

World Tribune

No. 3124

THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JANUARY 31, 1997

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Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

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Peace Activities Going Strong on African Continent

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The highlight of this trip was our first visit to Mauritius. There we conducted a Gohonzon-conferral ceremony on Dec. 28 at which 18 members received the Gohonzon. Georges Rivet, the recently appointed chapter chief, received a Gohonzon after seven years of practice; Dolores Petit, chapter women's division chief, after 14 years of practice; and Lisette Mamode, chapter vice women's division chief, after 15 years of practice.

At the ceremony, the members receiving the Gohonzon gathered with their families and

other members who came to celebrate the occasion. All 60 people at the ceremony dressed in formal attire. There was joyful applause and tears of joy.

About one year before the ceremony, President Ikeda received a package from Mauritius in which there were a name list of the 18 people, a photograph of the members and a heartfelt letter telling him how these people had already prepared Buddhist altars and wished to receive the Gohonzon. This request eventually led to the Gohonzon-conferral ceremony we attended.

PLEASE SEE AFRICA, 4

SGI President To Receive 1st Tagore Peace Award

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

The Asiatic Society, headquartered in Calcutta, India, has informed SGI President Ikeda of its decision to name him the first recipient of the Tagore Peace Award.

In his letter, Acting General Director Anil Kumar Sarkar affirmed that Mr. Ikeda was selected in recognition of his "creative contribution to the development of human understanding toward peace."

The director further explained that the award has been inaugurated by the institute to promote global peace through advancing the humanistic and pacifist tenets of the esteemed Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

The Asiatic Society, currently headed by General Secretary Chandan Raychowdhury, was established in 1784 by Sir William Jones (1746-94), a British jurist and Eastern studies scholar. In 1984, the bicenten-

PLEASE SEE TAGORE, 4

SGI Launches Public Information Website

By DAVE McNEILL
MANAGING EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., Jan. 23

The Internet contains more information than most of us could ever use. Unfortunately, not everything on the Net is true. Allegations and misinformation about the SGI appear frequently.

In response to increasing inquiries from the press, researchers, and other individuals seeking accurate information, the SGI has launched a web page (www.sgi.org).

"We established this website to provide clear explanations about the various controversies that we're dealing with," Rie Tsumura of the SGI Public Relations Office said. "There is so much misinformation on the Internet regarding our organization, but now the members and

other interested people have a place to turn for the straight scoop."

In addition to rebutting various allegations made against the SGI and the SGI president, the site provides third-party perspectives about the organization from such people as Dr. Howard Hunter of Tufts University. The religious studies professor shares his views about the organization in an essay titled "Making the Soka Gakkai Truly International."

The site also explores such issues as religious freedom and responsibility in media. The six major themes are "Religious Freedom," "SGI Peace Activities," "Responsibility in Media," "Buddhism Today," "Our Say," and "Introduction to Soka Gakkai International." ■

|| Soka Gakkai International ||
Public Information Site ||

 Religious Freedom	 Peace Activities	 Responsibility in Media
 Buddhism Today	 Our Say	 About Soka Gakkai International

The SGI's website explores six major themes, including 'Religious Freedom.'

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VOICES

Has your practice enabled you to confront your thoughts and feelings about differences among people? If so, how?

Members from New York #1 Joint Territory respond:



Diversity had a hand in my joining the SGI in 1982. Practicing in New York City, our district meeting included a cross section of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Italians, blacks, whites, gays, lesbians, etc. We weren't afforded the luxury of practicing "with our own." Our challenge was to stifle the impulse to assume we knew the hearts and minds of each other — we didn't. The SGI provided a safe haven to begin to sort out a multitude of differences; sometimes we chanted just to tolerate one another. Over time those efforts paid off in bonds that have not been severed by years or miles.

— KATE LOAGUE, Brooklyn, N.Y.



I began practicing in 1973. As a gay man, I was soon shocked to find that homophobia was as rampant in our organization as in society at large. Top leaders gave guidance that gay members were "out of rhythm" and must change their sexual orientation. I felt I had two choices: Either leave the Gakkai or change it! I opted for the latter. In response, I was

scolded for "breaking unity" and "promoting my own agenda." But I would not give up. In 20 years, we have transformed ourselves! I can now stand proudly, just as I am, as a member of an organization that is at the forefront in the battle against prejudice!

— W. DAVID JOHNSON, New Hyde Park, N.Y.



By basing my sense of identity and self-worth on the Gohonzon, the Goshu and President Ikeda's guidance, I have gradually changed how I think, speak and act with respect to others. The SGI's continuous emphasis on the worthiness of each person, regardless of their distinguishing characteristics, has helped me tremendously. I think more about how I can

reach out to create value, harmony, dialogue, appreciation and even humor. Inevitably, my prejudicial nature periodically tries to intercede and, just as periodically, I tell it to go back to its home.

— ROBERT TALIAFERRO, Brooklyn, N.Y.



When I first started practicing 13 years ago, I was very idealistic. I thought Buddhists were more enlightened than others and didn't suffer from the same prejudices. Experience has taught me that this is not true. Buddhists possess the same negative tendencies as other humans — to distrust or dislike people who are different. The one thing we Bud-

dhists have in our favor is that we can recognize these devilish functions and work to eradicate them.

— MARI McQUEEN, Rego Park, N.Y.



For many years I felt afraid of African American men based on some experiences that my daughter had. However, during my 25 years in the SGI, I have met so many wonderful men in our organization, so how could I stay prejudiced? When I go to world peace gongyo, I see many people of different races. I have also made wonderful friendships with

members of other races. Having positive experiences like this has opened my mind. This is one reason I love the SGI so much.

— BETTY BELL, Flushing, N.Y.

Thanks for Years of Dedication

EDITORIAL

An era is over. For more than 32 years, volunteers in the districts, chapters, headquarters, territories and joint territories personally collected money for subscriptions to this newspaper. Beginning in February, though, people everywhere can subscribe directly through the mail.

No more late nights, computer printouts spread out on dining room tables or living room floors, searching for the missing name that will balance the turn-in sheet. No more "ADD," "CHANGE," or "DELETE" forms. No more data inputting. No more late night deposits.

The effort that went into ensuring that people could read Nichiren Daishonin's writings, members' experiences and SGI President Ikeda's guidance in our publications was enormous. The thanks we all owe these folks — mostly women, but joined here and there by men — cannot be expressed adequately here. Suffice it to say that without these people's dedication, few of us would have gotten the words of encouragement that have kept many of us going over the years.

While people in the districts will no longer collect money, people will, of course, still need to spread the messages contained in these pages. Promoting our publications — and urging people to read them — is still an important part of our movement.

The written word is a powerful tool in spreading the SGI's message of peace and personal hap-

piness. Many great movements of the past and present use newspapers to forward their aims. President Ikeda spoke on Gandhi's use of the newspaper when he was in Los Angeles last year:

What was one of Gandhi's great weapons in his struggle to communicate his ideas to the people? It was publishing his own newspaper. He believed that a newspaper's sole purpose is to serve the people. Through his newspaper, he called for non-violent resistance and rallied the people to this cause. The autobiography he began to write in prison was also serialized in the paper and tens of millions of Indians across the land waited eagerly to read each installment. In the meantime, it was ordinary, nameless youth who spread Gandhi's message — conveyed to them via the pages of his newspaper — widely among the populace. (*SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's Addresses in the United States, June/July 1996, p. 11*)

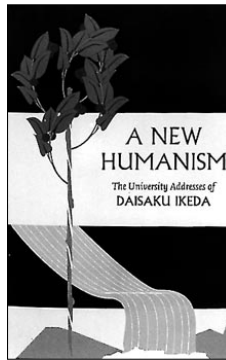
This direct mail system will make the task of spreading and receiving our message much easier. The reader's convenience is enhanced not only because the form is simple and the envelope postage-paid but also because credit cards can now be used for payment.

Thus the publications turn-ins have been relegated to the realm of golden memories. Those who did what had to be done deserve our enduring thanks. W

A New Humanism (softcover version)

University Addresses by Daisaku Ikeda

Over the last two decades, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has given speeches and lectures at more than 20 universities, research institutes and academies outside of Japan. Here is a collection of those addresses that have profoundly inspired and initiated worldwide recognition of the SGI movement for peace, culture and education. This book will continue to serve as the credo for a genuine peace movement into the 21st century. **Price:**



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**WORLD TRIBUNE
MAILBOX**

Young Fathers

Over the past 30 years the SGI-USA organization has gone through many changes. The most recent and liberating one took place in February 1990 when SGI President Ikeda came to the United States....

Yet with all the changes and equality in this new organization there is still a very disturbing phenomena in the youth division. As it is now, when a young women's division member becomes pregnant or there is a new "younger" [female] member with children, they are required to become a part of the women's division. But a young men's division member, regardless of his parental status or responsibilities in the home, may remain a young men's division member until he becomes the right age for men's division (which is pretty unclear as to which is the right age)....

Our organization reflects our society. Women are no longer the sole caretakers of the children. There are women who balance a successful career and take care of the home. Because of this change in our society, fathers are taking more responsibility in raising the children, and it is common sense that the SGI division they are in reflects this change as well....

There are numerous advantages to creating this change. Imagine how the men's division would be revitalized if all the young men's division members with children were to become part of the men's division. There would be a great new youthful energy present within the men's division. This can only be a positive influence for the growth of our organization.

Perhaps this change will require that the entire structure of the divisions be re-evaluated so that it will honestly reflect the conditions and values of our society. The years in youth division are very short and precious; we should cherish the time we have as a young women's division or young men's division member.

— GEORGANN MULLER, Salinas, Calif.

Boldy Entrust Young Men and Women

Given the challenge society at large continues to face in this respect, it may take an increased awareness on the part of district members to ensure that the newly introduced (and great) idea of entrusting the youth with responsibility is not taken simply to mean entrusting the young men. Sometimes, in society as well as organizations, the situation continues to hark back to more primitive times. Persistence of this problem in the Gakkai, however, conflicts with the creed of our successive presidents, who night and day fought to spread this philosophy of objectivity and fairness.

Both women and men can contribute to the perpetuation of sex bias, and in turn, the solution needs the support of both sexes.

— AUDREY MARXER, Los Angeles

Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

In the "Mailbox," we will publish members' comments, suggestions and questions as they pertain to the World Tribune. Because of volume, not all letters can be printed, but they are all read. All letters are subject to condensation.

Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Send letters to "Mailbox," World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401; or via CompuServe (102137,354) or America Online (SokaNews).

Letting Go of Her Negativity

PERSPECTIVE

By **CHERYL McINTOSH**
KANSAS CITY, MO.

When Bria, my women's division chapter chief, asked me to give an experience at a large meeting, I automatically said, "Yes."

Then I thought, "Uh-oh." Every time I shared an experience, obstacles immediately kicked in. This time was no different. But, I have learned, obstacles present us with opportunities to change our negative karma. I decided to change my attitude to say, "OBSTACLES — you just gotta love 'em!"

Before I started practicing this Buddhism, I thought I had a pretty good life. I had a wonderful and supportive family, three great sons and a few good friends. However, I was living in a very tiny, very limited little box called "my life." I had a list of goals that included: doing volunteer work, supporting causes I believed in, finding a religion, becoming active in my community, meeting new people, learning about other cultures, and participating in activities and events that would stretch my imagination and horizons.

But the fact is that I never took one step toward making even one of my goals a reality. I was too busy, I thought, to add another thing to my hectic life. I didn't have the time or energy to meet new people.

I was in a rut, which, by its lack of initiative or growth, can be a hellish life-condition. As the 3rd chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes, it was like "having dwelled in hell for so long I had come to think it as natural as a garden."

Then I started practicing this Buddhism, and I have either achieved or am in the process of achieving all of the goals on my list. My life isn't perfect, but it is far better than anything I could ever have imagined just two-and-a-half short years ago.

One of the biggest things I have learned to do is to take responsibility for my life and the choices I make. Although it has been difficult, I am learning to take a hard look at the dark, ugly sides of my personality — looking at those negative qualities I have spent a lifetime denying.

me when people wouldn't "act right," which meant do what I wanted them to do. I stayed mad all the time and couldn't understand why people wouldn't just simply listen to me and take my most excellent — and unsolicited — advice!

An ex-boyfriend used to accuse me of thinking I was perfect. I would think, he has a lot of faults and I've got my work cut out for me here, but he is kind of cute and extremely perceptive. Since I didn't want to seem to be as arrogant as I really was, I would always say, "No, honey, I'm not perfect, I'm sure I must have SOME fault." The problem was that I couldn't think of one.

The most wonderful thing about the personal changes that have come about as a result of this practice is that it has, miraculously, changed the way I view the world. I see clearly, for the first time, that each of us is like a flower — we are precious, beautiful and unique, with special gifts and talents to contribute. Each of us also has our private journey of human revolution that does not look, nor does it have to look, like anyone else's journey.

Letting go of negativity has created a vacuum in my life that has allowed me to be more open, curious and seeking about the world. I am happier than I have ever been, regardless of what is going on around me. And I have learned to trust the universe and to know that I am loved, protected and supported.

My favorite Goshō passage best sums up my philosophy: "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and keep chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the Law" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161).

I am delighted to have encountered this Buddhism in this lifetime. I can hardly wait to see where the next chapter of this adventure will take me. ☸



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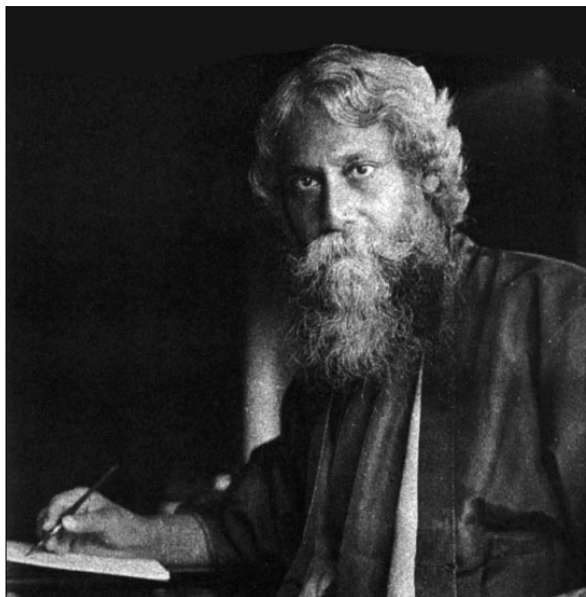


I am trying to take these qualities and change them, one by one, from poison to medicine. One thing I have been working on is letting go of the need to be in control of everything and everybody in my life, all of the time. I am learning to let people be who they are.

You wouldn't believe how much freedom letting go has given me. I had wasted a lot of time and energy trying to get my way; trying to make people do what I wanted them to do; and trying to get everybody to agree I was right about everything. It was so frustrating to

What Do You Think?

Please write to us and let us know your thoughts on the World Tribune. What articles do you like or don't like? Which types would you like to see more of, less of? Do you have ideas to make us better? Do you have questions you'd like answered? Would you like to get involved in your local area? We welcome all letters at: Mailbox, World Tribune, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401.



Rabindranath Tagore, whose legacy the award honors, was a dramatist, composer and among India's foremost painters. Tagore, shown here in Japan in 1916, was also an outspoken opponent of the evils of nationalism.

SGI President To Receive 1st Tagore Peace Award

TAGORE, FROM PAGE 1

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Soka Gakkai Lawyer Requests Nikken's Testimony

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

On Dec. 25, 1996, a lawyer for the Soka Gakkai formally requested Nikken's testimony in the "Seattle Incident" trial, according to a report in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's newspaper.

This was the 14th court session in the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's libel suit against the Soka Gakkai over the latter's coverage of the Seattle Incident in the *Seikyo Press*.

In his request, the Soka

Gakkai's attorney writes that "we intend to question Nikken Abe to clarify the falsehoods and contradictions in his statements, thereby establishing the news reports regarding the incident as factual."

Since Nikken has now admits that he "went for a walk and returned to his hotel room after having a drink," the Soka Gakkai's attorney wants to ask him in detail about his activities that night.

Sources say that when lawyers for Nichiren Shoshu told the chief judge that there was no need for Nikken to testify, the judge asked

them to present their argument formally. The next court date is set for March 17.

Witnesses whose testimonies have contradicted Nikken's account are the late Hiroe Clow and former Seattle police officer Ronald C. Sprinkle. An affidavit of Bernard Mayhle, Mr. Sprinkle's partner the night of March 19-20, 1963, which also contradicts Nikken's account, has been submitted as well.

Craig Green of Los Angeles contributed to this report.

SGI President Stresses Unity to U.S. Leaders

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER
Tokyo, Jan. 10

The SGI-USA has been developing in an ideal and splendid manner toward the 21st century, winning the admiration of all, SGI President Ikeda said this evening.

To the SGI-USA and Japanese leaders gathered he stressed that uniting in the spirit of many in body, one in mind, which Nichiren Daishonin teaches in the Goshu, will always be the key to advancing kosen-rufu. The word *mind* in the expression "one in mind" refers to faith, the SGI leader explained. It is important for us to have the kind of faith where we put aside ego and emotionalism and work for the sake of kosen-rufu, while always remembering to chant daimoku no matter what obstacles we encounter.

Our potential for growth is

infinite, President Ikeda noted, but so is our potential for self-limitation. Therefore, even if we face problems, we should strive to grow from them. There is no more fulfilling life than one in which we ponder hard, strive earnestly and suffer hardships for the sake of spreading the Mystic Law. Such struggles constitute wonderful chances for us to develop ourselves.

The SGI leader then quoted the passage from the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," "If you exert a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you

at each moment" (*Goshu Zen-shu*, p. 790). All our exertions for the sake of the Mystic Law and for kosen-rufu, he explained, are transformed into

great personal benefit and good fortune.

The SGI has achieved the remarkable development it has today, President Ikeda said, because we have steadfastly practiced in exact accord with the Dai-

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shonin's teachings. He stressed the importance of continuing to advance with such strong faith in order to forge an indestructible path, sink down everlasting roots, and realize an eternal flowering of prosperity. **BT**

SGI Peace, Culture and Education Activities Going Strong in 32 African Countries

AFRICA, FROM PAGE 1

Kazuichi Namura, SGI Africa Bureau chief, gave the following speech at the 7th Headquarters Leaders Meeting in Japan, Jan. 7.

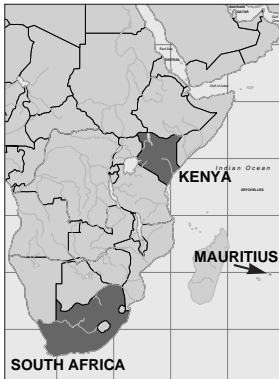
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The highlight of this trip was our first visit to Mauritius. There we conducted a Gohonzon-conferral ceremony on Dec. 28 at which 18 members received the Gohonzon. Georges Rivet, the recently appointed chapter chief, received a Gohonzon after seven years of practice; Dolores Petit, chapter women's division chief, after 14 years of practice; and Lisette Mamode, chapter vice women's division chief, after 15 years of practice.

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bers receiving the Gohonzon gathered with their families and other members who came to cel-

brate the occasion. All 60 people at the ceremony dressed in formal attire. There was joyful applause and tears of joy.

About one year before the ceremony, President Ikeda received a package from Mauritius in which there were a name list of the 18 people, a photograph of the members and a heartfelt letter telling him how these people had already prepared Buddhist altars and wished to receive the Gohonzon. This request eventually led to the Gohonzon-conferral ceremony we attended.

During our visit to Mauritius, we were originally planning on forming a district there — but it

was suggested to form a chapter instead, which we did. At the chapter inaugural meeting, 92 people gathered. You can imagine how much the members were delighted about the formation of a chapter there.

When we arrived at the Mauritius airport, a man named Kumar Pravesh came to see us. He had practiced in India but now works for a radio station in Mauritius as a producer and announcer. He was dispatched to Mauritius by the Indian government two years ago.

As soon as he arrived there, he and his family started looking for SGI members but could not find any.

Shed the Mystic Law's Light on Each Person

The "Emerging From the Earth" (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes the world trembling and splitting open and countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth coming up out of the ground. These hitherto unknown bodhisattvas suddenly appear in all parts of the world.

Society today has become deadlocked in all areas, and suffering plagues the lives of many. People's hearts are closed tight, as though walled off behind barriers of rock, and they are assailed by a sense of powerlessness.

At the same time, those in power display a shocking recklessness. Conditions today mirror those of the Daishonin's day; it is a "time of trouble, when there is little that ordinary people can do" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 281). This is truly the strife-ridden *saha* world that the sutras describe. But because of this state of affairs, there is great potential for *kosen-rufu* — in every sphere of society.

With the dawn of the 21st century just ahead, SGI members, as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, have now appeared in all parts of the world and are vigorously and cheerfully developing *kosen-rufu* in a synchronous global advance. It is the discussion meeting and one-on-one dialogue that have and will continue to call forth these bodhisattvas. When we gain people's understanding through dialogue, our circle of human relations becomes the driving force for the expansion of *kosen-rufu*.

Based on this principle, we, the mem-

bers of the SGI, have stood up shoulder to shoulder in unity. And with the struggles of the successive presidents as our fundamental spirit, from one person to the next we have forged bonds of united struggle for *kosen-rufu*. The emergence of courageous Bodhisattvas of the Earth on a global scale represents the sum total of these efforts.

The SGI movement in every respect begins with treasuring the individual. Everything begins with the human revolution of a single person, and this causes a ripple effect that reaches countless others.

Everyone has the right to become happy. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the Buddhism of the sun; its light shines equally on all. The "Acceleration" chapter of *The New Human Revolution* describes the

The following article by SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya appears in the January 1997 *Daihyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

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dramatic transformation of an impoverished, war-torn community in Fukuoka, Japan. The people in the area were living in the shadows of Japanese society and had been ignored and forgotten by the government. Yet they realized happiness through the light of the Mystic Law.

At the start of the Ceremony in the Air described in the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (11th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, there is a scene where the people in the assembly, gazing up at Shakyamuni and Many Treasures Buddha seated side-by-side high above in the Treasure Tower, express the wish to join these Buddhas in the sky. Shakyamuni immediately uses his transcendental powers to lift the members of the assembly into the air (*The*

Lotus Sutra, trans. by Burton Watson, p. 176). Interpreting this passage, Nichiren Daishonin teaches that all people can participate in the Ceremony in the Air and manifest "the enlightened nature they inherently possess" (MW-1, 212). The great power of the Mystic Law illuminates the lives of all people without exception.

In another letter, the Daishonin says that the "Treasure Tower" chapter "exists within the body" of each person (MW-5, 273-74). In other words, each person is the Treasure Tower. Our movement to encourage others with the spirit to treasure each individual is, in a sense, a movement to expand the Ceremony in the Air, to fill the world with Treasure Towers.

Because this is such a polluted age, those who embrace solid conviction and belief shine all the more. In the SGI's commitment to treasuring the individual, many leading thinkers and people of conscience find cause for hope that society will overcome its present stagnation in the 21st century.

From the standpoint of the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law, we are still in the pioneering stage. Our long march has only just begun. Now, once again, each embodying the spirit of the SGI, let us hoist high the tricolor flag of victory, glory and peace and joyfully raise our voices in song. During the coming Year of Advancement Toward the New Century, while encouraging one another, let us work to build an age of the people through conducting steadfast, grass-roots dialogue. 

Expressions



Practicing a tennis serve, Aldan, Pa. Photo by Jonathan Wilson.

Children's WORLD

Jacqueline Chauvin, Metairie, La.

Hello. I am 10 years old and in the 4th grade. I've been chanting since I was 5 years old, so I've been chanting almost six years. I've been chanting that my best friend Bridget Clement would do fun things and now we are going to Blue Bayou, a game place and sports camp. But don't just chant to get what you want. Chant for peace and happiness.



The New Human Revolution

BY HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 5, Chapter 6

Lion

Translation of parts 1–3 of the 'Lion' chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

The new year dawned. A new curtain had risen. On Jan. 1, 1962, the start of the Year of Victory, Tokyo was blessed with pleasant weather.

At 9:00 a.m., President Shin'ichi Yamamoto led the first gongyo of the year at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi.

Anticipating another year of tumultuous struggle, Shin'ichi prayed deeply, pledging to achieve total victory on all fronts.

The final verdict in the Osaka Incident trial would be handed down on Jan. 25, while on the 29th Shin'ichi was scheduled to depart on his first trip to the Middle East. His main destinations would be Iran, Iraq and Turkey. In addition, Upper House elections were slated for that summer and it had been unofficially decided that the Gakkai would endorse nine candidates.

After gongyo and greetings by General Director Koichi Harayama, Shin'ichi spoke:

"Just before Mr. Toda's death, he announced the following guidelines: (1) faith for a harmonious family, (2) faith to enable each person to become happy, and (3) faith to surmount obstacles. We can surely consider these the three eternal principles of the Soka Gakkai."

The leaders present were a little surprised — they clearly remembered Shin'ichi speaking about the same three points at the New Year's gongyo the year before. Shin'ichi's guidance was always fresh and original, its content rich and diverse. Many wondered why President Yamamoto would choose to speak on the same topic two years in a row.

Seeming to sense their thoughts, Shin'ichi said: "I spoke about these three principles at last year's New Year's gongyo. The reason I mention them again is that they represent the fundamental purpose of our practice. The Soka Gakkai now has a membership of over 2.3 million households and has in actuality become the pillar of Japan. We will continue henceforth to work all the more dynamically to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism. What is our purpose in doing so? It is not to increase the power and influence of the Soka Gakkai as a religious organization, nor to increase the number of members in public office.

"Our aim is solely for each individual to actualize the three principles Mr. Toda left us by achieving a harmonious family life, personal happiness and an indomitable self.

"I ask all the leaders here today to always bear in mind why we practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. I call on you to work hard to ensure that everyone re-

ceives great benefit through faith, that not a single person falls by the wayside. That is my greatest wish."

In the course of the Soka Gakkai's lightning-speed development, many of the leaders had nearly forgotten the organization's original aim.

Any organization will end up spinning its wheels when its core leaders forget their purpose. If results become the only focus, then even if something great is achieved in the short run things will definitely fall apart sooner or later. If leaders, in particular, conduct activities solely for personal recognition or gain, they will end up throwing their entire organization into chaos.

By starting off the year reconfirming the three eternal principles set forth by Josei Toda, Shin'ichi wanted to drive home the fundamental purpose of faith.



He had recently been devoting a great deal of energy and time to fostering leaders.

At the end of the previous year, chapter-level and above leaders had gathered at the head temple to prepare for the start of the Year of Victory. At meetings there on Dec. 23 and 24, Shin'ichi had spoken of the qualities demanded of leaders.

"Soka Gakkai leaders," he said, "must have no interest in personal fame or glory. And it is a grave mistake to presume that just because you have been a

leader for five or 10 years, you will always remain in such a position. If this attitude takes root, then the Gakkai will be no different from any other organization or company. There is no room in the Gakkai for leaders who rest on the laurels of past achievements and do nothing now, or for those interested only in the status or recognition that position can bring.

"That said, I think it's important for leaders to have the spirit that, when the time comes to hand their chapter position or other position over to a younger person, they willingly go back to the organization's front lines — without any position for a while if need be — and work there for the members and for kosen-rufu. The reason I say this is because even the highest leaders in the Soka Gakkai will have to hand the baton on to the younger generation eventually.

"If, after you have handed over your position, you go around declaring that you were once senior or in a higher leadership position than the present leaders, you will be unable to keep up with the Gakkai's newest direction and focus. You will only sow confusion, eradicating your good fortune. In that case, you will be the one who ends up the loser. I have brought this matter up because I don't want to see any of you become losers in the realm of faith.

"There may also be some among you who seem the model of humility while here, yet upon returning to your areas or chapters adopt an arrogant and disrespectful attitude toward the members, causing them to wonder how such a person could be a leader."

Shin'ichi Yamamoto's guidance at the head temple was unusually strict. He continued with even greater emphasis:

"If leaders arrogantly strut around

like lords, it is a sign that they are already off track. A Gakkai leader's fundamental purpose is to serve the members, to work for kosen-rufu. It is important to give guidance with conviction, but that is entirely different from being haughty. When you care for people, praying for their happiness while always treating them politely, with courtesy, conviction in faith will naturally emerge from your life.

"When you are appointed to a leadership position in the organization, members will always accord you a certain degree of respect.

But President Toda declared that any leaders who let this go to their heads and begin to use the members for their own gain should be instantly dismissed. We must do our utmost to ensure that base, selfish individuals never become leaders in our organization.

"On the other hand, there are people who try to take advantage of the Gakkai and its members by currying favor with the leaders. If leaders are taken in by these people, it is due to their laxness and conceit. I want all of us to strictly keep one another in line on this point.

"Furthermore, it's up to leaders to take full responsibility for the organization. Earlier, I asked some of the directors how many members from each general chapter are here today. But no one knew. So I sternly took them to task.

"As directors, they're responsible for the entire Soka Gakkai. If they leave everything to others while remaining unaware themselves of what's happening, then they're being utterly irresponsible and derelict in their duties. There's nothing wrong with stepping back and delegating responsibility when one has a clear picture of what's going on. Even then, however, you shouldn't be complacent. You should be determined to take full responsibility for everything that happens.

"This also applies to chapter chiefs and vice chiefs. It is your job as leaders to be aware of the number of groups and units in your chapters and the condition of each. If, as a leader — as a central figure of the organization — you have a strong determination to help each member become happy, then there is no way you will ever allow yourself to neglect your responsibilities.

"Nichiren Daishonin sternly warns in the Gosho that some who profess to embrace the Lotus Sutra have actually lost their faith although they give the outward appearance that they maintain it (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 287). I want to emphasize that those who accept the honored responsibility of being a Soka Gakkai leader must never become base and self-serving, allowing their faith to decay."

(To be continued)

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

What Is Love?

This is the seventh installment of a series of discussions on youth between SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division chiefs Hidenobu Kimura (young men's chief) and Kazue Igeta (young women's chief), representing the members of the high school division. In this installment, Kansai High School Division Young Women's Chief Miki Katanosaka joins the discussion.

Kimura: Along with having questions about friendship, many students are asking about love and relationships.

Igeta: The other day, one young women's high school division member asked: "My mother forbids me from dating anyone. Is it really best to avoid relationships while I'm in high school?"

Ikeda: Your high school years coincide with adolescence. It's as natural to feel attracted to, be interested in, and fall in love with members of the opposite sex during your youth as it is for flowers to bloom in the spring or snow to fall in winter. This is just one of many phases you'll go through. Like a brilliant new sun rising at dawn, adolescence marks your entry into a new stage of life.

The agonies of love, too, are many and varied. Each person has his or her own character and personality, background and circumstances. So there is no set rule that applies equally to everyone. In addition, everyone is perfectly free to fall in love or be attracted to someone. Whom a person dates is also a matter of personal choice. Essentially, no one has any right to meddle in your private affairs.

As one who has many years of experience, however, I want to stress at the outset how important it is not to lose sight of pursuing your personal development.

The true purpose of your studies and participation in club or team activities is to build a foundation for a strong self. Your problems, too — be they a lack of self-confidence or a strained relationship with a friend — enable you to construct a solid core.

The same can be said about love. It should be a force that helps you expand your life and bring forth your innate potential with fresh and dynamic vitality. That is the ideal but, as the saying "love is blind" illustrates, people often lose all objectivity when they fall in love.

If the relationship you're in is causing your parents to worry or making you neglect your studies or engage in destructive behavior, then you and the person you're

seeing are only being a negative influence and hindrance to each other. Neither of you will be happy if you both end up hurting each other.

I'm sure the mother of the student you mentioned earlier had such concerns. This is the heart of a parent, and it is all the more so when it comes to parents of daughters.

Igeta: The bottom line, then, is that we don't lose sight of the fundamental goal of developing truly valuable and meaningful lives.

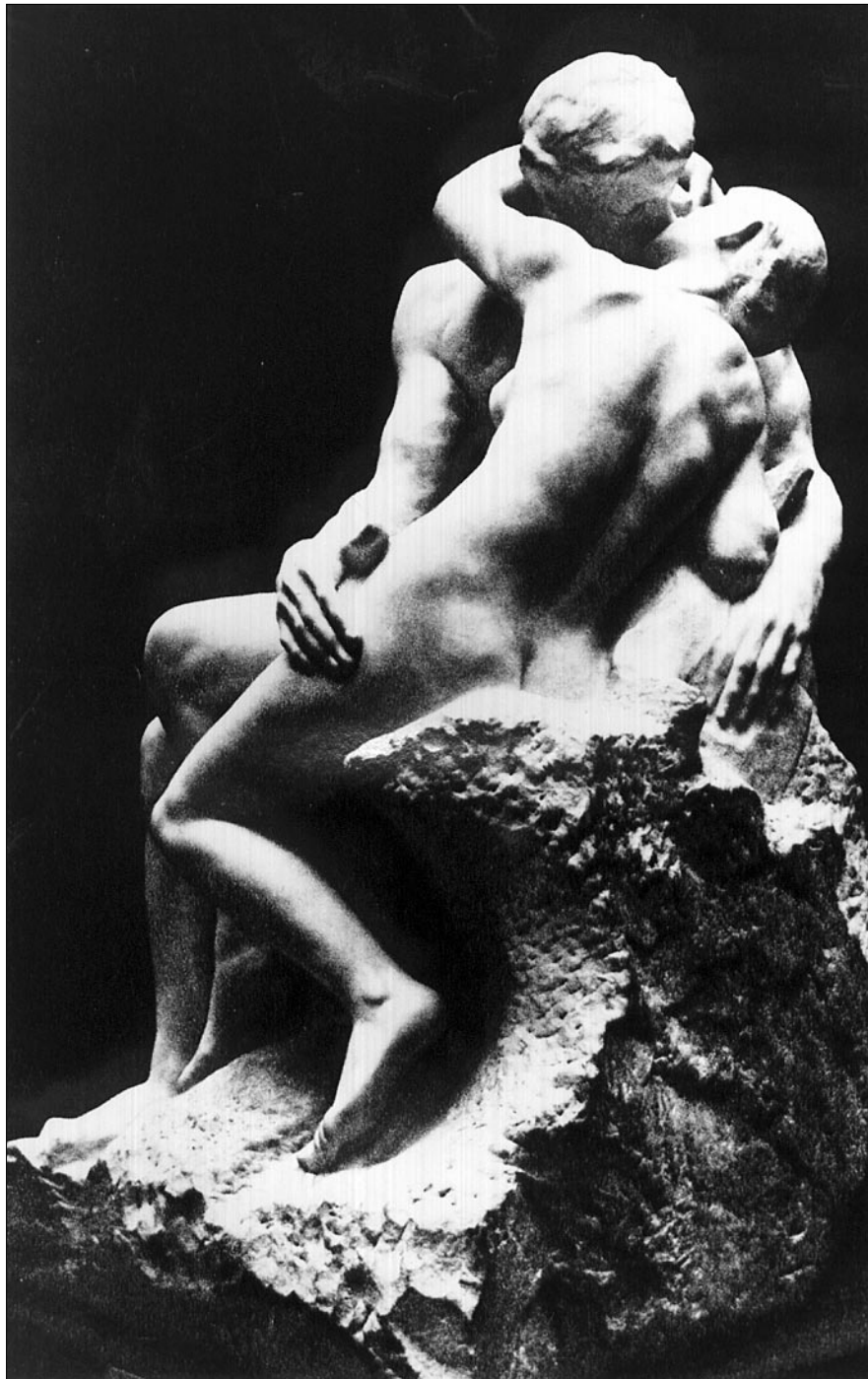
Katanosaka: One student told me: "Having a crush on someone makes each day so much more exciting. I think liking someone is wonderful, and if that person inspires you to grow, it's even better."

Ikeda: The question is: Does that person inspire you to work harder at your studies or distract you from them? Does his or her presence make you more determined to devote greater energies to school activities, be a better friend, a more thoughtful son or daughter? Does he or she inspire you to realize your future goals and work to achieve them? Or is that person your central focus, overshadowing all else — your school activities, your friends and family and even your goals?

If you are neglecting the things you should be doing, forgetting your purpose in life because of the relationship you're in, then you're on the wrong path. A healthy relationship is one in which two people encourage each other to reach their respective goals while sharing each other's hopes and dreams. A relationship should be a source of inspiration, invigoration and hope.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), one of the greatest poets of the West, had as his source of inspiration a young woman named Beatrice, whom he loved from afar since childhood. One day, after years spent apart, the 18-year-old Dante ran into her again on the street. He later composed a poem about his joy at that encounter, titled "Revitalization." In his struggle to convey his feelings for the young woman, he created a new poetic form. Without a doubt, Beatrice unlocked Dante's artistic potential.

She would remain, however, an unrequited love, for she married another man and then died at an early age. But Dante never ceased loving her. Ultimately, that love enabled him to strengthen, elevate and deepen



Auguste Rodin's 'The Kiss.'

'If you genuinely love someone, then through your relationship with him or her, you can develop into a person whose love extends to all humanity.' — Daisaku Ikeda

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the capacity of his heart into something truly noble and sublime. In his masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, Dante depicts Beatrice as a gentle, benevolent being who guides him to Heaven.

Of course, Dante lived in a different age and perhaps a different country from you. But I think there are many things to be learned from this great poet who stayed true to his feelings, whether they were reciprocated or not, and transformed them into his guiding inspiration in life. I truly believe that love must be a positive impetus for our lives, the driving force that rouses us to live courageously.

Katanosaka: One high school student sent a letter to *Koko Shimpō* [the high school division newspaper in Japan] in which she wrote: "There's an older student in a class above me that I like and respect very much. One of my girlfriends told me I should stick to respect and forget about love. I don't agree with her, but I don't know what I should do."

Ikeda: There is no set answer. There are as many views on love as there are people! So I don't think we can find any one blanket policy on love that will win everyone's consensus. Love is a complex matter that reflects each person's attitude and philosophy toward life. That is why I believe people shouldn't get involved in relationships lightly. It is like the Japanese saying, "Do not treat love like a game."

Nevertheless, I understand how this student feels, not being satisfied with merely respecting the young man on whom she has a crush. If love could be explained logically, all the agonizing it causes would vanish from the world. Nonetheless, the bottom line is that, without respect, no relationship will last for very long nor can two people bring out the best in each other.

The late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai and his wife, Madame Deng Yingchao, were admired far and wide as a model couple. Though sadly both have now died, they always treated my wife and me warmly.

When her husband died, Madame Deng placed the words "Zhou Enlai, comrade-in-arms" next to his coffin. "Comrade-in-arms" — what profound feelings were infused in this term. It speaks volumes about their mutual commitment, the respect they had for each other as comrades, and their shared struggle side by side for the realization of a great goal. Perhaps their example will



'The true purpose of your studies and participation in club or team activities is to build a foundation for a strong self'

offer those of you who are contemplating love something to think about.

Rather than becoming so love-struck that you create a world where only the two of you exist, it is much healthier to learn from those aspects of your partner that you respect and admire and continue to make efforts to improve and develop yourself. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the author of *The Little Prince*, once wrote, "Love is not two people gazing at each other, but two people looking ahead together in the same direction."¹ It follows then that relationships last longer when both partners share similar values and beliefs.

Men, too, must respect women as individuals. Doing so is a sign of maturity.

I once heard that a female student from a neighboring Asian country remarked: "Japanese men merely regard women as playthings. They lack the maturity to respect women as human beings."

Kimura: On television and in magazines, love is frequently depicted as the ultimate goal in life or, to the other extreme, as some kind of game or casual diversion. The media treats women as sex objects — products to be packaged and sold. And they single out the most extreme stories to sensationalize. For example, there are never articles on such topics as "High School Girls Study Hard," but the mass media goes crazy for a story like "High School Girls Patronize Telephone-Dating Clubs!"

Katanosaka: Swayed by the media and peer pressure, many young people seem to be in a hurry to start dating. They must feel that they are missing out if they don't have a boyfriend or girlfriend when everyone else around them does.

Ikeda: There's no need to be influenced by such superficial trends. Please don't get caught up in doing something just because everyone else is.

The behavior of the mass media and other negative influences that prey on youth reflects a warped adult society that exploits young people for profit without a thought for young people's happiness.

It is so important that you see these things for what they are and not be deceived by them. Your youth is precious. Each of you is valuable beyond measure. It is foolish to become a puppet of media manipulation. I hope you will resolutely follow your own path in life.

Furthermore, please don't succumb to the view that love is the be-all and end-all, deluding yourself that as long as you are in love, nothing else matters. Nor, I hope, will you buy into the misguided notion that sinking ever deeper into a painful and destructive relationship is somehow cool.

When asked what was most important in this world, a well-known philosopher responded that it is "normality, common sense and reason."

There is a time for everything in life — a time to be young, a time to enter the adult world, a time to get married and so on. Moving forward step by step into each different phase accords with reason.

All too often, when a relationship ends, the great passion it once inspired seems nothing more than an illusion. The things you learn through studying, on the other hand, are much more permanent. It is important, therefore, that you never extinguish the flame of your intellectual curiosity.

Please don't live without direction but, rather, pursue a life of meaning and purpose. Just as a house will be uninhabitable if its foundations are laid carelessly, or as certain types of rice won't cook properly if they haven't been washed, it's clear what kind of results you can expect if you take shortcuts or neglect to make proper efforts. In that respect, it is certainly not wise to try to act like an adult before you can properly look after yourself.

The most important thing is for you to do your very best in the endeavors you have to concentrate on now. Through such efforts, you will grow into individuals who have truly wonderful futures ahead of you. I hope you will not sell yourselves short and stifle your vast and limitless potential before it even has a chance to bloom. Far too many people nip their brilliant promise in the bud because of their blind pursuit of love.

Igeta: Some people start out with a clear idea of what they want to do in the future, the kind of work they want to pursue, but then get swept away by the excitement of love. Finally, when they come to their senses, they realize they've missed their chance to achieve their goal and are totally lost as to what to do.

Ikeda: Much of daily life tends to be ordinary and unexciting. Making steady efforts day to day can be trying. It's not always going to be fun. But, when you fall in love, life seems filled with drama and excitement; you feel like the leading character in a novel.

If you lose yourself in love just because you're bored, though, and consequently veer from the path you should be following, then love is nothing more than escapism. What you are doing is retreating into a dream world, believing that what is only an illusion is actually real.

If you try to use love as an escape, the euphoria is unlikely to last for long. If anything, you may only find yourself with even more problems — along with a great deal of pain and sadness. However much you may try, you can never run away from yourself. If you remain weak, suffering will follow you wherever you go. You will never find happiness if you don't change yourself from within.

Happiness is not something that someone else, like a lover, can give to you. You have to achieve it for yourself. And the only way to do so is by developing your character and capacity as a human being; by fully maximizing your potential. If you sacrifice your growth and talent for love, you will absolutely not find happiness. True happiness is obtained through fully realizing your potential.

While in your teens, your scope of experience is still quite limited, and you may not yet have found which area your talents are best suited. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that nothing could be more desirable than love. But there is more to life than love. Particularly in the case of women, I feel, real happiness is determined after they enter their 40s and onward.

I also want to add that to embark on a relationship as an escape is extremely disrespectful to both your partner and yourself.

In any event, the point is not to be in a hurry. You are young. The important thing now is to work hard at developing yourself into

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a truly wonderful human being. Each of you has a precious mission that only you can fulfill. Suffering people around the world are waiting for your brave endeavors. To neglect your mission and seek only personal pleasure is a sign of selfishness. It is impossible for an egotistic, self-centered individual to truly love another person.

On the other hand, if you genuinely love someone, then through your relationship with him or her, you can develop into a person whose love extends to all humanity. Such a relationship serves to strengthen, elevate and enrich the inner realm of your life. Ultimately, the relationships you form are a reflection of your own state of life.

The same is true of friendship. Only to the extent that you polish yourself now can you hope to develop wonderful bonds of the heart in the future.

Katanosaka: Some members are concerned about friends who are only hurting themselves by living for momentary thrills. There is a growing attitude among young people that as long as two people like each other, anything goes.

Kimura: One student told me that she thinks boys are selfish and deceitful. The fact is that some boys are only out to use girls. They have to be on their guard and cultivate their powers of wisdom and judgment so that they can see through such people.

Igeta: Although this doesn't apply to all cases, some people worry when they see female high school students dating older men, like college students; they are concerned that such relationships are not in the young women's best interests. And indeed, all too often such relationships do end up with the young women being hurt mentally and, perhaps, even physically.

Ikeda: Many young women prove extremely vulnerable to the insistent advances of the opposite sex. They act as though stunned and lose their ability to make calm, rational decisions. It is precisely for this reason that young women must develop inner strength and self-respect. Since they are the ones who most often get hurt, they have every right to assert their dignity and look after their welfare. And if the young man in question does not respect this right, then he isn't worth being with.

With some people, however, once they have gotten into a relationship, they have a hard time saying "no" to the other person for fear of losing them. In that case love is like riding in a car with no brakes. Sometimes, even if you want to get out, you can't; even if you regret having gotten in, the car won't stop. Many times, people get involved in a relationship thinking they are free and independent, but at some point find they have become captive to the relationship.

Each of you is infinitely precious. Therefore, I hope you will treat yourself with utmost respect. Please don't follow a path that will cause you suffering but take the road that is best for your well-being.

The truth is, ideal love is fostered only between two sincere, mature and independent people. It is essential, therefore, that you work on polishing yourself first.

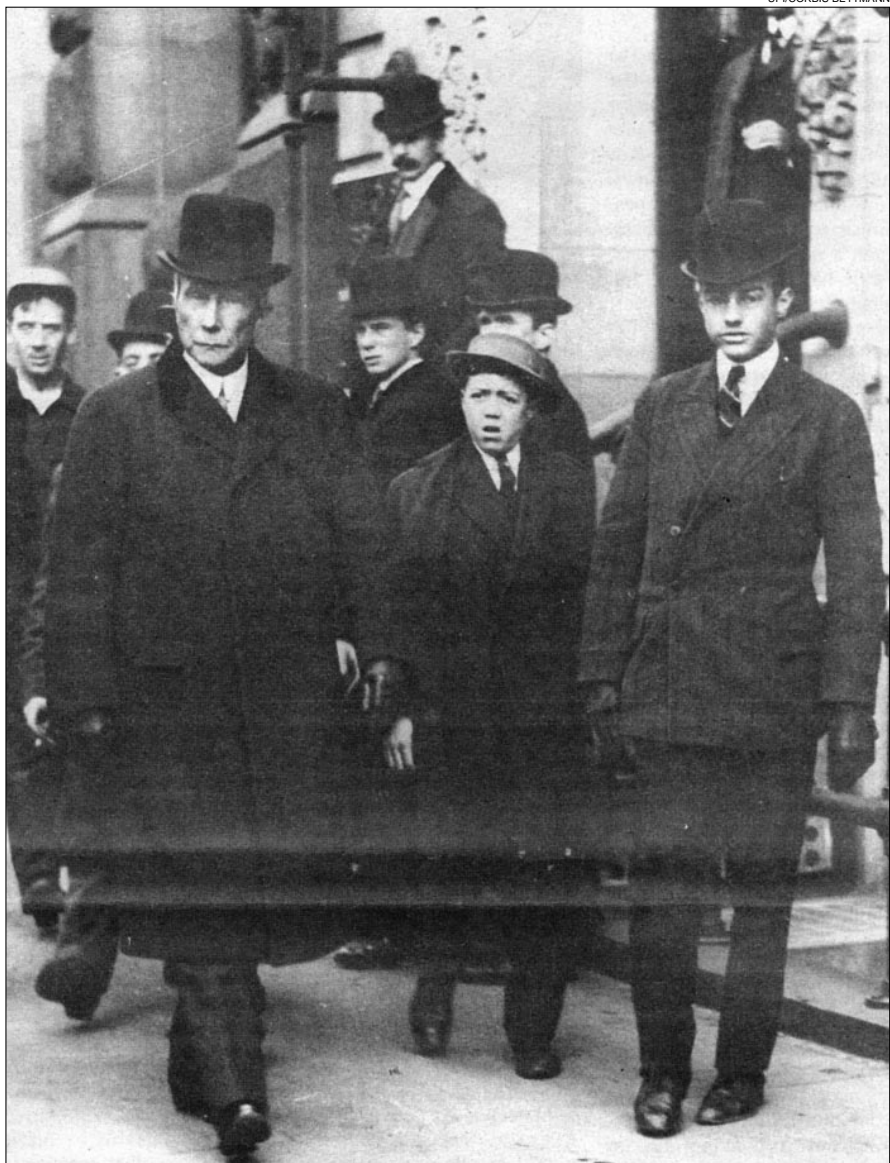
Katanosaka: In a relationship, it sometimes happens that one person tries to become whatever, or do whatever, the other wants in order to avoid losing him or her.

Ikeda: It is demeaning to be constantly seeking your partner's approval. Such a relationship is bereft of real caring, depth or even love. If you find yourself in a relationship where you are not treated the way your heart says you should be, I hope you will have the courage and dignity to decide that you are better off risking the scorn of your partner than enduring an unhappy relationship.

Real love is not two people clinging to each other; it can only be fostered between two strong people secure in their individuality. A shallow person will have only shallow relationships. If you want to experience real love, it is important to first sincerely develop a strong self-identity.

True love is not about doing whatever the other person wants you to do or pretending you are something you're not. If someone genuinely loves you, he or she will not force you to do anything against your will nor embroil you in some dangerous activity.

Furthermore, I personally want to see men being extremely courteous and caring toward women. Men should always remember to respect women, doing their utmost to support them. Rather than depending on women like children, men should become strong enough, compassionate enough and adult enough to care about their partners' lifelong happiness. This is the quality men



John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), the American industrialist, philanthropist and multimillionaire, is a center of attention as he walks down Wall Street. When he was young and poor, Rockefeller proposed marriage and was turned down by his first love. Rather than discourage him, the rejection seems to have inspired Rockefeller. SGI President Ikeda said: 'Youth is not a time for pessimism or self-pity and sadness. Such a mind-set is for losers. Please have the confidence and fortitude to think to yourself when you face rejection: "It's their loss if they can't appreciate how wonderful I am!" This is the kind of resilient spirit you must strive to cultivate.'

must strive to cultivate; it is also an expression of true love.

To the young men I say: Please think when the time comes for you to become a parent and have a daughter of your own. If she were to fall in love, how would you like to see her treated? If you can't imagine this kind of scenario, then you are not yet qualified for love.

As for those people who are concerned about their friends' well-being, the best thing is to chant daimoku and be there for them. I think it's important for everyone to have at least one person with whom they can talk about anything. In matters concerning love, it is to your benefit to accept that you are not necessarily the best judge of

your situation and have the wisdom to turn to others for their objective opinions and advice.

It's fine to keep some things to yourself, but please remember that sometimes secrets may hurt you. I am especially concerned about those who have closed themselves off from their friends.

No matter how much you may appear to be enjoying yourself now, or how serious you think you are about the relationship, if you allow your love life to consume all your time and energy to the detriment of your growth, then you're just playing a game. And if you're always playing games, then your life will be just that, a game.

Regardless of how large a number is, if multiplied by zero, it will inevitably come to zero. To

have a relationship that wipes out the value in your life is truly sad.

Kimura: There are some people who are plunged into deep despair and lose all meaning in life when a relationship ends or their hearts are broken. Some take the rejection as a personal negation of everything they stand for and feel as if they have no value or worth left as a human being.

Ikeda: Many people can probably relate to such feelings. But you're only letting yourself down if you succumb to unhealthy obsessions in your youth or are so blinded by love that you can't see anything else. No matter what,

PLEASE SEE YOUTH, NEXT PAGE

YOUTH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

you must always do your best to live courageously. You mustn't be weak-hearted. Youth is a time for advancing bravely into the future. You mustn't veer off course or fall behind or hide in the shadows.

Youth is not a time for pessimism or self-pity and sadness. Such a mind-set is for losers. Please have the confidence and fortitude to think to yourself when you face rejection: "It's their loss if they can't appreciate how wonderful I am!" This is the kind of resilient spirit you must strive to cultivate.

John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937), the American industrialist and philanthropist who built an unprecedented fortune, was such a person. In his younger days, when he was poor, he proposed marriage to his first love, but she turned him down. The reason, in retrospect, is most amusing: The young woman's mother wouldn't allow her daughter to marry someone whose prospects did not seem very bright. This is another case in point of how difficult it is to correctly evaluate the potential of others. But rather than feeling depressed, this rejection seems to have been just the thing to inspire young Rockefeller.

Please don't let a broken heart discourage you. Tell yourself that you're not so weak or fragile as to let such a minor thing bring you down. You may think there is no one who could possibly compare to that person, but how will they compare to the next 100, the next 1,000, the next 10,000 people you will meet? You cannot declare with certainty that there will not be others who far surpass him or her. As you yourself grow, the way you look at people will change as well.

I'm sure quite a few among



'Many young women prove extremely vulnerable to the insistent advances of the opposite sex. They act as though stunned and lose their ability to make calm, rational decisions. It is precisely for this reason that young women must develop inner strength and self-respect. Since they are the ones who most often get hurt, they have every right to assert their dignity and look after their welfare. And if the young man in question does not respect this right, then he isn't worth being with.'

you have had your hearts broken or been badly hurt and perhaps feel unable to go on, your self-esteem in tatters. But you must never believe that you are worthless. There is no substitute for you who

are more precious than all the treasures in the universe gathered together. No matter what your present circumstances, I think of all of you as my irreplaceable sons and daughters, and I have the

greatest expectation that you will overcome all obstacles and rise out of any suffering and despair.

It is important for you to become strong. If you are strong, even your sadness will become a source of nourishment, and the things that make you suffer will purify your life.

Only when you experience the crushing, painful depths of suffering can you begin to understand the true meaning of life. Precisely because you have experienced great suffering, it is imperative that you go on living. The important thing is to keep moving forward. If you use your sadness as a source of growth, you will become a person of greater depth and breadth — an even more wonderful you. This is the harvest of your pain and suffering.

Hold your head high. Because you have lived with all your might, you are a victor. You must not sink into depression or take a path that leads to self-destruction.

Kimura: I have heard the saying: "If you are sad, cry. Cry until

your tears have washed away all the pain." It's like crossing a river of suffering. The person who has done so has a depth and a radiance unknown to those who are strangers to such experience. The thing is not to drown in the river.

Iked: Whether you are happy, sad or suffering, if you chant honestly to the Gohonzon with the feelings in your heart, your life will naturally proceed in the best direction.

Katanosaka: One member told me she was worried about a friend who is so desperately afraid of being on her own that when she breaks up with one boyfriend, she immediately goes out and finds a new one.

Iked: Every person has the freedom to live his or her way, and each person's character is different. Nevertheless, I think it's a shame to spend one's youth constantly chasing after the opposite sex.

If you're going to fall in love, wouldn't it be wonderful to have one great love that lasts a lifetime? And how much more wonderful would it be if that love led to marriage? Of course, this isn't always going to happen. Nevertheless, it is unfair to both you and the other person if you enter a relationship having already decided that it is just for fun — putting casual relationships in one box and serious relationships or even marriage in another, completely separate one.

I'm sure you still have many questions, but the fact is that a future of unlimited possibilities lies before you. There is no need to rush into anything; you don't need to be in a hurry to grow up. If there is someone you like, what's wrong with holding onto that feeling inside your heart for a while and resolving to polish yourself so that you can become the kind of person he or she, or anyone, would be proud to be with? Such a spirit of self-development is most admirable, I feel.

Whether or not that person ever learns how you feel in your heart, with time those feelings will grow and mature like a fine wine. When you become an adult, the memories of your youth will envelop you like a beautiful fragrance.

I truly feel that these experiences are the means by which you will all become people of great depth and character. 卍

1. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, trans. Lewis Galantière (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1939), p. 215.

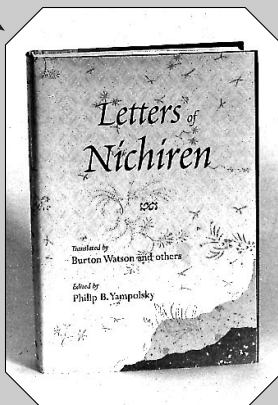
ENJOY LIFE!
STUDY MORE OFTEN!

(Hardcover)

Translated by Burton Watson and others
Edited by Phillip Yampolsky

This final work of the late Prof. Yampolsky of Columbia University is an essential and comprehensive collection of more than 70 letters (Gosho) by Nichiren Daishonin. Translated for the general reader.

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TOMMY LEE RAY, LOS ANGELES

Anger Into Value

When I encountered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I was an angry, young black man seven years back from the Vietnam War. I felt that I was still at war — a war against what I considered to be the greatest evil to Black America: the American white man.

An incident in my hometown in Mississippi just days after my return from Vietnam plunged me for years into a nightmare of hatred and anger toward Caucasians. One day I got on a city bus and sat down beside a young Caucasian girl who promptly got angry and stood up because she didn't want to sit beside me. She and the bus driver began expressing their discontent with the seating on the bus. Although I had experienced things like this before Vietnam, this incident reached into the depths of my anger, particularly at that time in my life.

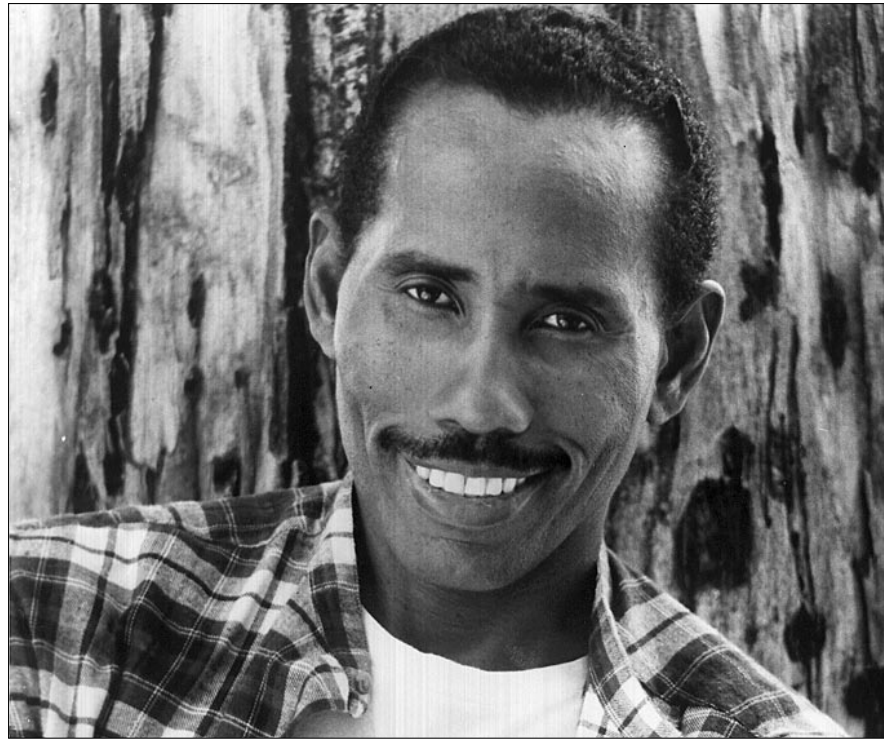
I moved to Tennessee in 1968 and got a job with the post office. For years I created disruption on and off the job, whenever and wherever I could. I came to work every day angry and dressed in as much traditional African dress as possible. I wore earrings and many beads around my neck. And I braided my hair. This adamant outward expression of my cultural consciousness was prompted by my desire to make America aware that discontent among my people still existed. It was also a protest against America having sent me off to Vietnam, bringing me back all shot up and then displaying such racial bias toward me.

I joined several revolutionary organizations, including the Black Panther Party. I concluded, because of the path I chose, I would probably die an early, violent death. But I was prepared to die for the Revolution — it was a necessary sacrifice. I continued on this death march for seven years after my return from Vietnam.

Until the day I was approached by a co-worker about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I was insulted that this man, blacker than the color of my shoes, was asking me to consider some Eastern philosophy. I cursed him — didn't he think black people had enough trouble following white people's religion? Now he wanted to introduce me to Buddhism! He politely thanked me for the conversation and excused himself. I was taken aback at his pleasant response.

This co-worker continued to invite me to discussion meetings. I went, but I would deliberately sit in the rear and not do gongyo. When it ended, I would start to



Tommy Lee Ray overcame his deep-seated anger toward Caucasians through practicing in the SGI.

debate whatever subject was being discussed. Yet I was never asked to leave. I was again surprised at the generous response of members.

At one meeting, I was discussing the Black Revolution in America and the "back to Africa" movement when a member presented a report from the *World Tribune* on a Gohonzon-conferal ceremony for 50 members in Ghana. I was stunned. That was when I decided to give this Buddhism and the SGI a try.

That was 1975. My sponsor's gifts to me when I received the Gohonzon were a sutra book, a nice set of prayer beads and a copy of *The Human Revolution*, vol. 1. In the early years of my practice I did most of my studying of the Goshō from the guidance of presidents Toda and Ikeda contained in *The Human Revolution*. Over the years, this novelized history became my constant study guide.

The first time I tried gongyo on my own it took two hours. I called my sponsor and told him to come get the Gohonzon because I would not be spending two hours on my knees every morning. I took the altar down, but no one came to get it.

Around this time I was running for president of my na-

tional labor union. I was also cast in a Shakespearean play at a local university. Although my local union had the largest membership and I was the favorite, I lost the election. I was also replaced in the play after rehearsing four to five hours nightly for three months. These incidents actually happened on the same day! I was plunged into a state of total depression.

At 2:00 in the morning, I called my district chief and told him my story. He asked me if I had chanted about the situation. I said no, because the Gohonzon was still sitting in the corner, the altar disassembled. He encouraged me to reenshrine the Gohonzon, chant daimoku and study this passage from the Goshō "On Prayer": "Though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise up from the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 46).

At that moment I decided to dedicate my life to practicing with complete sincerity. I intro-

duced many of my friends to Buddhism and became very happy practicing.

And as the years passed, I received many benefits. One of the greatest benefits was a change in my violent temper I had developed after my return from Vietnam.

There were also many obstacles. By 1984, the number of African Americans practicing in Tennessee greatly increased. Simultaneously, racial prejudice began surfacing in the organization.

That year, after 10 years as a district chief, my sponsor decided to give up his position because so much racial disunity had developed in our local SGI-USA. This deeply troubled me; this man had been so dedicated.

He shared with me some of the difficulties he had experienced over the years with the local leaders. One experience was particularly shocking. He said he had been told back in 1970 to slow down in introducing so many African Americans to the organization because it would prevent whites from joining. I saw him suffer great anguish and chant many, many hours of daimoku before he decided to give up his position. And I was appointed district chief in his place.

Problems continued until 1986, when racial disunity had developed to a breaking point — African Americans on one side and Japanese and Caucasians on the other. Most of the conflicts were among members in positions of leadership. I now felt betrayed by the SGI-USA.

By then, I had completely stripped myself of many of my old revolutionary ways of thinking and acting; I believed in my heart that this was the one organization in the world where this kind of conflict should not exist. So I started to voice my discontent to some of the leaders and was branded a troublemaker.

Many African American members became so disillusioned that a great number in my chapter discontinued their practice. Just about every men's division member, with the exception of myself and a couple others, quit or left the organization. The ranks of every other division were desimated as well. Many of these later joined the temple.

I was told that my district, which had been the first in the city, would become a group because of lack of participation. I would get so depressed from the guidance about this situation that there were mornings I did not want to get out of bed.

My sponsor told me that I should also consider giving up my district position because what I was doing to rebuild the district was not being appreciated by the SGI-USA leaders. But I knew I could not go that route.

I completely immersed myself in chanting hours and hours of daimoku and studying the Goshō and *The Human Revolution*. I went back to that very first Goshō I had studied, "On Prayer." The passage I chose this time was: "Now that the Former and Middle Days of the Law are over, persons who observe the precepts are as rare as tigers in a marketplace, and men of wisdom are harder to find than the horns of a *ch'i-lin*. While waiting for the moon to rise, one must rely upon a torch, and when there are no true gems or treasures at hand, gold and silver must serve for treasures. The debt of gratitude one owes to the white crow may be repaid to the black crow, and the debt one owes to the holy priest may be repaid to the ordinary priest. So if you earnestly pray that blessings be given to you without delay, how can your prayers fail to be answered?" (MW-7, p. 47).

I returned to *The Human Revolution* to see what President Toda would have done in a situa-

Making a Difference

Buddhist practice and principles learned in the SGI help Michael Pehmoeller be a strong and effective community leader.

By MICHAEL PEHMOELLER
LONGMONT, COLO.

Now surely the peace of the world and the stability of the nation are sought by both ruler and subject and desired by all the inhabitants of the country. The nation achieves prosperity through the Buddhist Law, and the Law is proven worthy of reverence by the people who embrace it.... Therefore one must first of all pray for the safety of the nation and then work to establish the Buddhist Law. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 27)

This is an account of some personal experiences and reflections on what it means to me to be a neighborhood leader.

Longmont, Colo., has a Neighborhood Group Leaders' Association, which was formed to facilitate communication among neighborhood groups and the city. My involvement began when a gentleman bought the property adjoining mine. He started proposing developments that would have altered the basic character of this area.

That was in 1992. There was no neighborhood group for my area, so I formed one and began circulating a petition to get support from nearby residents. It soon became clear that there were many concerns among the residents.

I had stopped practicing Buddhism sometime before this, and

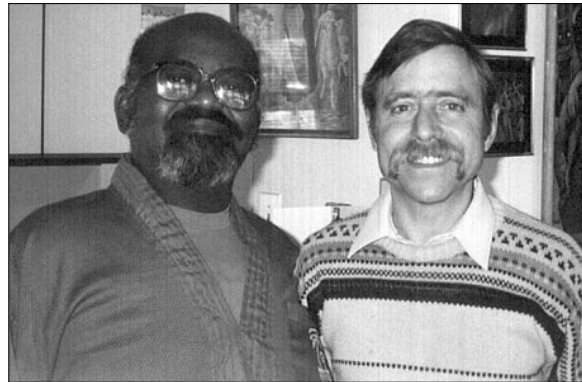
the whole situation seemed overwhelming. My esteem grew for those who find the time and courage to challenge the problems of a community. I spent the following year learning how the city operates and how other NGLA leaders handled concerns.

I resumed my Buddhist practice in early 1993. The four years since then have been a real education in appreciating and learning to apply the value-creating principles of the SGI. This is key. Many of the demands on a community leader can be solved by dialogue. Hearing what people consider important and allowing discussion to reach consensus is a start. Further dialogue can bring disparate parties together. These are things I've learned the hard way at times and am still learning.

The value of combining *daimoku* and dialogue cannot be overemphasized. The one thing community leaders need most is wisdom.

The challenge to understand neighborhood concerns and find answers is one aspect of community involvement. Another is to get recognition from city government regarding the importance of these concerns. Here again, dialogue is essential. Chanting to the Gohonzon is the only real means I ever had to persevere and learn a proper perspective — that, and the invaluable aid of SGI friends and leaders.

In 1995, at the urging of a leader from an adjacent neighborhood group, we created an annual community activity we call the Old Town Street Stroll. It's basically a giant block party. We set



Bill Clinton (l) and Michael Pehmoeller.

up tables to provide information on the historic houses in the area and on Habitat for Humanity, which was to begin a project in the neighborhood. We organized a variety of games and contests so that the young people had activities. Many friendships emerged and trust among people grew.

However, until the week before the event, there were only two or three people working to make it possible. There were many obstacles, including dissent among those who originally played a major role in the planning. At one point it seemed impossible for the event to happen. I redoubled my chanting and then saw our concerted efforts draw others in at the last moment. The success of the Street Stroll was beyond belief. The next year, we had the young people organize the games and contests.

In another case, one neighborhood had been experiencing increasing difficulty with vandalism and graffiti. Leaders from

many neighborhood groups recognized that these same problems could happen in their areas. This led to the formation of a panel — including the police chief, city prosecutor, a parole officer, and a city community relations person — to hear the neighbors' concerns.

A fellow SGI-USA member, Bill Clinton, had recently moved to Denver from Las Vegas. He had a lot of experience with youth violence and related issues, and he gladly consented to be a part of the panel. Bill and I did gongyo together before the panel discussion and talked about how to understand the issues we were facing.

The discussion began with each panelist describing his or her experience as it related to the problem. The attitude among the group seemed to be largely one of us versus them. That is, until Bill shared his conviction that the problem had to be solved using a humanistic approach that was inclusive, not exclusive.

There was a reason for the rebellious actions of the youth, he said. Only by seeking to understand and work with these disaffected young people could a solution become reality. This opened the door for people to start focusing on solutions. The chief of police recognized Bill's statements as the long-term solution and a neighborhood plan as a necessary short-term beginning.

The focus of the neighborhood's efforts had been to "take their park back," but during the question-and-answer period, I mused that we might be better off "taking our kids back." This drew laughter and helped break the tension. The meeting was considered very successful by every person present. Everyone knew that it was still just the beginning, but it offered hope and some fresh ideas.

These recent words from SGI President Ikeda have been helpful: "Let us compose many dramas of human revolution for the sake of others. Let us adorn our lives with many 'various causes' and 'various smiles.' And let us decorate our communities like flower gardens filled with the 'various smiles' of many and varied dramas of human revolution, with one person after another realizing victory and becoming happy" (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, pp. 90-91).

Two years ago, Michael Pehmoeller was elected chairperson of Longmont's Neighborhood Group Leaders' Association.

RAY, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

tion like this. And there I found the perfect guidance: A passage described how President Toda had used dolls to conduct district meetings because of the lack of members when he began reconstructing the Gakkai.

I continued chanting many hours and having discussion meetings where I would set out stuffed animals and give each of them names. I invited my territory leader to one of my doll meetings; he was rather surprised when he came in and saw nothing but small stuffed animals at the meeting.

Eventually the members came back, one by one, to participate. The district was still a district. (It

continues today as a healthy and vibrant center of world peace activities. In fact, several leaders, including the current headquarters chief, originally came from that district.)

I continued to study *The Human Revolution* and speak out about things I felt needed to change in our SGI-USA organization. Many times the only encouragement I got was from my *daimoku* and my connection to SGI President Ikeda through *The Human Revolution*. Even now, I become emotional when I read certain parts of this novel.

In 1987 I wrote President Ikeda a letter and included a poem that I had written for his birthday. I then made it a tradition

to send him a poem each year on Jan. 2. These were based on my study of *The Human Revolution* over the years. In January 1992, I combined all of these poems into one poem, which I titled "Master and Disciple."

In January 1993 I came to Los Angeles to work and expand myself in the performing arts, planning to eventually return to Tennessee and continue to work for kosen-rufu there through the arts. That May, I spoke with General Director Emeritus George Williams, who encouraged me to achieve my goals and also to send "Master and Disciple" to President Ikeda. The next month, I received President Ikeda's thanks for this "heartfelt gift," as he put it.

So many, many things have

changed since President Ikeda came in 1990 and gave the SGI-USA a facelift. I feel very fortunate that I never left the SGI-USA. Through those turbulent years, I have evolved to a state of life where my angry feelings and hatred for Caucasians, that were so deeply imbedded in the soul of my life, have been transformed into actions to create value for the sake of world peace.

I treasure my connection with Memphis. I have seen the organization there grow even beyond my expectations — there are leaders who have learned to listen and act on the concerns of the members and members who are getting opportunities in the organization that they seldom got before. In fact, I traveled to

Memphis to perform in the relocation celebration of its community center, Jan. 25-26.

There are still lots of hard shells that must be broken within me. However, I am more than convinced that there is no other philosophy or organization that could have changed the death march that I was on. There is no other vehicle for me to achieve the greatest happiness, no other organization in which I can work as honestly for the sake of humanity. I will never leave Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and this great SGI-USA. I will continue striving for kosen-rufu as a disciple of President Ikeda until my last breath.

SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Remembering We Are In Charge of Our Lives

By REIKO GROSHALL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, any discipline or good deed will be meaningless. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 4)

I love this Goshō passage because it describes one of the most important features of Buddhism — simply that we have control of our lives and that it is a waste of time to look outside ourselves for solutions to our problems.

I have been practicing for quite some time and know in my mind that this practice works, but it takes constant effort for me to realize it with my heart. I mean, every time I had a problem or even a major obstacle, I used to do everything else but go to the Gohonzon.

I enjoy going to activities, meeting the members and talking with them. And I like to study. However, when forced to challenge myself to overcome something it has been a tremendous undertaking every time.

Why? It is always easier for me to use words than to take action. So, I fool myself by blaming the environment, other people, etc., for my obstacle — or just suffer through it.

However, taking responsibility within the organization and realizing that I'm not getting any younger, I have learned to really self-reflect and not seek happiness outside myself, as this Goshō passage says. It is not enough anymore to just study and internalize intellectually; I have to apply my study in my daily life and take action.

I'm not even close to where I want to be, but I am much happier now because I feel a sense of direction and purpose. I no longer feel helpless or sorry for myself when something arises. And I am beginning to understand that no one else is responsible for my life except for me. I have nobody else to blame except myself if I don't apply myself.

So, my New Year's resolution is to face my challenges head on, based upon strong prayer, and to realize everything stems from me. ❏

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH

What Is the 'Gohonzon Within My Life'?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF

Q What is the relationship between the Gohonzon enshrined in my altar and the "Gohonzon within my life"?

A When we talk about the "Gohonzon within my life," we generally are referring to the innate enlightenment that Buddhism teaches exists within us. Most of us understand this concept intellectually, as it is a basic premise of our practice.

As we go through the ups and downs of life, however, we tend to judge ourselves — sometimes feeling that we come up short compared to our ideal image of an "enlightened" person. We then wonder how the Gohonzon could ever exist within our life.

Yet it is wrong to think that the Gohonzon enshrined in the altar depicts a state of life out of the reach of ordinary human beings. This is because Buddhism doesn't look at enlightenment as something separate from ordinary people but rather perceives Buddhahood as a basic principle operating within our daily existence.

This fundamental principle in Buddhism is Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō — and it is the basis for both the Gohonzon enshrined in our altars and the Gohonzon within our lives. We can say they both share the same Buddha nature.

Nichiren Daishonin described this in "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" when he wrote: "Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless eons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other. Therefore, to chant Myōhō-enge-kyō with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 22).

From the deepest point of view, Shakyamuni and the Lotus Sutra in this quote refer to "Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō — Nichiren" inscribed down the center of the Gohonzon. "We ordinary human beings" refers to the Buddhahood that exists within our lives. In stating that these are "in no way different or separate from each other," the Daishonin is declaring that the same infinite potential depicted on the Gohonzon exists within us. At the core of our beings, each of us possesses the power to break through our

limitations and continually progress toward happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin taught that we should chant Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō realizing this relationship that exists between our lives and the Gohonzon. Awakened to this reality, we naturally desire to bring out this potential in others as well. That is, we spontaneously start to propagate the Law as we come to understand that this intrinsic Buddha nature is the bond that unites us as human beings — beyond the superficial diversities of race, culture or even religious belief.

The Buddha nature is the fundamental treasure that we, the environment and the boundless universe itself all have in common. To have faith in this point is one meaning of the word *namu* and a key to tapping all the wisdom that lies within us; it is "to inherit the ultimate law of life and death," directing our lives toward value and the greatest joy. ❏

Readers are invited to submit any questions on faith or the doctrines of Buddhism to the World Tribune office, to be answered by SGI-USA Study Department Chief Ted Morino.

THE THREE CATEGORIES OF ACTION

Doing the Right Things

BUDDHIST CONCEPT

By JENIFER MILLER

SEATTLE CORRESPONDENT

I wake up in the morning and sleepily make hot cereal, standing in front of the stove, groggy and still recovering from the half-consciousness of my dreams. All is dark out, even in summer, and now in winter I catch cold chills until I sit down with the hot pot of wheat, wrap a blanket around me and read the *World Tribune* while I eat, always going straight for SGI President Ikeda's guidance.

Some members think I am a diehard in my pursuance of study. It's not as noble as that — it's just difficult for me to get through the day maintaining a high life condition. And President Ikeda's words always give me a stone of hope to turn in my pocket when I find my attitude slipping.

Perhaps it's due to the fact that I am so newly awake, but sometimes there is one sentence or paragraph that applies to me and me only. That sentence is just what I need to hear.

Then I am ready to tear into gongyo and an hour of chanting — ready to change my life. Somehow, though, in the 20 minutes it takes to actually start

gongyo, and in the hour of chanting afterwards, I get distracted. I consider the impossibility of my dreams.

I get discouraged and disappear into daydream daimoku, suddenly noticing 15 or 20 minutes have gone by. But I know I need the strong determination to match my goals.

So I summon it and come up with ways to win in whatever situation I am in. "I am determined to know what I need to learn from this situation," I say to myself. "I am determined to know how to create value in this situation. I am determined to see total victory in this situation."

I see the victories, but nonetheless it is always a fight. A constant fight to keep my thoughts, words and action synchronized.

Buddhism teaches that all three types of action — thoughts, words and physical actions — need to be in unison, in harmony. Otherwise, we will not experience the full benefit of this Buddhism. This imperative is an indication of the primary importance of each moment in our lives.

The logic is so simple: Thoughts lead to words, which in turn lead to actions. The subtle yet powerful balance between a positive or negative determination — something that comes to shape our outlook on life and consequently affects the life we live — rests first upon our thoughts.

The three categories of action can also be applied to our practice to the Gohonzon. Thoughts correspond to how we feel when

we pray — for instance, do we have a strong determination to win in our dreams and contribute to kosen-rufu? Words refer to the actual recitation of gongyo and chanting of Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō. Actions correspond to getting in front of the Gohonzon.

At the same time, regarding our practice for others, thoughts correspond to our strong desire for others to become happy; words to whatever we say to encourage them; and actions to our activities for others, like home visits and attending district meetings. As the Daishonin writes in "Letter to Priest Nichiro in Prison": "Others read the Lotus Sutra with their mouths alone, reading only the words, but do not read it with their hearts. And even if they read it with their hearts, they do not read it with their actions. Praiseworthy indeed are those like you who read the sutra with both body and mind!" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 127).

One cannot live without thinking, speaking and acting. This Buddhist concept of the three actions is worth reminding ourselves of everyday. It is the ruler that helps us direct our determinations into victories.

My fight to wake up my life from the dark of sleep every morning and read the *World Tribune*, then do gongyo and daimoku, aligns my thoughts with the rhythm of the universe. It is the path to my dreams and world peace. ❏

My Recollections



Farouk Hosni, Egypt's Minister of Culture

By SGI President Ikeda

I remember an incident that took place during my mentor Josei Toda's last years. We were riding a train on the Tokaido Line, and he met a man across the aisle who was a noted authority on road building, a sort of "Mr. Highway." They were soon talking as if they were old friends.

When Mr. Toda heard that the engineer was designing a road from Aomori to Osaka, a distance covering more than half the length of the main island of Japan, Honshu, he praised him for his daring but then offered a further challenge: "Yes, indeed, that will be the finest road in all Japan. But Japan's not the only country in the world. If you're going to design roads, why not extend your horizons and build one from Japan to Korea, Korea to China, and China to India?"

"A road connecting the entire world?" asked the engineer speculatively. "I was proud to be working on the best road in all Japan, but I never thought beyond that. You think on a far grander scale than I do, my friend."

Then Mr. Toda explained that he had devoted his life to blazing a spiritual road that would one day lead to the rest of Asia, to the world and to all humanity. The engineer listened intently, then replied: "I see now. I will leave the construction of the metaphysical road to you, and I will take care of building the physical road."

That meeting took place 39 years ago in the autumn of 1957. The struggle to make Mr. Toda's ideal into a reality has been my life.

On a visit to Alexandria, Egypt, in June 1992, I said to Egypt's minister of culture, Farouk Hosni: "When I was young, Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.) was one of my heroes. I wrote a novella about him titled *Alexander's Decision*. I am deeply moved to be here in Alexandria, the city he founded. After his death at age 32, his



Bust of Alexander the Great, sculpture by Lysippus. Museo Capitolino, Rome.

Plutarch wrote of Alexander's ambition to link Europe, Asia and Africa, viewing Alexander's purpose as that of a great philosopher. Alexander did not venture forth for personal wealth or ambition, the Greek biographer maintained, but to teach the virtue of cooperation to all who lived on earth and to make them understand that all humanity is one big family.

body was brought back here. Is it known where his remains were buried?"

"In fact, one theory has it that he is buried beneath this very Ra's at-Tin Palace where we are now sitting," Mr. Hosni replied.

This exchange took place just before my meeting at the palace with Egyptian President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak. While Mr. Hosni explained that there were other theories concerning Alexander's final resting place, his remark nevertheless profoundly affected me.

I was reminded of the heroism of Alexander, who pressed ever forward from West to East. "I find Alexander to be one of the great leaders who changed the world, together with King Ashoka of India," I told Mr. Hosni. "Both of them loved culture. The wonderful feat of bringing Eastern and Western culture into contact with each other is one of Alexander's enduring achievements."

Plutarch wrote of Alexander's ambition to link Europe, Asia and Africa, viewing Alexander's purpose as that of a great philosopher. Alexander did not venture forth for personal wealth or ambition, the Greek biographer maintained, but to teach the virtue of cooperation to all who lived on earth and to make them understand that all humanity is one big family.

It is said that Alexander first came to realize this revolutionary truth — that all humanity is one — in Egypt, a land from which a monumental civilization sprang. Even today, Egypt remains a country where racial or ethnic prejudice is almost nonexistent.

Minister Hosni also shared his ideas about Alexander the Great when we met in Japan in March of 1992. He said: "I feel that Alexander was more of a philosopher than a political figure. What did he find in philosophy? One, a method of meditation; two, a dream.

"That dream was the greatness of the human spirit — that we are something more than this small, individual self. Peo-

HOSNI, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ple can indeed acquire power over others, but Alexander believed that we possess a power higher than that. And he wanted to carry that message to all humanity."

Perhaps Alexander wanted to test his potential and leave a record of how much a single individual can achieve. He rushed onward at full speed, reaching as far as India. His drive and energy left his followers breathless trying to keep up. Alexander never had the lazy, irresponsible attitude that things would somehow work out by themselves or that someone else would take care of everything. This was not his spirit.

When he left on his expedition to Persia, he distributed all his wealth among the families of his soldiers. One of his retainers was puzzled by this action and asked him, "If you give away all your treasures, what will you have to take with you?"

Alexander replied, "I take with me only the single treasure of hope."

When I asked Minister Hosni about this famous episode, his reply revealed a deep understanding of humanity: "What Alexander meant to say, I think, is that he would go equipped only with himself. All human beings are great, he was saying. If you are truly in possession of yourself, you have everything there is to own."

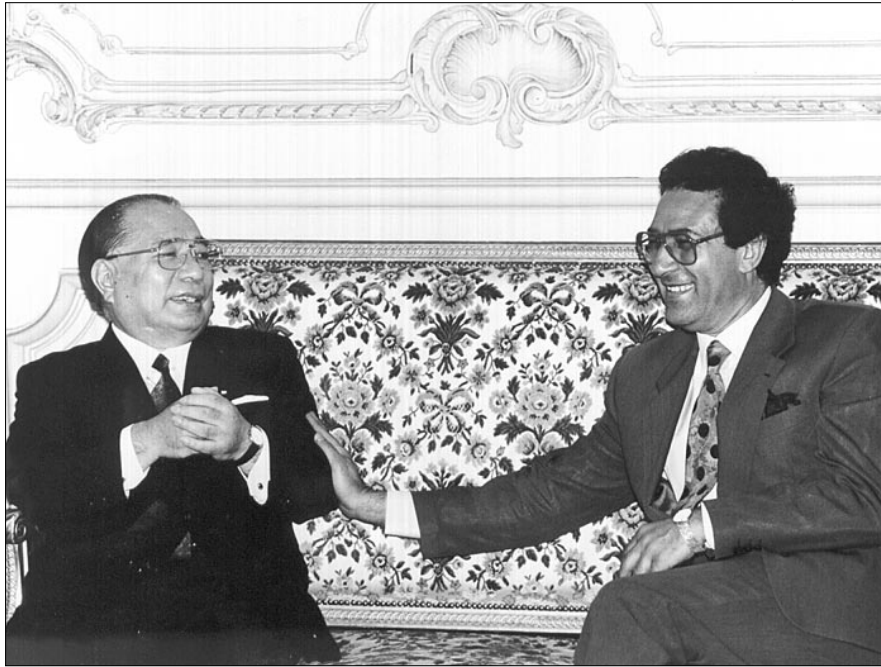
Alexander was a person of indomitable courage. He never gave up. The essence of hope lies in such spiritual strength, and such faith in humanity is the heart of culture.

Mr. Hosni was born in 1939 in Alexandria. He is one of Egypt's leading painters, and his work is highly acclaimed in Europe and around the world. "Everything has rhythm," he said. "Music is the rhythm of life. My abstract paintings are my attempt to express Egyptian music on canvas."

Mr. Hosni clearly seeks the fundamental rhythm that pulses through both humanity and the universe. He said: "I think that all art flows from the same source — and on a plane transcending such categories as music, painting and poetry. I also believe that the finest civilizations of the world all share a common source."

That source — the desire for the eternal — surely also gave birth to Egyptian civilization on the banks of the Nile.

"I hold the position of minister of culture," Mr. Hosni said, "but I have no idea what will happen to this seat tomorrow. I



SGI President Ikeda meets with Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni of Egypt. Minister Hosni said: 'I feel that Alexander was more of a philosopher than a political figure. What did he find in philosophy? One, a method of meditation; two, a dream. That dream was the greatness of the human spirit — that we are something more than this small, individual self. People can indeed acquire power over others, but Alexander believed that we possess a power higher than that. And he wanted to carry that message to all humanity.'

am by profession a painter and above all a human being. Many things are swept away by the inexorable passage of time. But culture and art transcend time and last for all eternity. They are more lasting, more profound bridges to the future than politics or economics, which are always changing."

When we spoke of the pyramids, the culture minister interpreted them in terms of their eternal nature. "When I have something deep to think about," he said, "I stand before the pyramids. That allows me to come into contact with a feeling that transcends this world and the entire universe and is quite separate from everyday life and its concerns. I am convinced that there is some link between the pyramids and the universe."

Recently, the theory that the position and size of the three Great Pyramids of Egypt correspond to the position and brightness of the three main stars in the constellation Orion has attracted much attention. Perhaps the Pyramids are a paean to the law of the universe and a physical expression of a prayer of sorts, a longing to manifest here on earth the eternity of the stars in the heavens.

A search for something that lives for eternity, transcending time, something undying, an invincible power that triumphs over death — that is the search that has given birth to religion and to art. At the base of all

cultures is this passionate search for the eternal. That is what separates us from other animals, and that is why it is culture that links humanity, one person to the other.

If all that mattered were power and military might, human history would be one long war. If only wealth mattered, everything would be measured by profit and loss. As humanity is being unified at last, isn't "cultural power" the force that needs to be strengthened in the 21st century? Culture must be the rising tide upon which government and economics ride and which gives them the right direction.

When I voiced these sentiments, Mr. Hosni replied: "I agree completely. Only culture will save humanity. We must begin true and lasting spiritual exchange between nations, not just a brief exchange of goods." I believe that is precisely the task facing any modern Alexander the Great. And we SGI members gladly accept that as our mission and are eager to accomplish it.

I asked Mr. Hosni whether he thought the Pyramids of Egypt, regarded as one of the wonders of the world, were designed by one person or several. He immediately replied, without hesitation: "Great ideas always originate from a single individual. And I think that the original concept of the pyramid also came from one person."

History is created when a single brave individual stands up with a strong sense of purpose.

In times past, Alexandria, known as the "bride of the Mediterranean," was a world capital of civilization and culture. Scholars such as Archimedes studied at its Mouseion, an institute of learning that housed the largest library in the ancient world; Euclid lectured

on geometry there. People came from all over the world, many traveling across the sea, guided by the port-city's famous lighthouse, the Pharos of Alexandria.

The city was a crossroads that drew even emissaries from King Ashoka in faraway India. Here, the turbulent tale of Cleopatra and Caesar — a tale of love and dynastic upheaval — unfolded. Napoleon, proud of his designation as a member of the Académie Française, stepped ashore in this city founded by his beloved hero Alexander.

It was a moonlit evening. The waves of the Mediterranean caressed the shore in their soothing, timeless rhythm. As their song stirred in my heart a palpable awareness of life's eternity, I gave myself to thought: Those who created the colossal civilization of Ancient Egypt have been called "people 100 feet tall." Now it is time again for such "giants" to appear — people of creativity who, imbued with an eternal spirit, will boldly transform reality. They and they alone personify a great culture.

When such giants emerge from the earth and unite humanity, the golden age that all have waited and longed for since the dawning of civilization will at last materialize.

Mr. Hosni is a dear friend and comrade working in the sphere of culture to build an eternal, imperishable spiritual road linking all the world. ❧

Expressions

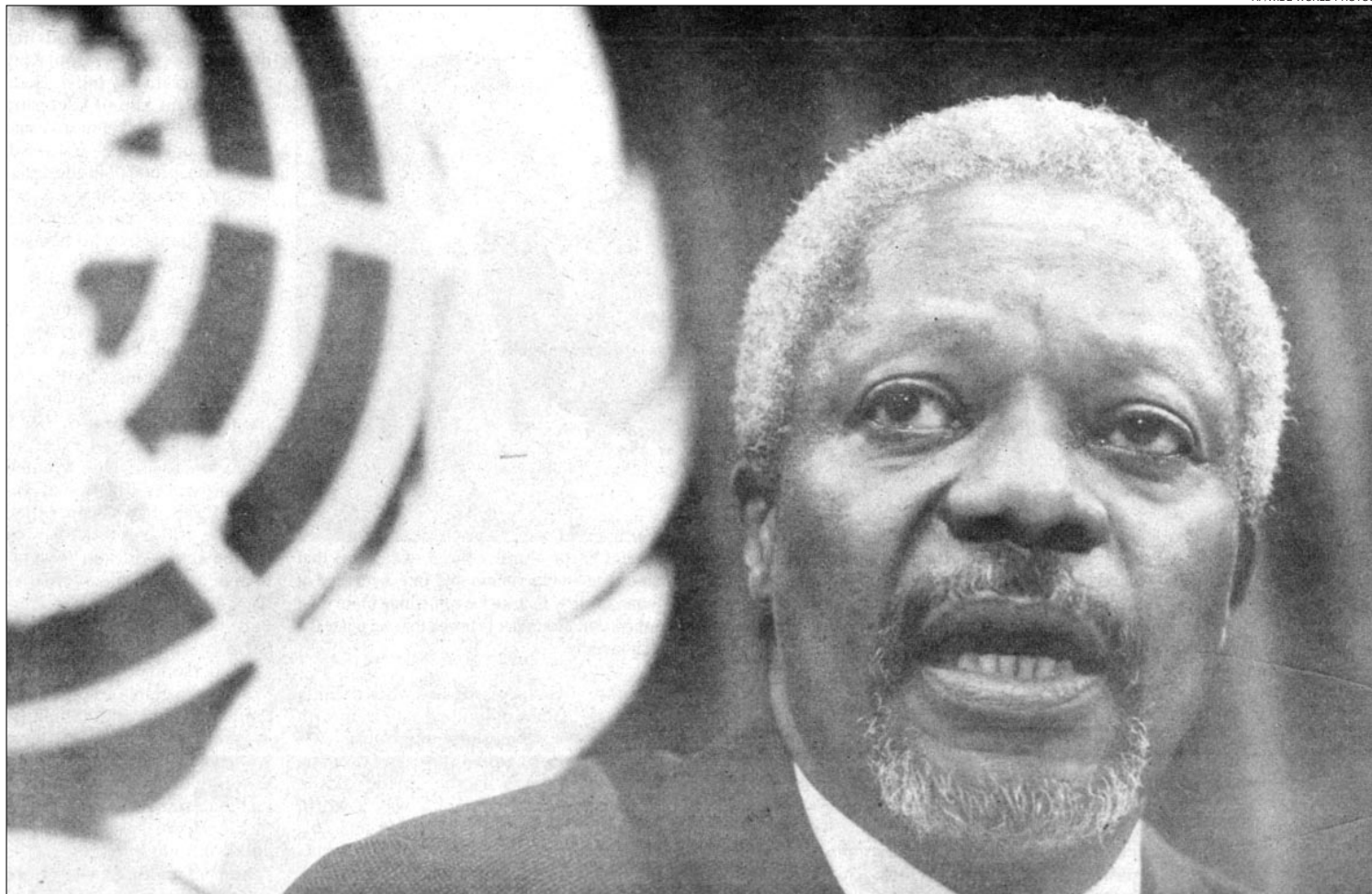
Kosen-rufu (the road to happiness)

The road less traveled by
Even Robert Frost deliberated with a sigh
Before he chose that difficult trail
Was it on impulse, a compulsive dash
A leap into darkness
In search of an unpatented flash?
Was it calmly decided
Like his maple syrup voice
Or was he desperately clinging
To a splintering joist?

No matter the crux of his mental thrust
The choice once cemented, a magnetized must
Kosen-rufu flows like a river, does not flutter like a flame
Once pursued, forever racing
A joy-filled mystic train.

— RICHARD ZOMMICK, Philadelphia

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan answers a question at his first news conference at the United Nations, Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1996, in New York. Annan said the United Nations must promote reform and 'the search for excellence' as it presses Washington to pay its arrears. A 30-year U.N. veteran, Annan also pledged to revive sagging staff morale.

Instrument of Peace

The new U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan, has a monumental task: to usher the United Nations into the 21st century.

By CRAIG GREEN

LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

On Dec. 17, 1996, the United Nations elected a new secretary-general. Replacing Boutros Boutros-Ghali is Kofi Annan, a native of Ghana. His term of office will run from Jan. 1, 1997, to Dec. 31, 2001.

Fluent in English, French and several African languages, Mr. Annan has spent most of the past two decades working at the United Nations, most recently as under-secretary-general for Peace-Keeping Operations. In this position, he was responsible for negotiating the repatriation of more

than 900 international staff and the release of Western hostages in Iraq following that country's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. He also initiated discussions on the "oil for food" formula to ease the crisis in Iraq and oversaw the transition from the U.N. Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia to the multinational Implementation Force led by NATO, following the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. Mr. Annan has also served in the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization.

Thus far in his career as an international civil servant, Mr. Annan has been seen as extremely effective and reliable —

Djibouti Ambassador Roble Olhaye calls him a man of "moderation and good management style as a consensus builder." Concerning his future work at the United Nations, Mr. Annan has said: "A new understanding of peace and security must emerge. The world is beginning to recognize the many roots of conflict, the economic base of stability, and the grim truth that intolerance, injustice and oppression — and their consequences — respect no national frontiers."

The task before him now is to usher the United Nations into the 21st century. Many have criticized the United Nations recently for its need to reform. Many have

criticized the United Nations for not being effective enough in various arenas throughout the world. But no one can dispute the importance of the United Nations in the future. Mr. Annan is acutely aware of all of this.

In a speech to the General Assembly on the day of his appointment, Mr. Annan said: "The United Nations is your instrument of peace and justice.... It can be no wiser, no more competent and no more efficient than those member states that now comprise and guide it.... Alone, I can do nothing. Together, we can irreversibly advance the frontiers of peace, dignity and justice for all humankind." ■