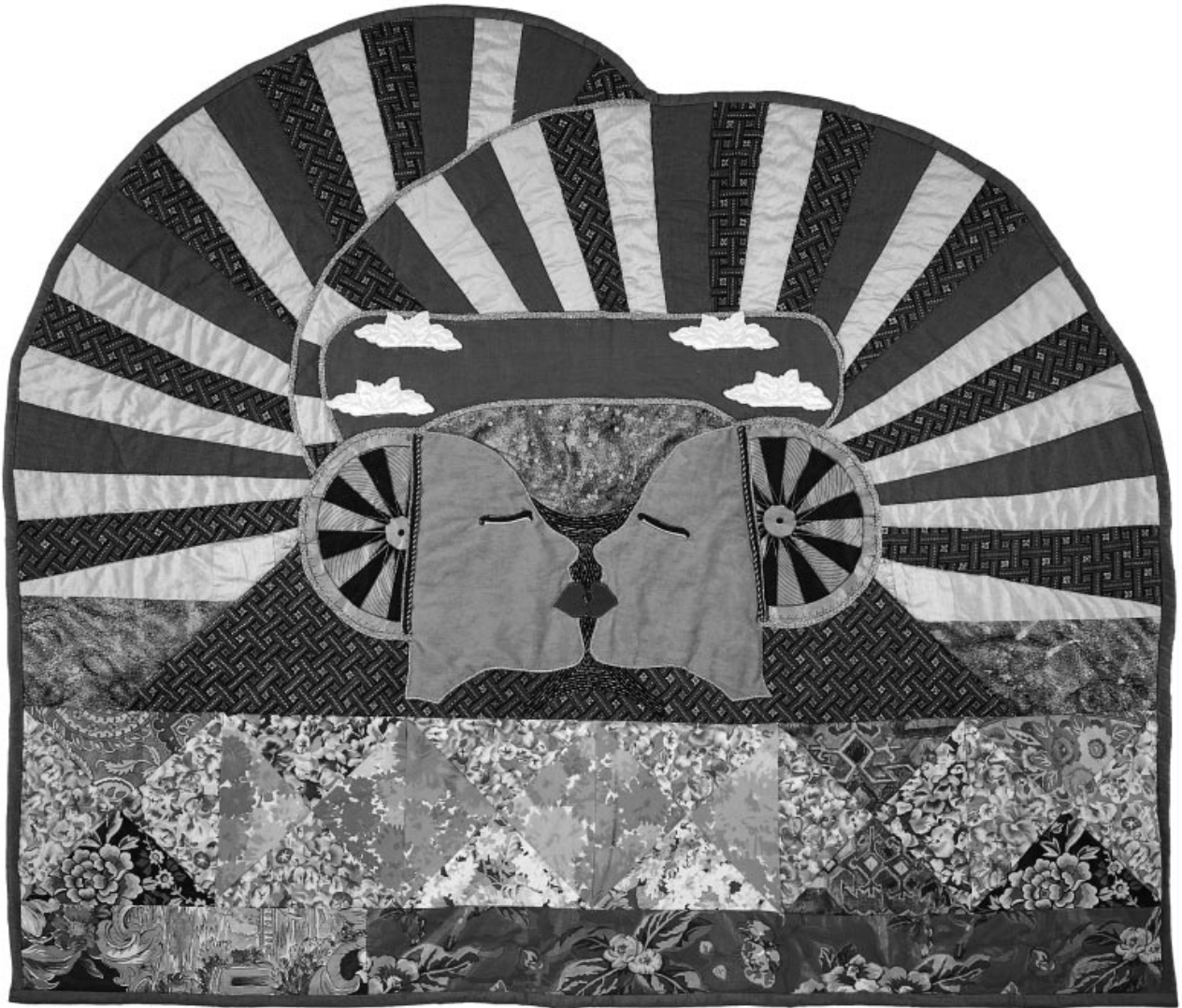
After another of my friends convinced me to have an exhibit, I was offered a generous venue in Soho, N.Y.—a good gallery located in a perfect spot that would present me to New York as a new and upcoming artist. It was my dream come true, or so I thought. The title of my

exhibit was "ARZU IN PIECES," and I was.

When the gallery owner asked me to pick up some of the expenses because I was an unknown and that he was taking a financial risk in exhibiting my work, I agreed. Several days before the show, he asked me for more money, saying he had underestimated the expenses. In the same breath, he asked me for my mailing list. I agreed again. Instinctively I knew at that moment that not only was he swindling me out of money but also out of my mailing list. It seemed too late to cancel the show since I would be the only loser.

However, when I showed up to install the artwork the day before the show, I found the gallery absolutely filthy with dirt and garbage all over the floor. I did not know how I could possibly have a show there. The gallery owner told me he needed to borrow money from me again to pay someone to clean the gallery and that I could not install my work before then. He also told me that every single press release sent out had been returned for lack of postage and that he did not have the additional twelve cents each to mail them.

IT was the day before the show and I was in utter hell. But I had one foot in and I'm not a quitter, so I began to chant for the wisdom to deal with this in the most graceful way. Of course I wanted to kill him, but I could not afford to be distracted by this hellish experience. At the time, SGI President Ikeda was due to visit New York in ten days and I wanted to make sure every one of my members had the opportunity to participate in the activities. It was also my responsibility to help with World Tribune coverage. I wanted



She Kisses, 60 x 53 in., story quilt. "This quilt was purchased by a member of Parliament in Bermuda in 1995," Arzu recounts. "It is a self-love piece. During a course I was taking by Louise Hays titled 'You Can Heal Your Life,' an exercise I had to do every morning was to look into a mirror and say, 'I love you.' It sounded easy, but it was very difficult for me. For three months I did this exercise in front of the bathroom mirror with my eyes closed—I was determined to do it until I believed what I was saying. One day I looked at myself in the mirror and was able to look into my own eyes. What I saw was a beautiful woman. I said, 'I love you.' I kissed the woman in the mirror, and the woman kissed me back."

my quilt exhibit to be over and done with by the time President Ikeda came.

I was forced to install the quilts the same morning as the show opening even though the gallery owner had just painted the walls. But people were coming and the show had to go on. I did not know if my quilts would be permanently stuck to the gallery

walls or not. In spite of everything, the opening was wonderful and very well attended. I was just glad it was over so that I could go on with my life, maybe get a job to pay the debt I had incurred trying to put on the show.

The following day, the gallery owner disappeared, along with my artwork, and the phone was disconnected. The third day I received

scores of phone calls from people asking why they could not get into the gallery. I had no idea so many people were interested in my work. Even without press releases the word about my exhibit had gotten out far and wide. I stopped answering the phone because I could not take it anymore. I ran out of things to tell people. By now I believed I would never see my quilts again.

So I decided to chant all day.

For the first time in my eighteen years of practice, I found chanting almost impossible. The rage and pain I felt made even chanting a hellish experience. But it was better than any alternative and I knew from experience that I couldn't go wrong if I chanted. I did not know where the pain was coming from. Why was this hurting so much?

I chanted until I had no voice left and my face was swollen from crying. The pain still would not go away. I felt as though someone had taken away everything I loved and would not give it back. I did not care about the show anymore. I just wanted my artwork back. How could anyone be so evil and do this to me or to anyone?

The answer came quietly and unmistakably clear. A little voice inside my ear said, "Because you have no appreciation for anything you create." I knew the little voice was right. But now I hurt more than when I didn't know the answer. As far back as I can remember, nothing I ever made was ever good enough for me. I have been creating and slandering simultaneously all of my life. This cycle had to be stopped. I had been neglecting my worth and now, through this pain, the universe was forcing me to claim my worth. For once I did not care how imperfect my work was. It was mine and I had created it. I just wanted it back.

That evening, the gallery owner called me. With the help of the police, some friends and local gallery owners who by now had become involved, I was able to retrieve all of my artwork unharmed. By now I had attract-

ed the attention of Dr.Carolynn Mazloomi, the founder of the Women of Color Quilters Network. She loved my work and invited me to become a member of a worldwide women's network that produces museum quality art quilts. I attracted a lot of attention in the art world because of what had happened so I got a lot of offers from a lot of venues, but I had grown very suspicious of everyone.

DR. Mazloomi solved that problem for me. She guided me to the institutions that were reputable and just. She made sure that I remained faithful to my style while at the same time honing and polishing my skills. She became my mentor and even though we live in two separate states, we are never apart. Because of her encouragement, I have been accepted as an artist in the genre of fiber arts.

At the end of 1996, three years after I began quilting, I was invited by the New York Park Alliance to exhibit one of my quilts (*Palula's Daughter*) at the Lefferts Homestead in the New York Botanical Garden. It was a big hit. I was interviewed by the news cable network New York 1 and my work was seen all over the world. During the exhibit, Dr. Mazloomi asked me if she could include my work in her new book, *Spirit of the Cloth*, which is being published by Random House and is due out next spring. A total of seven of my quilts will be included along with their stories.

By January 10 this year, I had held seven exhibitions and as of this writing, I am booked through next summer. My venues have

included The African American Museum in Tampa, Fla., the American Craft Museum in Manhattan, N.Y., Octagon Gallery in Clearwater, Fla., MaryMount College Gallery in Manhattan, N.Y., CRT Gallery in Hartford, Conn., the Standard & Poors building in Denver, and many more. I am currently preparing for an exhibit to be hosted by the Bermuda National Gallery, and another book publishing my work is under way.

I recently spoke to my friend who was dying from AIDS. He is now producing his own T cells and he is living more than dying. When I showed him my work, we both cried like babies. I am so glad he is alive. I think I will finish his quilt now.

I love President Ikeda. I love his life and everything that he is doing for the world. Were it not for him, I would not know of this Buddhism and I would not be who I am and I would not be as happy as I am. I have made several pieces for him and they were not good enough, I felt. I'm getting better though. I would certainly like him to have one of my pieces. Any one he wanted actually. □

Each dialogue I have with my inner self has resulted in a quilt. *My Spirit* (on the cover of the magazine) tells the story of what my spirit said to me: "Take the pain and do something useful with it. You have exhausted your allotted time for regret in this life. The only time left is for creating value. Eat the pain and make yourself strong. Swallow the tears and nurture me. Take the pressure and use it like a diamond. Make yourself shine."



left, *Watermelon Patch Work*, 1995, Quilt, 56" x 59"

below left, *Sadness and Hope*, 1996, Quilt, 64" x 74"

below, *Palula's Daughter*, 1996, Quilt, 95" x 46"





Living Buddhism
Periodicals Postage Paid
at Santa Monica, CA 90401

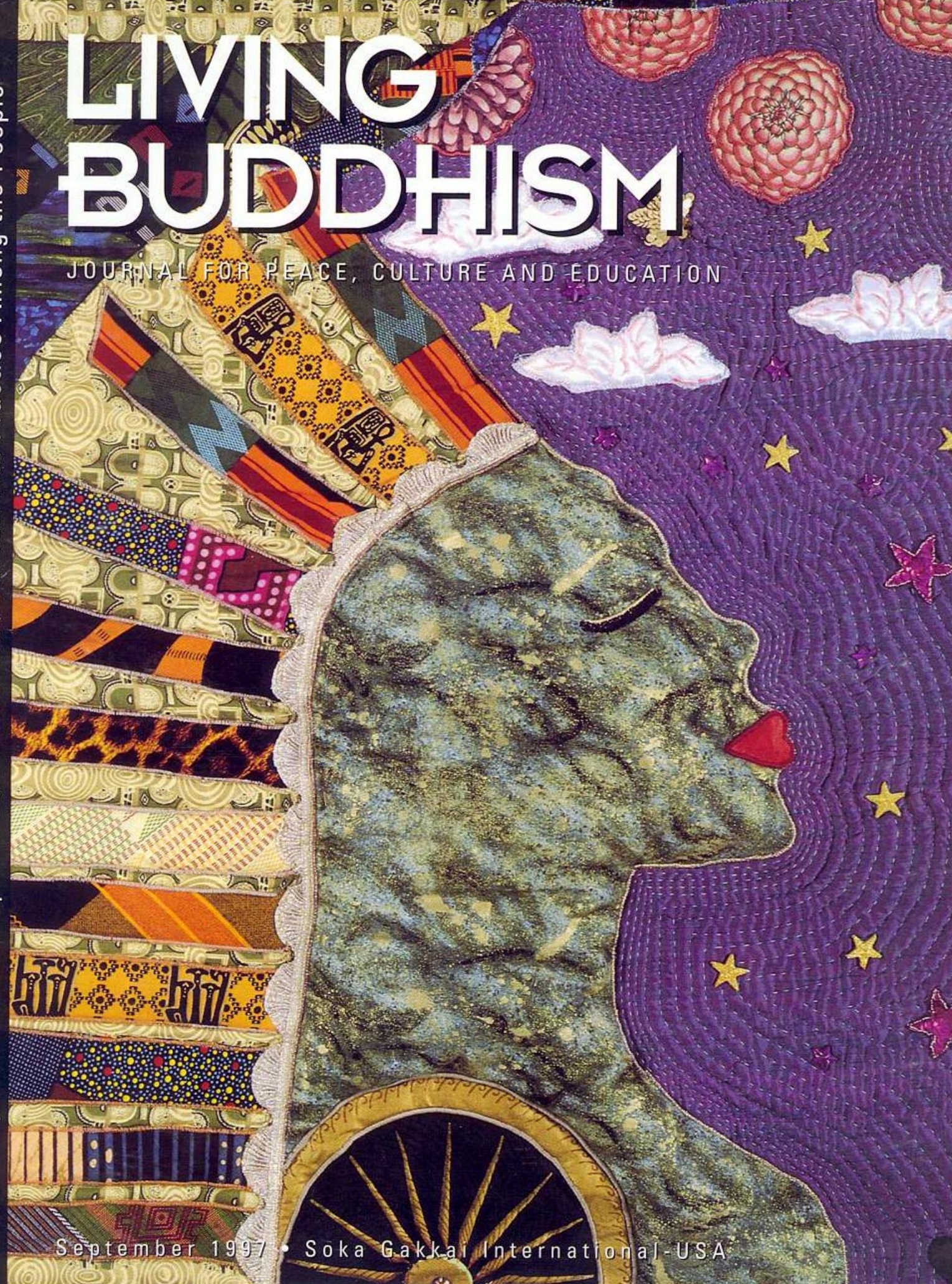
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

Return To:
SGI-USA Subscriptions Section
525 Wilshire Boulevard
Santa Monica, CA 90401-1467

Study Material for September/October: This Person Will Practice Among the People

LIVING BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION



September 1997 • Soka Gakkai International-USA

Netherlands Culture Center



THE SGI of the Netherlands Culture Center, which opened in September 1991, is situated in a beautiful forest in Zeist, which is located in Utrecht province in central Netherlands. The three-story building is close to major cities including the capital of Amsterdam and the seat of government, The Hague.

SGI President Ikeda first visited the Netherlands in 1961. Six years later on May 27 (designated Netherlands Day), during his second visit there, a chapter was formed with six members. In May 1973, during a three-hour stopover in Amsterdam

due to a change in travel plans, Mr. Ikeda held an outdoor discussion meeting with about twenty people in front of a windmill on a riverbank. Participants at that meeting continued to play a leading role in developing SGIN activities, establishing a headquarters in November 1982. SGIN members again welcomed Mr. Ikeda in 1983, at which time he visited Prime Minister R. F. M. Lubbers at his official residence in The Hague. The emergence of many young people led to the formation of the Young Women's Fife and Drum Corps in 1985 and other youth groups the following year.