

World Tribune

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THE YEAR OF ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THE NEW CENTURY

JUNE 13, 1997

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General Director Zaitu (center) prepares to cut the ribbon with Alaska Headquarters members as the community center opening begins.

Alaska Community Center Re-Opens

By **BILL LAWRENCE**

SEATTLE BUREAU CHIEF

Anchorage, Ala., May 24-26

Alaska is filled with active volcanoes and vast archipelagos. It has more miles of coastline than the contiguous United States. The Americas were first peopled via this region. In May, the warm sun can shine 20 hours a day. In winter, the long nights can hold

steadily at 20 degrees below.

This weekend, members of Alaska Headquarters, joined by an exchange party of 46 people from Seattle and Portland, Ore., opened a new chapter of kosen-rufu here as they officially re-opened their Alaska Community Center in a new location.

PLEASE SEE ALASKA, 4

Survey of the SGI-USA Continues

Did You Receive the Survey? Did You Mail It in Yet?

By **JEFF FARR**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Santa Monica, Calif., June 2

Dr. Phillip Hammond's study of the SGI-USA has moved to the next phase: collection of the 1,200 questionnaires he sent to randomly selected members in April.

Because the accuracy of his results depends on a maximum response, the University of California at Santa Barbara researcher requests that all members who received the questionnaire respond as soon as possible.

Questionnaires sent to the general public usually yield a return rate of one-third to one-half, says Dr. Hammond, but he has yet to achieve that high a rate with the SGI-USA survey.

The SGI-USA has fully endorsed the study from the outset.

"This will provide objective information for other scholars and anybody interested in learning about SGI-USA," Al Albergate, the SGI-USA community

relations director, said when the survey began.

The questionnaire takes only an hour to complete.

"We know our questionnaire is lengthy," says Dr. Hammond, "but all the members who helped us by pre-testing the questions reported their pleasure in doing so. I imagine every member who received our pamphlet would likewise enjoy filling it out."

Members who may have misplaced their questionnaires are encouraged to request a second copy directly from Dr. Hammond:

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Studies

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LETTER FROM THE SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

'My Deepest Thanks for Your Efforts'

To all the members and friends of the SGI-USA:

Please accept my deepest thanks for your support during this past May commemorative contribution. I especially appreciate the many individuals who volunteered their time at the community centers or opened their homes for this activity. Thanks to everyone's efforts it was a total success, with an even greater number of participants this year than last.

Throughout last month, I received a lot of personal correspondence from members across the United States expressing their appreciation and joy to participate in this annual activity. Many people have deepened their understanding of contribution and renewed their determination to contribute to American kosen-rufu. From all the positive response, I feel the attitude is changing from "How can the organization help me?" to the spontaneous spirit that "I am personally responsible for kosen-rufu in America and the growth of our organization."

SGI President Ikeda recently attended a representatives conference in Mie Prefecture, Japan, where he talked about enjoying good fortune. He said:

In a letter titled "The Unity Between Husband and Wife" [addressed to Nichigen-nyo, wife of Shijo Kingo], Nichiren Daishonin states, "You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 158). Those who exert themselves assiduously in faith become youthful and enjoy good fortune. This is the benefit from the Mystic Law. We can live out our lives with a youthful spirit. And although one's body changes as years go by, "What matters is one's heart" (MW-5, 289). The sun rises in the hearts of those who fight for kosen-rufu, illuminating them with youthful brilliance.

Buddhism is win or lose. Faith is an eternal battle for kosen-rufu. Great strength and limitless hope well up within us when we struggle for kosen-rufu with strong faith.

With this guidance in mind, I hope all of us can renew our faith and practice with the youthful spirit of starting fresh from today. Let's advance forward, taking everything in a positive way, using our obstacles as springboards toward our glorious future.

We are now into the month of June, soon to begin the latter half of 1997, the Year of Great Advancement Toward the New Century.

I am determined to make a fresh departure toward the remainder of the year, striving to get to know each member's heart. Together, let's advance toward the 21st century, achieving great victories in our lives.

I sincerely offer my best wishes to you in all your endeavors. I am praying for everyone's continued good health and happiness to blossom. Please convey my best regards to your family and friends.

Once again, thank you very much.

Fred M. Zaitu
SGI-USA General Director

VOICES

When you encounter 'difficult' people, how do you use your Buddhist practice to overcome the situation?

Members from Arizona Territory respond:



In order to overcome difficulties with people, I do not see the people as being "difficult." I try to see them as just ordinary people. I also view it as the other person's responsibility, as well as my responsibility, to be nice. If I have been nice to that person, then I did my job successfully. This, to me, is being a Buddhist.

— RUBEN MAJOR, Phoenix



I am learning to truly appreciate the "difficult" people who help me generate chanting campaigns because they are a benefit to my practice. When I was chanting to save my job, I didn't appreciate my "difficult" person. Because of my heartfelt daimoku during that time, however, I have learned much more about my life and I better understand her role in my growth. Now I chant to appreciate "difficult" people.

— JANET STACEL, Mesa, Ariz.



Being in the business I am in — the restaurant and cocktail business — we encounter a lot of difficulties with people. The best way we have found is to try not to show the angry nature that they try to produce. We try to answer their problem with a positive view, which we can get from SGI President Ikeda's guidance.

— FRED KESSLER, Tempe, Ariz.



When I encounter a negative person, I turn the situation around. I think, "I'm not going to let anybody disrupt my day with negativity." I turn around, smile and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, either out loud or to myself. My attitude is, "Thank you, Gohonzon, for giving me the opportunity to change this situation around!"

— MATTIE HALL, Phoenix



I immediately search my attitude and make a determination to win. With a warm smile, I engage in a friendly dialogue.

— NORMA TOWNER, Mesa, Ariz.



I think I'm the most "difficult" person I encounter. So I try to maintain my life-condition, and hopefully that will have an effect on the person I'm dealing with.

— JESS REED (and son, Johnathan) Mesa, Ariz.

Each week (except when we run "Question of the Month"), members of one area will respond to a question on life, Buddhism or the organization.

Developing Our Community 'Gardens'

EDITORIAL

From our standpoint as SGI members," writes SGI President Ikeda, "the community in which we live, our area of specialty, our occupation and our families all are our 'garden' of kosen-rufu. We must cultivate and develop this garden."

Throughout the SGI-USA, from Miami to Maui, members are grappling with the important issue of how to create an organizational structure which best accomplishes the cultivation of the garden in their respective areas by the end of this year. Creating an organization rooted in the community — a neighborhood-based, streamlined organization — is one of the six challenges for the SGI-USA's future outlined by General Director Zaitzu (see the Dec. 27, 1996, *World Tribune*).

What's it like after reorganization? One headquarters chief reporting on the immediate upsurge of enthusiasm and participation after the new community-based headquarters was inaugurated describes the "exciting, joyful, jubilant and tear-stained eyes" of members.

One territory reorganized and streamlined this past January. Prior to that they had eight chapters and three headquarters — 11 teams of leaders — to serve 16 districts. They had many problems including unfilled positions, weakened districts, poor communication, an overburdened women's division (since it was the only division with enough capable individuals to fill all the leadership positions) and especially a youth division stretched to the breaking point.

They combined into four units with four districts each, and now need only four teams of leaders (16 divisional chiefs instead of 44). They report that communication has improved significantly, leaders have more time to home visit and encourage members directly and in general they are really enjoying the change.

But reorganization is difficult to implement. The benefits for the members are great and the im-

provement of the organization is important for the future of our kosen-rufu movement. But the impact on individual members and leaders can be disorienting and possibly discouraging at first. Therefore, regardless of the plan for your area, there are a few important things to keep in mind.

First, each person's active involvement in the creation of the plan is important. Express your opinions and ideas. Know what is being considered. The best plan for each area will emerge from the collective wisdom of those who know the conditions best. Of course, no plan will satisfy everyone in all particulars. Therefore, once a good, workable plan is adopted it is important to fully support it.

Second, every member is precious. In the midst of change, those who may not be assertive, may not attend activities regularly or who are inactive may fall through the cracks and be lost. Good, accurate membership lists are indispensable. Also, each leader should keep in good contact with each member until they are confirmed and personally connected in their new organization.

Finally, many leaders will find themselves with new members, new organizations and new responsibilities. Some positions and organizational units may be eliminated. This is a natural result of our intention to downsize the organization and put more resources at the forefront. Great care should be taken in finding the best place for each person, consistent with his or her ability, availability and willingness. Although a painstaking process, the goal should be that every leader feels happy and excited about his or her new responsibilities.

In other words, the reorganization plan can only be as good and effective as our careful consideration of human relationships is during the process. After all, while structure is important, it is only important or meaningful when focused on the people — all of the people — it intends to serve.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH: *'What has Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism taught you about independence?'*

Please be specific and limit your responses to 50 words or less. All responses are subject to editing. Please send your responses and a face photo of yourself to: "Question of the Month," *World Tribune*, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif., 90401. Fax: 310-260-8910. Or e-mail us at: SokaNews@aol.com.

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WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

To Save the Art of Dunhuang

SGI President Ikeda's piece on the late Chang Shuhong, custodian of the treasures of Dunhuang (May 9 *World Tribune*) is one of the most moving and inspiring pieces of writing I have ever read. Mr. Ikeda conveys, in very poetic form, the unimaginable struggle Mr. Shuhong endured in the relentless and selfless pursuit of his mission to save the great works of art of Dunhuang.

The article, and the relationship between President Ikeda and Mr. Shuhong, has an almost mystic quality to it. One can feel the great inner symphony taking place in the undercurrents of life between two great men, two great hearts. I would encourage all my fellow members to read this wonderful piece. Thank you, President Ikeda, for writing it. And thank you to the *World Tribune* for publishing it.

— ALAIN BERGER, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Oh, Man

April 4 issue. Page 5. Top photo. How could any editor choose to run a picture of someone wearing a shirt with such a logo: "I'm chanting as we speak"? First, what does it mean? Second, it's weird and stupid. Are those people doing the hokey Japanese exercises? To a non-member, Bill Endsley would look like a Heaven's Gate or other cult member. I am embarrassed for all of us.

— BOB ZUEHLKE, Manila, Philippines

How We Use the Study Page

Thanks very much for utilizing the current format of the study page. In our local area, a selected study page is often the basis for group and divisional discussion/study meetings, and the variety of potential study items (usually three, including a Gosho passage and a Q-and-A) is ideal in case one topic doesn't spark much discussion. Also, since each item is relatively short, it can be read aloud before discussing it. And then we can move on to read and discuss the next one (if time allows).

— FRED MATTIS, Annapolis, Md.

Ecology Articles

I thank you for the ecology articles that have been appearing in the *World Tribune* recently. I thought: "Wow! What a great idea! Why didn't I think of it?" (I'm very environmental; my dad calls me the household environmentalist, and I might pursue a career related to ecology.) Does the SGI use both sides of each piece of paper or have some kind of recycling or waste reduction program (or anything environmental)?

Also, I thank Brooke Bundy for sharing her experience in the May 23 issue. I felt "connected." I was surprised to find that we're alike (with the seductive whispers to give up, the self-doubt that we could never "exhibit the kind of courage and unshakable faith that I had only heard about," and the "No, mother—!"), although, by now, I shouldn't be; I've experienced so many similarities between myself and my fellow members/friends. Somehow, I'm surprised (happily so) to find that I'm not alone.

— PEGGY CHEN, Bayside, N.Y.

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*.

A Magic Eye for Tolerance

PERSPECTIVE

By JAN SIBERT
ANGELS CAMP, CALIF.

Almost everyone has seen those amazing magic eye pictures. You know — the instructions read, "Bring the picture up to your nose, then slowly pull it away without focusing your eyes until you see an incredible 3-D image hidden deep within the print."

It is frustrating to me when I happen into a store where kids are oohing and ahhing over the unicorns and puppies and jungle animals right there in front of their faces. I cleverly wait till they move on, and then I pick up the very same picture. I carefully press it against my nose and slowly pull it back, forcing my eyes to remain out of focus, beads of sweat on my forehead.

"Relax," I tell myself. "Let your mind open to the beauty in front of you.... Quit trying to control the image.... Let yourself melt into the picture." I find myself chanting furiously under my breath that this time, I, too, will see. Then someone bumps into me and, POOF! — the ever elusive unicorn has again escaped my grasp. I walk away, exhausted and feeling sorry for myself.

This isn't an altogether new feeling for me. I recall experiencing another kind of magic eye phenomenon when I was a new member. I was made aware of it through the personal experiences of many members. They went something like this: "I was chanting life-and-death daimoku last night, and all of a sudden the Gohonzon appeared almost luminescent. It was the most peaceful and happy experience I've ever had." The members were so sincere and so obviously affected by this that I began to chant even more to see what they had seen and feel what they had felt. I am proud to say that I have experienced this incredible close-

ness to the Gohonzon and, to this day, some 23 years later, I still try to see and feel what was so vividly described to me back in those early days of my practice.

You might think this is a stretch, but through my obsession to see what others see so easily, I've actually come to be far more tolerant of many things. It fascinates me that little kids can pick up a magic eye picture and within seconds scream in delight at the hidden treasure before their eyes. Perhaps it's because they haven't learned of the boundaries and definitions that make our society functional — or dysfunctional, as the case may be.

Many of them still have imaginary friends, and aren't most of them still coloring outside the lines? In the innocence of youth, they exhibit a tremendous ability to embrace almost anything and everything. I believe it's because they haven't yet been taught that they can't.

Tolerance and diversity — the buzzwords for this decade. But it's nothing new, this battle we fight for tolerance. Today's targets of bigotry range from blacks, Jews, low-income families, bikers, handicapped people, the homeless and AIDS/HIV victims to just about anyone whose lifestyle is unfamiliar or different.

Unfortunately, many of us are "deviant" in one area or another and spend most of our lives pushing and pulling and stretching the thick boundaries that have been established by the mainstream.

I feel things are changing.... Well, somewhat. I mean, there has been noticeable progress, but there is so much more to do. Part of the problem, in my opinion, is that most minorities try to make other people change — enacting legislation, extracting promises that can't be kept, or just raging in pain and frustration. From almost every minority, we hear cries like: "We are who and what we are, and we're proud of that. Why should anyone have a problem accepting us?" So, if

people on both sides of an issue are looking at the other side and demanding that "you change," no one will ever develop the heart of a child.

SGI President Ikeda stresses the importance of dialogue and the need for tolerance. Nowhere does he say "We need to be tolerant, except about blacks, Jews, gays and illegal immigrants." The SGI-USA has received the gift of the clearest road map to tolerance, compassion and humanism through the writings of President Ikeda, but still some of us insist on traveling without this compass, or interpreting and defining his guidance in a way that provides justification and credibility to our self-limited belief system.

What are we so afraid of? I believe many of us are terrified to look inside ourselves. We are afraid to allow our minds to open wide enough to observe the "abnormal" and not judge what we can't possibly understand because we lack firsthand experience.

So, what is the answer? How do we develop tolerance? I don't know. My obvious opinion is, of course, by practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Nowhere else in the world can we find a religion whose core teaching is that of self-reflection and self-accountability. Nowhere else in this world are we given the tools to overcome our inner darkness, which deeply affects our daily lives. Nowhere else in the world are we encouraged to look at one another and search for the diamond within.

I definitely believe we human beings are on the right track to creating one world happily filled with diversity and individuality. As SGI-USA members, we have the tremendous honor to be on the forefront of this amazing quest to abolish all prejudice and discrimination. I am convinced that we can make this world a wonderful place for all to live in as long as we continue to seek President Ikeda's guidance and step back far enough to see the beautiful potential of each human being through our magic eye. WT

Flames Burn Bright Among Houston's Future Force

Photo by DeETTA LANE



Houston Territory's Future Force campout brings all four divisions together.

By DeETTA LANE

HOUSTON CORRESPONDENT
Woodville, Tex., April 19-20

Imagine yourself on Walton's Mountain without the farmhouse, but with a puppy name Michell and a dog named Jasper.... Now you have the right picture.

Houston Territory's Future Force (Boys and Girls Group) celebrated its 6th annual camping trip this weekend, compliments of Jack and Andrea Ayers. The Ayers have donated the use of their property each year and have continually given their time and support to ensure its success.

On Saturday morning participants assembled at the community center for gongyo. The Future Forcers simultaneously hosted their own abbreviated gongyo. Once all campers had registered and signed in, vehicles were loaded and the convoy departed for two days of fun and

camaraderie.

This trip was special in that, collectively, the Forcers demonstrated their leadership abilities. Within an hour and a half, the campsite was completely set up, including all the tents, the food area, the latrines and both campfires. The Forcers have been doing this for six years, and practice makes perfect. Even the younger Forcers jumped right in as though they, too, had been doing it for a long time. It was as though everyone was in rhythm with each other.

Many improvements had been made to the campsite since last year. There was new lighting throughout the entire area. There was even an altar with offerings. The camp looked incredible, and the feeling was one of serenity. This closeness with nature created an atmosphere of universal celebration with the cosmos.

The Forcers followed their responsibility charts with little or no encouragement and were enthusiastic about doing their share. The Future Forcers demonstrated not only a stand-alone spirit, but also the spirit of unity (one in mind, many in body).

After gongyo on Saturday evening, we all sat around the campfire telling scary stories and roasting marshmallows. Many departed from the area to go stargazing while others stayed back to talk or just sit quietly engrossed in the flames. Finally it was lights out for the Forcers and fireside chats for the adults.

On Sunday morning, following a Future Force tradition, the men's division members cooked pancakes while teams gathered water and finished preparing the rest of breakfast. This morning's gongyo was special because it was led by a Future Force volunteer,

Michael Romero, along with Nia McKerin, a friend of the SGI.

Many of the adult campers were touched by the children's sincerity. It was encouraging to witness the development of the Future Force.

It was now time for fishing. This was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the camping trip. Thanks to the ingenuity of the men's division, we returned to the

'ole school' way of catching fish — that is, with sticks and lines. No fancy poles for us.

Although no fish were caught, everyone pitched in for a final open pit meal of hamburgers and hot dogs.

The Future Force members determined to return next year so that they can learn more about nature, practice with their friends, and have lots of fun. **W**

ALASKA, FROM PAGE 1

Twenty-two people from Fairbanks Chapter also joined the exchange by making the six-hour drive from Fairbanks to Anchorage.

This weekend commemorates the 14th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's visit to Alaska in 1983. On that occasion, President Ikeda said, "I hope all leaders have strong faith and warm hearts." This annual commemorative activity is the Alaska members' way of redetermining to live up to that challenge.

What is it like to work for kosen-rufu in Alaska? Lara Middaugh-Gaines of Anchorage speaks of a sense of mission when she says: "Someone told me that people who come to Alaska either live here forever or they have to leave right away. Alaska is so vast and immense. You have to have something vast and immense inside you to stay here."

I see our new community center as the world peace center for Alaska.

— Al Aginbinik

Being surrounded by water on one side and a vast wilderness area on the other can lead to a sense of isolation. During President Ikeda's visit here in 1983, the SGI leader said:

As an organization grows...there



The new location of the Alaska Community Center in Anchorage.

is a tendency for leaders to become too accustomed to faith and practice and to let their attitude toward faith stagnate, thus losing their original purity....

This tendency is normal among common mortals; in fact, it is a dominant force deep within people's lives — history has shown this. We who aim at kosen-rufu and are leaders of faith should never fall into this pitfall, always admonishing ourselves in carrying out a determined practice.

The weekend's activities included district exchange meetings and a trip to Portage Glacier. Seeing the enormous glacier for the first time made Seattle Joint Territory High School Division Chief Michele Higgins think of the youth di-

vision's responsibility for the future.

"The youth division must become like this glacier — an unstoppable force for kosen-rufu," she said. "This glacier has such a powerful presence and moves through all obstacles. Its determination is powerful, and it keeps on moving!"

Alaska Headquarters Vice Chief Al Aginbinik put this perspective on the significance of the weekend's activities: "This new community center means a new chapter in kosen-rufu in Alaska. We have really struggled up to now, but struggling means that we are now stronger in our faith.

"People have problems wherever we go, but especially in Alaska, we have many people who are suffering.

"I think that by studying President Ikeda's guidance and putting Buddhism into practice, we can help these people, one by one. We can really use our new community center to introduce



Members gather outside the Alaska Community Center, including Lara Middaugh-Gaines (far right) and Al Aginbinik (fourth from right).



Members from Oregon, Washington and Alaska gather near Portage Glacier, where SGI President Ikeda visited in 1983.

a lot of people in Anchorage to Buddhism.

"If you make things difficult for yourself, then you will have difficulty practicing Buddhism no matter where you are. I see our new community center as the world peace center for Alaska. Right now, we need to make a big leap forward with

momentum, focusing on the youth.

"Some members in other states have to drive hours and hours just to get to their discussion meeting. We are fortunate here because we don't have to drive so far. It can be difficult to practice anywhere, but it's an advantage to practice here." **W**

Photo by TOM ANDERSON

Photo by BILL LAWRENCE



Brass: still the core of the band. Recital rehearsal session.



Brass Band members move to the rhythms of a lively Latin song.

Brass Band Day in San Francisco

By **RON BAIRD**
BUREAU CHIEF

San Francisco, May 10

Without the Brass Band as one of my first SGI activities, I would not have accomplished my dreams as a professional musician," said Hart Smith, the former San Francisco Brass Band leader in the 1960s, at the Brass Band Recital and Reunion today. SGI-USA Vice General Director Richard Yoshimachi shared his experience of eight years in the Brass Band: With no music in his background, he recalled hearing suddenly from his parents that

he had become a Brass Band member. Picking a trumpet by process of elimination, he joined the Brass Band and learned that SGI President Ikeda had started the band to instill hope and confidence in those members struggling against difficult problems. The SGI president also encouraged the Brass Band to rise up and spread its music through the whole world.

As you can see, the San Francisco Brass Band is carrying on that spirit. WJ

Photos by Mike Mullen and Steve Frus



Brass Band alumni Sam Cody (piano), Montgomery Bray (percussion) and Hart Smith (trumpet).



New Century Brass Band members practice a vocal number in San Francisco's new Ikeda Auditorium.

MINA KING-CALBAZANA, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Blazing New Pathways to a Brighter Reality

In December 1991, six months after the joyful completion of a graduate degree at Northern Arizona University, I was diagnosed with metastasized breast cancer. Not only was I far away from my beloved leaders in Boston, but also a step away from starting a Fulbright Fellowship in Mexico.

At the time, I did not realize what a wonderful opportunity awaited me to further develop my life. In fact, I was unable to see this dilemma in any other way except for the tragedy it appeared to be. Despite knowing that time and time again, through sickness and sorrow, including the death of one of our sons, my prayers and unshakable faith had enabled me to live through just about anything — and still come up smiling — this time I panicked.

My life was on the line, and I was so traumatized I could not chant for weeks after the diagnosis. A senior leader in Phoenix literally had to take me by the hand and lead me back to my Gohonzon.

I became hopeful when doctors at the U.S. Information Agency in Washington, D.C., advised me that the Fulbright award could be postponed while I underwent cancer therapy. They would then make a decision based on the outcome.

After living through the agonies of a lumpectomy, chemotherapy and radiation, I was to continue with the drug tamoxifen indefinitely. Although the cancer had already metastasized to 13 out of 22 lymph nodes, the doctors still concluded that my treatment had been successful.

Consequently, in May 1993 I left my home in Arizona to serve one school year as a teacher-trainer at the University of Yucatan in Merida, Mexico. I soon realized a rate of professional growth that probably could not have occurred had I remained at home to teach. In addition, while in Mexico, my husband and I took a side trip to Cuba, only 90 miles away — a country he and I had always wanted to visit but had no idea how to go about doing so until then.

Upon returning to Arizona in February 1994, we had promised my daughter, Nina, to return to Cambridge, Mass., to baby-sit

our two young granddaughters. Since my regularly scheduled medical checkups every three months indicated no recurrent evidence of cancer, I felt confident to go there, and in a relatively short time found a part-time ESL/EFL teaching job at one of Boston's community colleges. Surely after three years absence of any signs of the dreaded disease, I thought, it must have passed out of my system — due to my strong unceasing prayers, I was sure.

But my destiny was otherwise. In May 1995, shortly before the end of the school semester, a biopsy revealed that new boils that had begun to appear on my left breast were indeed cancer. Again.

Despite the high-tech tests I had been taking every three months — the extensive blood work, X-rays, MRIs, CAT scans, and bone scans — none had indicated the disease was still present, until the eruption of boils. Frantically, I enrolled myself in the Macrobiotic Institute in Bequeath, Mass., for one week, certain that a change in diet could bring about remission. And once again I began the round of chemotherapy and radiation, thinking, "I'll surely beat it this time." After all, I had the Gohonzon, I was back in Boston (my spiritual home), and now I had the best medical care available in the United States.

After undergoing several cycles, it became clear that neither the chemotherapy nor the radiation were working very well. My doctor changed the therapy to more potent chemicals, which nearly killed me. I was hospitalized a total of five times while undergoing the therapy. Each time I doubted that I would leave the hospital alive. I became a frequent visitor to the local library, and searched the Internet determinedly for more information on alternative and complementary cancer treatments.

Although I had found information that appeared to offer better answers, the problem now was that I could no longer afford additional treatments. I had quit my part-time job to devote myself full-time to finding a cure. Worse still, spending so much money to change my diet did not appear to be working, either.

Nevertheless, I told the med-

ical personnel that I wanted no more of their treatments. I resigned myself to an early death, while continuing to eat organically. If nothing else, I thought, at least I will die eating correctly.

Gradually I became aware of other changes taking place in my life, despite the turmoil that raged within. It appeared that my heart was opening up new pathways to a reality I had never experienced: Not only were my family relationships becoming deeper, but I was also making friendships in places where none had existed previously.

People were attaching themselves to my life in the most meaningful ways. My suffering appeared to be changing my life, leaving me feeling warmly connected to people. New and old friends were calling me long-distance, writing and sending cards, or sending me flowers for no apparent reason — except to wish me well.

However, I was resigning myself to the fact that my days were numbered. I was becoming confused. Should I just give up and die now, I pondered, or should I continue to fight for my life? Even though Nichiren Daishonin writes in the Goshō "On Prolonging Life," "One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the universe..." the struggle to live was becoming too difficult for me. It became very clear before long that I needed guidance once more.

Yet another leader in faith answered my main questions very simply and eloquently. In so many words, he said, if I were resigning myself to an early death, then I was not practicing the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin; I must redetermine to fulfill my mission with faith and courage until the last moment of my life. What a wake-up call that was for me. Immediately, I began to fight for my life again. If there were a solution, I prayed, please let it be made known to me in concrete terms — actual proof was what I sought.

About this same time, I had been trying also to reach a son whom I had not heard from for many months. Five days after beginning to chant in this way, he called.

"Vince, where have you



Mina King-Calbazana with her husband, Ted: 'There is no cause ever to doubt the gift of my life, as well as that of those around me.'

been?" I asked.

"Mom, I had no good news to tell you so I didn't call," he said. "But I've got good news for you now. I've hit the lottery for \$50,000 dollars. And I'm going to buy you and Dad a car to replace your old one."

"Great," I answered without thinking, enjoying his excitement.

Later, I decided to call him back to ask if he would pay instead for one of the cancer treatments I had been researching, thinking, "What on earth would I do with a new car if I'm dying of cancer?" He agreed to help out and asked that I find out what expenses were involved, including those needed for my husband to accompany me.

The expenses amounted to a whopping \$17,000 dollars for both of us to travel and stay for three weeks at a reputable cancer treatment center in Mexico. A complementary cancer therapy called the Gerson Therapy was being practiced at a Meridien hospital in Playas de Tijuana. Founded more than 60 years ago by a Dr. Max Gerson (now deceased), it has been successful in initiating a cure for advanced cancers and other degenerative diseases.

Disheartened by the costs, however, I called Vince once more. He replied without hesitation, "I'll pay for two-thirds of it if you can get the rest."

Immediately, I called another son in Minnesota to see if he could help. Teddy promised to call me back shortly, so I was surprised when the phone rang to hear Vince say: "Pack your bags, Mom. You and Dad are going to that hospital in Mexico."

It seems Teddy had called Nina and then Vince. The three quickly agreed to share the costs. Vince oversaw everything, even taking the day off from work to take us to the airport. In less than 10 days after

praying for actual proof, my husband and I were on a flight to San Diego. From there, a shuttle bus carried us to the Meridien hospital.

From the time we arrived at the hospital until we left, I received unimaginable care — organic meals, B-12 injections, other vitamins, enzymes, massages, acupuncture, freshly made juices around the clock, daily enemas, clay packs and other treatments intended to detoxify the body and build up the immune system.

In three weeks I had lost approximately 30 pounds, mostly fluids, from my malfunctioning cells; my liver function improved 100 percent; there were now half the number of free radicals in my blood; and the swelling in both arms from lymphedema had disappeared completely in one arm and decreased immensely in the other. The doctors at the hospital agreed that my system had reacted well to the treatment, although they felt it better not to apply the full therapy. None of the medical care I had received in Boston had achieved these results.

According to the Gerson Therapy, I will have to continue this program for the next one-and-a-half to two years to rid my body completely of cancer. Only time and my determined prayers to win will be the deciding factors in my struggle for life. Yet I feel as though I have won the battle no matter what the physical outcome.

My life has changed so dramatically, leaving me feeling that this disease has manifested itself as a protective force in my life. There is no cause ever to doubt the gift of my life, as well as that of those around me.

My deepest gratitude to all of my family and the SGI members and other friends who have helped me to realize my treasures. ❧

Shin'ichi Yamamoto sensed in President Atatürk's motto, "Make new friends, but treasure old ones," a formula for creating the future. That was why on this trip to the Middle East, he strove as always to make new friends, to nurture the seeds for lasting friendship. He engaged those he met in heartfelt dialogue, praying sincerely and earnestly for their happiness as he did so.

After becoming president, Kemal Atatürk set himself to reforming Turkey and building a new nation. He worked to establish a new constitution and abolished the caliphate, the position of highest religious leader held by the sultan, thus effecting a formal separation of religion and state. He gave women the right to vote and run for office in national elections and initiated numerous other progressive measures. He supported reform and progress in every area of national life, adopting the Gregorian (Western) calendar and introducing a new romanized Turkish alphabet. He nurtured industry and actively pursued reform in government, business and the arts and sciences.

Even after becoming president, he continued to demonstrate exemplary initiative as a leader who lived and fought among the people. For example, he played a direct, pivotal role in the spread of the new Turkish alphabet and literacy. Until that time, Turkish had been written with Arabic characters — only about 20 percent of the Turkish people could read and write. This had led to frequent discussion of the need to reform the writing system as a first step to improving literacy.

When the president decided to implement a new romanized Turkish alphabet, he traveled around the country, personally teaching it to people. He would set up a blackboard in the village square and demonstrate the new alphabet. After the lesson, he would call a villager up and have him write his name on the blackboard in the new letters he had just learned. This often resulted in the joyous cry: "I can write my name!" Excitement spread throughout the land, until all of Turkey was for a time transformed into a giant classroom. The result was a dramatic jump in literacy.

In *The World and the West*, the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee writes of the Turkish revolution:

[I]n the nineteen-twenties [Kemal] put through in Turkey what was perhaps as revolutionary a programme as has ever been carried out in any country deliberately and systematically in so short a span of time. It was as if, in our Western world, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the secularist scientific mental revolution at the end of the seventeenth century, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution had all been telescoped into a single lifetime and been made compulsory by law.¹

The New Human Revolution

By HO GOKU — ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Volume 6, Chapter 2

Long Journey

Translation of parts 7–12 of the 'Long Journey' 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 morning of Feb. 4, Shin'ichi Yamamoto and his party left Istanbul, Turkey, and flew to Athens, Greece. Athens in February was colder than they had anticipated, but the sun shone brightly. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c. 540–480 B.C.E.) said, "The sun is new every day."² For us, too, each day is a fresh start, an opportunity to progress and make new achievements.

On Feb. 4 the previous year, Shin'ichi had been in Bodhgaya, India, where Shakyamuni attained enlightenment. Now, exactly one year later, he was in the birthplace of Western civilization, the capital of philosophy where Socrates and Plato thought and taught. He was excited on this first visit to Greece.

They had no guide, so they took a taxi and went sightseeing on their own. Their first stop was the Acropolis, a hill in the center of the Greek capital some 530 feet above sea level. The white form of the Parthenon, which sat majestically atop the Acropolis, gleamed brilliantly against the backdrop of blue sky.

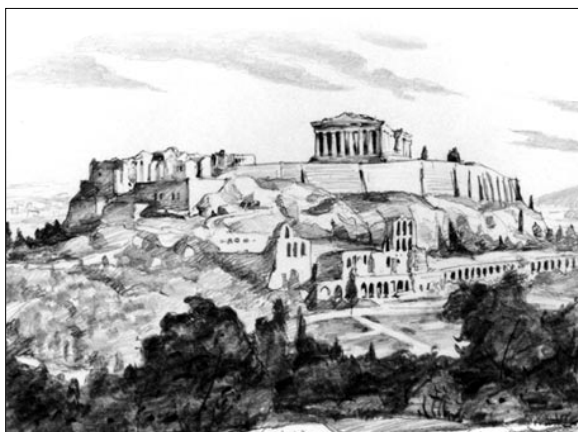
Getting out of the taxi, Shin'ichi and the others began to climb the steep path to the Acropolis. The Parthenon was supported by simple, stately Doric columns and was approximately 230 feet long and 100 feet wide. Each column was about 33 feet in height and about 6 feet in diameter at the base. The 46 columns comprising the structure made for a spectacular sight.

The Parthenon was built as a temple celebrating the victory of Athens over Persia and dedicated to the city's patron goddess, Athena. Work on it began in 447 B.C.E., taking more than a decade to complete. Athens at that time held sway over the Mediterranean world and was at the peak of its glory. The Parthenon is indisputably one of the greatest masterpieces of ancient Greek architecture, a

symbol of Greek culture's dominance at that time.

More than 500 years after its construction, the great writer and biographer Plutarch (C.E. 46–119) described the architecture of ancient Greece at its zenith as follows: "[I]n its vigor and freshness [it] looks to this day as if it were just executed."³ Even now, 2,400 years after it was built, the marble columns of the Parthenon shine with an eternal luster, a majesty combined with a gentle, human glow.

Shin'ichi felt as if humanity's aspiration for eternity had been expressed to perfection in the Parthenon. He also thought that when it came time to build the Grand Main Temple at the head temple, they should use stone as the primary construction material, with generous use of marble throughout. This would ensure that it would be a building harmonizing beautifully with the nearby majestic, snowcapped peak



of Mount Fuji and an edifice surpassing even the splendor of the Parthenon of Athens.

On the south slope of the Acropolis were the ancient ruins of a theater and other buildings. Beyond were the roofs of houses in the city below and then the blue, blue sea.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto and his group next visited the Erechtheum, a temple on the north side of the Acropolis. It was built in the graceful Ionic style, adorned

by a porch on which six sculpted female forms served as columns.

Looking down from the Erechtheum, they could see the center of Athens, including government buildings. And on the left, through gaps in a grove of trees, they could make out the ruins of other temples and ancient buildings.

Eisuke Akizuki checked a map and explained to Shin'ichi: "There is the The-seum, the Temple of Hephaestus. The old Agora used to be right in front of that." The Agora was an open space in the center of the city where the citizens of ancient Athens gathered.

"That's where Socrates and Plato taught and carried out their dialogues," Shin'ichi said eagerly. "Let's go." They descended from the Acropolis and headed for the Agora.

On the way, they met a Greek man who asked, "Japanese?"

When Yusuke Yoshikawa said they were, the man smiled warmly.

"The Greeks are really friendly, aren't they?" said Yoshikawa.

Akira Kuroki nodded in agreement. "They certainly are," he said. "I noticed it earlier in the city, too. When you walk past a shop, the owner smiles and waves you in.... But they seem very different from the image I had of them as descendants of the ancient Greek philosophers."

Shin'ichi laughed. "According to Kuroki, philosophers always have to wear a stern expression," he said. "But that may be an image that we in Japan made up, with no basis. Socrates, for example, was a philosopher who taught and lived among the people. I very much doubt that he spent his days walking around with a scowl on his face. I think he was actually very warm, very vital and very human.

"If a philosopher is completely divorced from the world and spends all his time puzzling over issues that have nothing to do with people's real lives — well, the philosophy he produces will be a lifeless thing. Philosophy only has true meaning when it is rooted in the lives of the people."

As they talked, the group arrived at the Agora.

When the Agora was built, it was surrounded by many public buildings including the senate, the archives, the court and a guest palace. All that was left when Shin'ichi and his group visited were the foundation stones. The word *agora* originally meant "meeting" and later came to refer to a place where people gath-

JOURNEY, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

ered, a public square. If the Acropolis was a natural fortress, the strategic center of Athen's defense and the sacred ground of the city's main temple, then the Agora was the center of ordinary life. It was the square where government decrees were made public, the market where people bought and sold their wares and the place where they met and exchanged information.

As he walked through the Agora, Shin'ichi said: "People of all different ages and professions gathered here. They discussed all sorts of things, from the gossip of the day to the gravest affairs of state. It was truly a place of free discussion, of free speech. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that the famous Athenian democracy was born here in the Agora, at least in part."

"What you just said reminds me of our discussion meetings — they're like the Agora, aren't they?" Yusuke Yoshikawa added. "Many different people gather at our discussion meetings. Some share happy experiences, while others talk about their problems, questions and doubts. Some come to start an argument. And in the process, the door is opened to free, honest discussion among ordinary people."

Shin'ichi nodded in agreement. "You're right," he said. "And our discussion meetings are not only an Agora dedicated to the people's happiness, but also where we can develop and train ourselves by studying Buddhism. This leads to our growth and that of others. I am sure that a new popular awareness will arise from our discussion meetings, our 'modern Agora.'"

Eisuke Akizuki added with some vehemence: "But almost none of the many critics and journalists who attack the Gakkai have recognized the value of our discussion meetings. They pay no attention to them...."

"In most cases," Shin'ichi told the young leaders, "the things that no one pays much attention to are really the most wonderful and important of all. People are captivated by a fine house, but they don't pay any attention to its foundation. The foundation holds up the house — our discussion meetings are our movement's foundation."

"The most important thing of all, though, is giving personal guidance and encouragement. It goes without saying that we should encourage those who attend discussion meetings as much as possible, but I always tend to think of those who do not attend. That's why I've often visited such members, to encourage them

personally. This is the most fundamental part of a leader's activities."

Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "A human being is made up of many individual cells. When each of these is healthy and vital, the whole person is healthy and vital. In the same way, individual members sustain and support the Soka Gakkai. When each member is joyful and energetic, we can undertake dynamic activities to revitalize society as a whole. That is why personal guidance, focusing on each individual, is the most important of all our activities."

"Socrates (c. 470–399 B.C.E.), too, was a great master of the art of dialogue. His philosophy's brilliance was revealed through dialogue. Since we subscribe to the supreme philosophy of life, we have to engage in sincere dialogue, giving encouragement that illuminates the depths of the human heart and leads to true happiness."

From the Agora, Shin'ichi and his party headed toward the foot of Philopappus Hill, also known as the Hill of the Muses, which is to the southwest of the Acropolis and the adjacent valley. There they found the prison cell where Socrates was reputed to have been held between his trial and execution. The cell was nothing more than a small rock cave with an iron grating set into the side of a sheer rock face. Shin'ichi's heart ached when he thought of the aged Socrates spending a month in this dark cell awaiting his execution.

Athens was the birthplace of democracy, the home of many great philosophers and a center of reason and intelligence. Socrates was known as the wisest of them all, a man of principle and peerless brilliance. Yet in spite of that — or perhaps precisely because of that — he was scorned, misunderstood and attacked. In the end, he was condemned to death for a crime of which he was completely innocent.

Shin'ichi deeply perceived in Socrates' fate the absurdity that is at times the dark karma of the human race.

It was in 399 B.C.E. that charges were brought against Socrates. Basically, he was accused of not recognizing the gods of the state and of corrupting the youth.

These charges were leveled by a little-known man named Meletus, but the powerful politician Anytus was said to actually have been behind them.

The Sophists also played a role in the accusation. A group of pseudo-scholars, the popular Sophists were chiefly concerned with rhetorical debate. Pretending wisdom, they would readily argue any point, whatever its true merits. They made money by teaching young people techniques for besting an opponent in argument.

The Sophists cared nothing for truth or for what was important to a good, happy life. Their only aim was convincing their opponents to accept their views. To that purpose, they made a pretense of vast learning, not hesitating to call black white if it meant they could confuse and defeat their opponents. While they were very popular with many

nians mistook Socrates for a Sophist. In this climate of confusion over truth and falsehood and right and wrong, opinion against Socrates rose. Finally, in democratic Athens, following apparently democratic processes, Socrates was condemned to death.

This is why it is often said that the democracy of Athens killed Socrates. And what precisely was this democracy? The foundations for it were laid in the 6th century B.C.E. by the poet and lawmaker Solon, one of the so-called Seven Wise Men of Greece, and the politician Cleisthenes, who reformed political organization from being based on heredity to being based on locality. Around the middle of the 5th century B.C.E., under the democratic leader Pericles, Athenian democracy entered its golden age.

Pericles further reduced the powers of the Areopagus, one of the councils of ancient Athens and a stronghold of the aristocracy. Stating that "Our government is called a democracy, because its administration is in the hands, not of the few, but of the many,"⁴ he carried on the reforms initiated by his predecessors, strengthening democracy by making it possible for the city's adult male citizens to participate in practically every sphere of government by drawing lots.

But when Pericles died in 429 B.C.E. and his strong leadership came to an end, the corruption of Athenian democracy soon began. None of those who followed after Pericles were particularly talented as political leaders. Instead of pursuing the ideals of justice and happiness for the people, they exploited the people for their personal ambitions.

(To be continued)



young people, the general populace looked on them with alarm.

Socrates knew that the Sophists were completely ignorant of the true nature of life. He always stayed aloof from them and kept his own counsel. When he appeared in the Agora, a small, stocky figure with a snub nose, dressed with careless indifference, young people who sought after truth would flock around him, begging to be instructed.

The Sophists challenged him to debates, hoping to defeat him publicly. But their clever tricks could not withstand Socrates' words of truth and sound reasoning. They must surely have envied and hated him for exposing their trickery.

Unfortunately, perhaps because of his superb rhetorical skills or his great influence on the city's youth, many Athe-

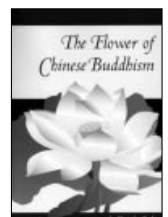
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SIGN POSTS

APPLYING
NICHIREN
DAISHONIN'S
WRITINGS TO
DAILY LIFE

Back to the Gohonzon

By REIKO GROSHALL

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

When one embraces this mandala [the Gohonzon], all Buddhas and gods will gather around him, accompanying him like a shadow, and protect him day and night...you should trust in it with all your heart. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 177)

This quote from "Upholding Faith in the Gohonzon" says it all — if I embrace this mandala, I will be protected. Then why is it difficult to trust the Gohonzon with all my heart on an everyday basis?

I talk with many young women from different lifestyles, careers, etc. They share with me their struggles as well as their victories. I have discovered that many struggle because they have lost their focus or purpose. I find that they know a lot about Buddhism theoretically, but sometimes encouraging themselves to challenge everyday situations is difficult.

I also go through this. I know in my mind that if I challenge my situation I can grow — but the bottom line is: Do I want to challenge it? Do I have the courage to face the situation head-on, or am I satisfied to coast through it?

Certain things that I have to challenge stem from the core of my life. For example, in past relationships if we would go to the movies I was compelled to pay my way. I wouldn't let my date pay for me. This would make him feel unwanted. Facing the Gohonzon with this, I realized I didn't feel I was worth being "cared for," or even worse, I wasn't worth spending time with. I realized if I could change this, I could change the root problem, my insecurities and lack of self-worth. I could do my human revolution — which is overwhelming and yet so freeing.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said: "While people today are extremely greedy, they do not desire the vast benefit of attaining Buddhahood. On this point they could be called unselfish, people of modest wants, or just plain foolish." Sometimes I fit the category of "just plain foolish." However, I am striving each day to become "extremely greedy" about attaining Buddhahood by taking my everyday situations to the Gohonzon. ☐

'RISSHO ANKOKU RON' — JULY 16

Give Hope to the Community

SIGNIFICANT DATE

By JAMIE CUTLER

FORT MYERS, FLA., CORRESPONDENT

If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not? (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 38)

People's lives today, at a fundamental level, are largely out of control. Because of our mistaken views, we have great difficulty taking responsibility for the conditions we find ourselves in. How can we find positive solutions to alter our lives at the root? Nichiren Daishonin's treatise the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" explains that we can find these solutions primarily in changing the fundamental darkness in our lives. (Nichiren Daishonin submitted this treatise to the most powerful man in Japan, the retired regent, Hojo Tokiyori, on July 16, 1260).

People ask: "What can I do? I'm just one small person." But Buddhism teaches

that a self-reformation in just one person can influence the whole environment. As SGI President Ikeda explains in the "Rissho Ankoku" chapter of *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4: "The goal of Nichiren's Buddhism is to create peace and prosperity in society by equipping individuals...with the inner requisites to triumph in all endeavors. The 'Rissho Ankoku Ron' reveals the underlying principle for achieving this."

I have an experience about studying the "Rissho Ankoku Ron": Managing a hotel in Fort Myers for the last 12 years, I have had many opportunities to get involved in my community. When I got a phone call asking me to be on the Chamber of Commerce, I was thrilled. I thought I was totally inexperienced for such a big job, but I'd give it my best shot.

There were several barren plots of land in our city and a lot of unused park sites. These eyesores had been the subject of many a town conference, but no progress had been made in 27 years. Since I was studying the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" at the time, I was wondering what I could do.

And I was surprised again when I got nominated as the president of the beautification project. I thought: "I don't

even have a green thumb, but at least they haven't given up. I'm not at all political, but I love helping people. I would just love to help them figure out a way to succeed." That's how I chanted night and day. I saw my mission: to give my colleagues hope (even if I over watered my own plants). My sense of mission led me to chant before every one of the board meetings to accomplish the goal of getting this city some recreation areas.

In a month we had 40 trucks lined up with donations for our first ever park site, centrally located, right by the river. At the opening the mayor and the county gave us checks to continue our work. And now there are five completed sites — we have concerts and children's play areas, a river walk, a place for people to stop and watch the sunset and a park for family barbecues and outings. We are the number one parks project in Florida!

It's a pleasure to know that because of my determination — based on my study of the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" — to make a difference, I had a positive influence on area citizens and politicians. By elevating my life condition first, I inspired them to make their mutual dreams come true with hope. ☐

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON FAITH

Why Follow Buddhist Formalities?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT CHIEF

Q How important is it to follow Buddhist formalities?

A Adhering to Buddhist formalities in itself is not the purpose of Buddhist practice. But in following them, we often have a tool to help us practice.

The purpose of Buddhist practice is simply to change our lives for the better. And Buddhism is talking about real change — fundamental change in our lives. SGI President Ikeda pointedly describes this in the beginning of *The Human Revolution*: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of all humanity."

Changing our life-condition is a constant battle against our inner weakness. It takes serious heart and spirit to challenge ourselves — something way beyond formality. So if we practice Buddhism only out of formality, out of force of habit, fundamental change within our lives cannot be effected.

For instance, take gongyo — the format of five prayers in the morning and three in the evening. Following this for-

mat alone is not the purpose of doing gongyo. Expressing our appreciation to the Mystic Law, renewing our determination for kosen-rufu, revitalizing ourselves, elevating, expanding and enriching our lives and solidifying our inherent Buddhahood: This is the purpose of reciting the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

At the same time, because many SGI-USA members have developed the discipline to undertake the morning and evening format of gongyo, the practice of it has taken roots in our daily lives. If we had taken Buddhist formalities more lightly, many of us may never have mastered gongyo.

Unfortunately, some of us have developed a guilty conscience from taking Buddhist formalities too rigidly, like feeling "out of rhythm" if we miss gongyo. Not only is such guilt unhealthy, but it is something that people who do not chant never have to feel.

In other words, one's life-condition can become lower than that of people who don't even chant because of "Buddhist guilt"! Of course, when we set a goal to do gongyo and miss it, resetting the goal is healthy. Self-challenge is healthy, but guilt is not.

Nichiren Daishonin states in "The Gift of Rice": "Even common mortals can at-

tain Buddhahood if they cherish one thing: earnest faith. In the deepest sense, earnest faith is the will to understand and live up to the spirit, not the words, of the sutras" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 268). "Earnest faith" here can be construed to mean sincerity, the "spirit of the sutras" to mean substance and the "words of the sutras" to mean formalities. Our sincerity is what ultimately counts; really changing our lives — the substance of Buddhist practice — is what we should seek in faith.

And since we can often reach this substance through the discipline of fulfilling formalities, we can think of formalities as a tool.

Formalities are like a glass, while substance is like the water contained in it. We don't drink the glass, but it would be hard to drink the water without it.

It is our challenge to put Buddhist formalities into this perspective, developing our faith by fulfilling their intent. "Those who strengthen their faith day by day and month after month are genuine practitioners," President Ikeda recently said. "Our daily practice of gongyo, therefore, is important, as well as attending meetings every month.... Buddhist practice is a succession of such untiring efforts, the ultimate goal of which is attaining the summit of Buddhahood." ☐

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 10th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day and Soka Gakkai Mothers Day, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, April 21.

Congratulations on May 3! Let's have an enjoyable meeting today. SGI members from around the world who have joined us here, thank you for your tremendous efforts in coming all this way. Since there are a number of members here from Brazil and Argentina, the countries farthest away from Japan, I will begin by speaking about Brazil.

I visited Brazil for the first time in October 1960. After being inaugurated as Soka Gakkai president, I lost no time in initiating efforts for world-wide kosen-rufu.

The SGI leader became the third Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1960. In October that year, he visited the United States, Canada and Brazil.

At the time, I was 32. That was an incredibly busy period in my life. Often for days on end I didn't even have time to go home.

This marks my 50th year since embracing faith. For the past half-century, I have single-mindedly worked and steadfastly challenged myself for the sake of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI, the happiness of our members and kosen-rufu — without sitting back to rest even a moment. As a result, I have created a great history of kosen-rufu.

The good fortune I have accumulated will surely adorn my life and shine in it for all eternity. And I am confident that the same is true of all those who have joined me in this great cause.

The second time I visited Brazil was in March 1966.

As a result of a 1964 coup d'état, Brazil was ruled by a military government when President Ikeda visited the country again. Under the repressive regime, many Brazilian cultural figures and intellectuals were persecuted and driven into exile.

During that entire visit, my party and I were kept under close police surveillance, our every movement watched around the clock. Of course, we hadn't done anything wrong. This situation resulted from slander and false accusations di-



Brazilian poet Amedeu Thiago de Mello and his wife visit the World Culture Center.

One Individual Can Change Everything

rected at us. The prime cause can be traced to a handful of Japanese or Japanese-Brazilians who had gone around calling us communists and racketeers.

The surveillance was relentless. When we arrived at the gymnasium for our final meeting with the members, it was surrounded by some 200 police. There were officers posted at the entrance and the exits. As a result, we had to leave the country after just four days and three nights in São Paulo.

Eighteen Years of Steadfast Daimoku

For the next 18 years, I was unable to enter Brazil. In 1974 I made plans to visit the South American country, but had to turn back en route when I was denied a visa. Throughout this long, difficult period, while weathering all kinds of hardships, there was someone who continued to chant steadfast daimoku to change this situation. That was Sílvia Saito, former Brazil-SGI women's division general chief, a truly admirable woman. Mrs. Saito was a former young women's

division member from Kyoto who, after marrying and practicing for a time in Tokyo's Meguro area, moved to Brazil with her husband.

Despite the obstacles Brazil-SGI faced, Mrs. Saito exerted herself in earnest. She prayed continually to the Gohonzon with all her heart and being. She would encourage the Brazilian members, saying: "No matter what, let's welcome President Ikeda to Brazil! Let's continue advancing Brazilian kosen-rufu!" She chanted boundlessly — not millions, but tens of millions — of daimoku. Her daimoku became the driving force behind the great development that Brazil-SGI has realized today.

The prayer of a woman who has made up her mind is strong. Men, on the other hand, are often cowardly and resort to cunning strategies instead.

And so it was that, after a hiatus of 18 years, in February 1984 I at last visited Brazil a third time. Mrs. Saito was overjoyed.

In response to mounting demands for democratic rule,

Brazil returned to civilian rule in 1985.

I visited the country again in 1993, at which time I had a leisurely talk with Mrs. Saito and her husband, Roberto, at the magnificent SGI Brazil Nature and Culture Center in São Paulo.

On my departure, Mrs. Saito accompanied me to the airport. Seeing me off, she said with gratitude and emotion, "Sensei, thank you so much!" Two months later, on April 28, she passed away. She led a splendid life during which she completed her mission. I can still picture her on that last occasion.

Five thousand people attended Mrs. Saito's funeral, even though it was on a business day, including current and former congressmen, influential members of Brazil's Japanese community, cultural figures, intellectuals and persons representing all areas of society. Many telegrams of condolence were received. At the close of the service, participants broke into thunderous applause in praise of Mrs. Saito's sublime, noble life. A long line of cars followed

the route to the crematorium; members lined the route to bid Mrs. Saito a final farewell. At dusk, there was a glorious sunset, the sun's majestic rays painting the sky a beautiful crimson.

The kosen-rufu movement in Brazil has made remarkable strides. In terms of its vigor and momentum, it is perhaps second to none in the world.

In Curitiba, there is a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park and on the outskirts of São Paulo a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Road. There are also plans for a Josei Toda Road in Curitiba and a Josei Toda Park in São Jose dos Campos, a short distance north-east of São Paulo.

Mrs. Saito's tremendous efforts in faith are the cornerstone of Brazil-SGI today. I am gratified to have had such a disciple, to know that such a person existed in the SGI. Her memory will always be with me. I hope her name will be remembered eternally, like that of Joan of Arc.

In recent years, President Ikeda has received a number of honors and decorations from Brazil in recognition of his outstanding contributions to peace, culture and education. In 1990, he was conferred the country's highest honor, the National Order of the Southern Cross.

In 1993, the prestigious Brazilian Academy of Letters named him a nonresident member, the first Japanese to be conferred this honor. Other nonresident members of the academy have included such great literary figures as Leo Tolstoy, Émile Zola and André Malraux and philosopher Herbert Spencer.

President Ikeda has also received honorary doctorates from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and the Federal University of Paraná, and an honorary professorship from the University of São Paulo. He has been awarded commendations and citations from the states of São Paulo and Paraná, and the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Duque de Caxias, as well as from various cultural, educational and scientific organizations.

A Poet of the World

As a result of our efforts for peace, many conscientious people throughout the world have become staunch allies and supporters of the SGI. One such individual is Amedeu Thiago de Mello, a Brazilian cultural figure

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who warmly watches over and supports Brazil-SGI's activities out of profound sympathy with its goals. Mr. Thiago de Mello is regarded as modern Brazil's greatest poet and enjoys an international reputation.

We need to recognize true greatness in people — whether or not they embrace faith. Please do not forget this.

Mr. Thiago de Mello is a pro-tector of the Amazon, who carries out his artistic activities in the depths of the Amazon in the city of Barreirinha. This in itself shows something of his greatness.

His representative work is the famous poem "Estatutos do Homem" (The Duty and Rights of Man), which has been translated into many languages. In 1992, he presented me with a beautiful poem titled "Um Ramo de Luz Para Daisaku Ikeda" (A Fresh Shoot of Light for Daisaku Ikeda). As a token of appreciation, I immediately composed a poem for him titled "Midorinasu Kigi no Kagayaki" (The Brilliance of Green Trees).

In his dedication of his poem, Mr. Thiago de Mello describes being deeply moved on viewing a compilation of photographs taken by the SGI leader, saying he felt as though a ray of light had reached him in the depths of the Amazon jungle. He explains that his poem attempts to capture that light and translate it into a poem for Mr. Ikeda.

Four years ago, when I spoke at the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Mr. Thiago de Mello, also an Academy member, journeyed several days from his home deep in the Amazon to be present.¹

In 1992, Brazil-SGI held the "Environment and Development" exhibition in the city of Manaus, a major city in the Amazon region. Mr. Thiago de Mello kindly made a speech at the opening. He asserted that human beings need to learn more about how to love and care, suggesting that such a giving quality can be found in the hearts of SGI members and their wisdom.

Mr. Thiago de Mello also commended the SGI leader, calling him a great thinker, philosopher, writer and poet who has planted love and compassion in people's lives and illuminated their hearts.

And he urged those present to support the SGI in its life-affirming endeavors. Before an au-

dience of distinguished guests, he declared that the SGI is dedicated to protecting life, the most precious treasure of all. He called on them to assist the SGI members, who are committed to such a noble cause.

We are truly fortunate to have such a friend. His views are in fact shared by many sincere individuals throughout the world. The situation here in Japan is a complete anomaly.

Exemplary Unity

The SGI-sponsored "Human Rights in Today's World" exhibition has been traveling around Brazil since last September. Mr. Thiago de Mello spoke on the occasion of its opening, in Brasília. He explained how the SGI is working throughout the world to improve human rights, protect the environment and realize peace, saying he felt very encouraged to take action with members of Brazil-SGI. The correct stance for those desiring these goals, he asserted, is to continue struggling to improve conditions in the world and to maintain firm conviction that a great future lies in store.

The development of the kosen-rufu movement in Brazil has been truly wonderful — Brazil has today become a model of kosen-rufu. The members are all on good terms with each other; they are sincere and straightforward; they do not resort to strategies. Each is forging broad, deep bonds of trust in society. They have exemplary unity.

The great driving force of Brazil-SGI is the women's division. As a result of women's profound prayers, the organization in Brazil has opened a path for kosen-rufu where none existed.

Brazil's victory has been won by the women's division.

Treachery Is Most Heinous

Mr. Thiago de Mello composed a beautiful poem in praise of the great hero of Brazilian freedom and independence, Tiradentes, whose real name was Joaquim José da Silva Xavier (1746?-92). I discussed Tiradentes once before on Jan. 28, 1990.

During the latter half of the 18th century, when Brazil was under Portuguese colonial rule, Tiradentes launched a struggle to bring independence to his homeland. However, as a result of base treachery, he was arrested, tortured and, finally, hanged. He was 46 when he died.

No realm is free of traitors. Moreover, the greater someone

is, the greater the risk of betrayal. The Daishonin suffered outrageous betrayal.

That people advancing along the same path could betray their friends or mentor well illustrates the precarious nature of the human heart, how changeable and frightfully uncertain it is. For this reason, Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), the great liberator of South America, says, "To forget one's indebtedness is the greatest crime a person can commit." In other words, nothing is more heinous than treachery.

Today, April 21, is the anniversary of the day in 1792 on which Tiradentes died for his convictions with great courage and dignity. In Brazil, today is a national holiday, Tiradentes' Day. Even now, the people of Brazil still proudly sing his praises.

A Hero Lives On

Saluting this great hero who died more than two centuries ago, Mr. Thiago de Mello writes:

*You now make your way,
Tiradentes,
To an encounter with death —
Recalling your hopeful comrades
And also those who
disappeared
In the disgrace of treachery.*

*Noble and serene,
You make your way toward
a life of truth,
Because with you goes the
dream you planted
In the Brazilian soul:
The great dream of
independence,
Of justice and liberty.*

*Two centuries have passed
And still you continue to
make your way
Through your native land,
Bravely, without fear
Of the brutality of injustice.*

*Time cannot erode you: you
improve.
You grow within us.
Time preserves the
brilliance of your
martyrdom.*

("Cântico a Tiradentes"
[Ode to Tiradentes])²

This is a famous poem. Reading it is deeply moving — I feel as though he is describing the martyrdom of the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

We who follow in the footsteps of President Makiguchi will also shine with ever greater brilliance and live eternally. A

life dedicated to the path of mentor and disciple becomes more immense and radiant as time goes by. This is Buddhism.

The key to attaining such an existence is to struggle wholeheartedly right now. Unless we do so, we will have regrets.

A little earlier, the Tokyo Wind Ensemble performed the Offenbach operetta *Orphée aux Enfers* (Orpheus in the Underworld). If you persevere in faith, you will manifest the world of Buddhahood. But if you abandon faith, you will fall into the state of Hell. The law of cause and effect is extremely strict.

A Sun of Hope

Tiradentes cherished a great dream and planted it in people's hearts. Our great dream is kosen-rufu.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said, "It is the Soka Gakkai's mission...to pave the way for the lasting happiness of humanity by drawing up a grand hundred-year plan, no, a grand plan for peace encompassing several millennia."³ He urged that we make a great plan for peace — not for two or three years, not for two or three decades, but for hundreds, thousands of years.

We have to work, he said, for the lasting happiness of all humanity. This is the SGI's mission. This is the task that President Toda bequeathed to us. I have advanced in exact accord with his words.

Given the chaotic state of society and the world today, this is an age in which the "sun" seems to be disappearing. In such a world, the SGI and Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism shine brilliantly as a sun of hope.

I will continue to advance along the path of kosen-rufu that presidents Makiguchi and Toda showed us. Only people of courage can proceed along this path. Cowards are unable to. Therefore, those of you with courage, join me on this noble path!

Because this meeting commemorates May 3, the Makiguchi and Toda families are present today. I am delighted to see you; I pray that you always enjoy the best of health.

Also with us today are members of the Association for the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, the Association of Priests Concerned for Nichiren Shoshu and Protection of the Law and the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu. They are true priests who have rejected and broken ties with an erroneous sect

and denounced its errors. They are true comrades of ours.

We are also joined by overseas SGI members and various groups' representatives, including those who deliver our publications each day and arts divisions members. I am delighted to see all of you.

The Path of Mentor and Disciple

President Toda was imprisoned in a great suppression of our movement during the war. What did he pray about each day in his tiny, solitary cell, the size of only three tatami mats? He left behind clear statements about this, for example in his speeches at memorial services for President Makiguchi and his treatise "History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai."

He prayed: "I am still young, but Mr. Makiguchi is old. May my mentor leave prison as soon as possible!" "It doesn't matter how long I stay here. Please let my mentor go free soon!" "Let all of the responsibility for the charges brought against President Makiguchi fall on me. May he return home even one day sooner!"

Mr. Toda wanted to single-handedly bear the full brunt of the persecution. His sole desire was to somehow protect the aged President Makiguchi. This is most solemn and sublime. Herein lies the path of mentor and disciple in the SGI and the attitude of a true disciple.

Let us always remember this solemn spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

To Be Praised by Fools

In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin says, "To be praised by fools — that is the greatest shame" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 188). It's exactly as he says. In his "Precepts for Youth," President Toda declares, "For a person of wisdom, to be praised by fools is the greatest disgrace, whereas to be praised by the great sage [Nichiren Daishonin] is the greatest honor in life."

The Lotus Sutra says that its practitioners will be cursed and spoken ill of (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 193) and will encounter hatred and jealousy even more severe than in Shakyamuni's time (LS, 164). "This sutra is hard to uphold," the Lotus Sutra also says (LS, 180). In the Goshō, citing these sutra passages, the Daishonin re-

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peatedly explains that those who propagate the Mystic Law in the Latter Day will be assailed by many difficulties.

This certainly has been the case in my life. I am living Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with my entire being. I have borne one attack after another. I have inherited President Toda's spirit and withstood all. No one but I could have endured what I have. I am living solely to safeguard the legacy of President Makiguchi, to protect the

SGI and the members who are so dear to me. Today, at this gathering to commemorate May 3 — which represents the prime point of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI — I want you to understand this earnest, unwavering spirit that guides my life.

A State of Life Vast as the Universe

In exile at Izu, the Daishonin writes, "In the *saha* world system, there are ten billion Mount Sumerus, ten billion suns and moons, and ten billion groups

of four continents" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 935; MW-5, 3).

The implication is that Japan is one tiny island among a vast number of lands and worlds.

The scale of the Buddhist view of the universe is vast. From a lofty perspective, the Daishonin observed the affairs of the tiny land of Japan with imperturbable calm and composure. He had an immense state of life. Faith is the effort to strive for and attain such a vast state of life.

The noted astronomer Dr. Chandra Wickramasinghe, with whom I have spoken on the mysteries of the cosmos and life,⁴ told me it is now known that within the Milky Way alone there are billions of stars similar to our sun. Moreover, there appear to be a great many planets in the galaxy with conditions suitable for sustaining life. The recognition of the existence of life throughout the universe, he predicted, will have great significance to humankind's advance.

The insight of Buddhism perfectly matches research on the forefront of astronomy. The outlook of science seems to be steadily approaching that of Buddhism.

Rejected From the Pure Lands

The Gosho that I just read from continues:

Since all the lands in the ten directions, with the exception of those in the *saha* world system, are pure lands, their people, being gentlehearted, neither abuse nor hate the worthies and sages. In contrast, this world is inhabited by people who were rejected from the pure lands in the ten directions.... For these offenses they fell into the three evil paths, and only after dwelling there for countless kalpas were they reborn in this world. Yet the residue of the evil

karma formed in their previous existences has not yet been eradicated, and they still tend to perpetrate the ten evil acts or the five cardinal sins, to revile the worthies and sages.... (MW-5, 3-4)

In another Gosho, the Daishonin writes: "The slanderers of Buddhism who were people of incorrigible disbelief were still being confined there by the guards of hell. They proliferated until they became the people of Japan today" (MW-1, 38).

The Gosho clearly describes the piteous state of those inhabiting this strife-filled *saha* world — in particular the country of Japan. I hope that by viewing the facts in light of the Daishonin's teachings, you can wisely discern the pattern of persecution.

For example, in "The Four Debts of Gratitude," the Daishonin writes, "The Devil of the Sixth Heaven, scheming to prevent the people of this world from [attaining Buddhahood and] going to other pure lands elsewhere, seizes every opportunity to carry out his perverse acts [creating various obstacles and thereby seeking to cause people to abandon their faith]" (MW-5, 4).

The SGI members with us today are from a total of 56 countries and territories outside Japan. I am delighted that you have traveled so far to gather here in this beautiful citadel of Soka. Thank you so much for your tremendous efforts.

Wishes of the Mentor

Also, to commemorate the 46th anniversary of the *Seikyo Shimbum*, representatives of those uncrowned friends who daily deliver our publications are gathered here in high spirits from throughout the country. Thank you for all your hard work day in and day out. Please accept my heartfelt gratitude.

President Toda said, "My wish is for all people in Japan to read the *Seikyo Shimbum*." This was one of his great dreams. You are taking the lead in making that wish a reality.

I also delivered a daily newspaper when I was a boy. There were many days when it rained or the weather was just plain lousy. But the fresh morning air — that was an irreplaceable treasure.

In the early morning most people are still sleeping. Though it must be a challenge to get up and make the rounds each day,

you can savor the clear, fragrant air that those still asleep do not know. And you can see the brilliant sunrise. Morning's drama is a grand ceremony of life. Those who experience it are the most fortunate.

At any rate, I hope everyone will treasure and appreciate those who every day deliver our publications. My wife and I press our palms together in appreciation each morning around when the newspaper is delivered. When I take up the paper in my hands, I always feel a deep sense of gratitude to all our noble deliverers.

Being a leader does not make you great. Having a position in the organization does not give you elevated status. The greatest people introduce others to the Daishonin's teachings and go visit each of their members offering warm encouragement and advice. One isn't great merely by virtue of position. There must be no confusion on this point. I want to make this clear once and for all.

Our Activities Promote Health

Doing SGI activities is good for our health. Walking around and meeting lots of people — this promotes good health. Doing gongyo and chanting daimoku are wonderful ceremonies in which we fuse with the universe. Everything we do is pervaded by profound reason.

The Daishonin states, "Buddhism is reason" (MW-3, 238). No effort we make in faith is wasted — of this you can be absolutely certain. We lead the most wonderful lives. With tenacity and endurance, together let us cheerfully advance along the supreme, most correct path in life.

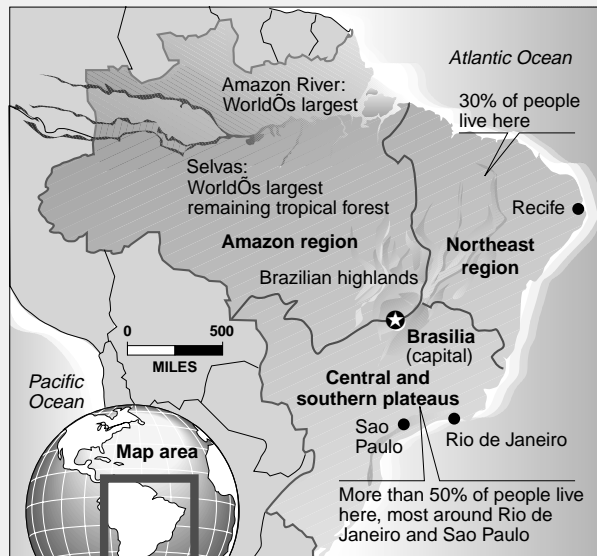
Thank you for today. Thank you! See you again soon! *Xie xie! Danke!*

Let's look forward to celebrating May 3 again next year in high spirits!

1. President Ikeda's speech on this occasion was "The Dawn of Hope for Humanistic Civilization."
2. Translated from Portuguese. Thiago de Mello, *De uma Vez por Todas: Verso e Prosa* (Once for All: Verse and Prose) (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1996), pp. 138-39.
3. From a speech in Osaka, 1955. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Works of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbumsha, 1989), vol. 4, p. 372.
4. Their dialogue is currently available only in Japanese: *Uchu to Ningen no Roman o Kataru* (The Cosmos and Human Life).

Geography and Brazil's environment

The first Earth Summit, the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 1 to 12. A look at Brazil's geography and environmental problems:



People

Population: 150.4 million
Global rank: 6th most populous nation

Distribution: About 75% urban; 80% of Brazilians live within 200 miles of the Atlantic coast
Problem: Developing the country's interior without damaging natural resources

Economy

GNP (per person): \$2,160
Global rank: 10th

Air and water

Air quality is poor in many urban areas
Water is contaminated in many areas by dumping untreated sewage and industrial wastes into streams and by mercury, a by-product of gold mining

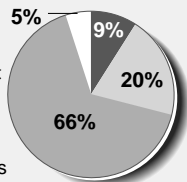
Land

Size: 3.3 million sq. mi. (almost as large as the U.S.)

Global rank: South America's largest country; fifth largest in the world

Land use

- Croplands
- Permanent pasture
- Forest & woodlands
- Other lands



Major problem:

Deforestation (over 5,000 sq. mi. per year) destroys forests and habitats for many species of plants and animals, raising concerns about species extinction and global warming

SOURCE: The 1992 Environmental Almanac, The Europa World Year Book, World Book; Research by PAT CARR

SGI President Ikeda's May 3 Poems

SGI President Ikeda composed the following poems to celebrate May 3, Soka Gakkai Day and Soka Gakkai Mothers Day.

Dedicated to all SGI members:

*Indestructible and eternal
The Castle of Soka
Stronghold of kosen-rufu
Shines brilliantly in the
world
Each member sparkles
brightly*

• • •

— With deepest appreciation to my beloved and most esteemed SGI members

— My palms pressed together in reverence.

Dedicated to the youth division:

*Youthful champions
Legion in number
Rise vigorously to the
challenge
For the time of kosen-rufu
Has now arrived*

• • •
*Fear not the appearance
Of the three powerful enemies
Advance intrepidly
With the jeweled sword of
faith
And win*

• • •

*A new era is here at last
Gallant young heroes
Knights upon white horses
Lead the way forward
With confidence and dignity*

• • •

— Dedicated to my beloved youth division members, the young leaders of the 21st century.

Dedicated to the young women's division:

*Bathed in the brilliant
Light Of Hope
Make your way
courageously
On your journey
To the Castle of Happiness*

• • •
*With rich wisdom
Live out your life in this
world
In victory and triumph
Adorning your inner palace
With priceless gems*

• • •

*The sun and myriad stars
Shine brightly
All heavenly deities
Will protect you
My dear young friends*

Dedicated to the men's division:

*Forget not for a moment
The strict love and affection
With which our late mentor
cried,
"Bemoan not, my friends,
Tribulation however great!"*

• • •

*Wherever the great
procession
Of the SGI advances*

• • •
*Unfolds an Eagle Peak
Alive with a profusion
Of untold fragrant flowers*

• • •

*Since we faithfully
Practice his sacred
teachings
The Daishonin surely
Rejoices and delights
Embracing us as his children*

Dedicated to the women's division:

*As sunny as a fine May day
The presence of smiling
mothers
Will ever transform
Heaven and earth
Into a realm of peace and
happiness.*

• • •

*Like the majestic sun
Shining from time
immemorial
Envelop and warm
Countless many
With your compassion and
love*

• • •
*Mothers of humanity,
Do not lament!
Live cheerfully and brightly!
With a lofty philosophy
Life's journey becomes a joy*

• • •

*Nothing surpasses you
Noble mothers!
Live each day
Today and always
With dignity and confidence*

• • •

*With a heart of devotion
Let all of us warmly protect
Our precious mothers
So wise and sincere
Earnest and hardworking*

• • •

*The presence of mothers
Makes this world
A thing of joy and delight
Let each of us pray
For the long lives of our
mothers* ❏

SGI DEPUTY PRESIDENT EINOSUKE AKIYA'S GUIDANCE

The District Is Vital to the Members' Happiness

From the May 1997 Daibyakureng, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

This year we again welcome the glorious anniversary of May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, amid a spirited rising tide of kosen-rufu. Around the world, there is a groundswell of interest in our movement, as though in anticipation of its further development as a body actively promoting peace, culture and education.

For example, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Salzburg, Austria, recently named SGI President Ikeda an honorary senator. The academy, which counts among its executive advisors the presidents, prime ministers and kings of European countries, is pooling the wisdom of humankind and

working to resolve crucial issues of the day. Academy president Felix Unger commended the SGI leader for contributing to humanity's future through his many dialogues with influential figures. I understand he even suggested that the SGI may be the foremost in promoting dialogue among Buddhism and other religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.

In response to the SGI president's outstanding and far-sighted leadership, members throughout the world are courageously exerting themselves in their Buddhist practice toward realizing the peace and happiness of all people. Through our activities, infused with rich humanism, we are positively influencing society and winning people's trust and praise.

By putting down solid roots in our communities, we are constructing an age of the SGI and

a firm foundation for the future. With such development in people's understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, many new members are joining the SGI. We can take this as proof of our progress in the struggle to spread true humanism around the globe.

The part of the SGI that many people in the community and new members first encounter is the district or local organizational unit. The district is a microcosm of the SGI and its main interface with society.

When it is full of vitality and life — when it is naturally pervaded with a spirit of sincerity, common sense, tolerance and warm magnanimity — a district creates irreplaceable bonds within a community. As Nichiren Daishonin indicates when he says "I entrust you with propagation of Buddhism in your province" (*The Major Writings*

of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 5, p. 151), the growth of the district is the advance of kosen-rufu.

For members, the district, as the venue for daily activities, is the fundamental place to practice, the home ground as it were. It is also the place for the warm gathering of the Soka family. If someone falls ill, then, just as in a family, everyone comes together and prays for the person's quick recovery and well-being.

For those in the youth division, the district is like a second home, an oasis. And pioneer members, as wellsprings of wisdom in life and faith, are those with whom other district members can without hesitation discuss any worries or concerns they may have. Children, the members of the future division, are also important citizens of the district; their growth is a source of delight for all.

The local organization radi-

ates a family-like atmosphere, which is conspicuously absent from most areas of modern society. As such, it constitutes a true human network, a world in which all individuals are united by warm human connections.

In the meantime, the ills of society are intensifying. Egoism and spiritual degeneration seem to grow worse by the day. Truly the age matches the Daishonin's description:

The sects of Hinayana and provisional Mahayana established during the Former and Middle Days of the Law cling all the more stubbornly to their doctrines as they enter the Latter Day. Those who espouse Hinayana reject Mahayana, and those who espouse provisional teachings attack the true teachings, until the country is over-

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My Recollections



Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

By SGI President Ikeda

I met Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia the morning of Feb. 6, 1988, when that country was in the midst of a political tempest. Two days earlier, on Feb. 4, the political party United Malays National Organization, which Prime Minister Mahathir headed, had been outlawed by the Malaysian courts. A rebel faction within the party revealed that the party wasn't in complete compliance with the law (certain local chapters had not properly registered as political groups), so the Supreme Court in Kuala Lumpur declared the entire party unlawful.

This decision astonished everyone. How did this affect the party's elected representatives? What about cabinet members? It was a development that could easily hinder the entire nation's ability to function.

On Feb. 5, the prime minister



AFP/FRANCIS SILVAN

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad is lifted up by supporters of his National Front after the party's landslide victory in Malaysia's 9th general elections, April 26.

held a news conference and, explaining that the government and the party were two separate

entities, attempted to gain control of the situation. But given that Malaysia's leading political party had suddenly been deregistered, confusion continued.

In the midst of this political turmoil, I met with the prime minister. Though he had a reputation for being tough, Dr. Mahathir looked a bit tired. Still, in spite of his understandably busy schedule, there he stood, a dignified presence, awaiting me at the door to his office.

And he greeted me cheerfully. He wore a name tag on his jacket, stating plainly, "Mahathir." When he took office in 1981, one of his first declared goals was to energize the civil service. He instituted the use of timecards to record working hours, and punched one himself every morning and evening. He also began requiring all civil servants to wear name tags — to instill a sense of responsibility for one's work — and took the lead by wearing a name tag himself.

"In every age and in every nation," I said to the prime minister, "those in positions of leadership suffer hardship. By overcoming that hardship, they come to shine with even greater bril-

liance." Prime Minister Mahathir nodded and shared his vision of leadership with me. Leaders are always confronted with difficult situations, he said. One of the key requirements of leaders, he asserted, is the resolve to surmount difficulties. Another is the courage to seek out and take on challenges.

The crisis surrounding the UMNO died down when, on Feb. 13, Dr. Mahathir announced the establishment of a new party. There is an old Malaysian saying, "There is no ocean without waves." Opposition always arises when one attempts to accomplish something meaningful. Prime Minister Mahathir's bold actions — to realize his heartfelt goal of developing Malaysia into a modern nation worthy of the respect and admiration of the world — have always placed him in the center of controversy.

He is a man of principle who speaks his mind. Many have been startled by his frankness, but no one doubts his sincerity and dedication. For example, he supported Nelson Mandela, now president of South Africa, during his long imprisonment, ve-

hemently denouncing apartheid.

All his actions have been motivated by his strong opposition to bullying and the use of force. "I strongly object, whatever the issue and whomever it involves, when someone is patronizing or tries to coerce others by exploiting their weaknesses..." he said. "No matter how powerful my opponent may be, if I don't agree with him, I don't agree with him."¹

He mentioned that when still a practicing physician, treating the poor into the late hours of the night, he was driven by the thought "We must do something about poverty before we do anything else." In the same spirit, he staunchly spoke out against the power politics of the major powers and the condescending attitude of the West toward Asia, emphasizing that Asia has its own values that must be respected. He underscored the need to recognize a plurality of cultures and values.

Criticizing the spirit's desolation caused by materialism, he has insisted that one's spiritual state is more important than material wealth. And he has described the ideal developed nation as a caring nation, a virtuous society in which spiritual and material wealth are both achieved. This is the so-called Asian Renaissance, a new challenge to realize an ideal civilization.

Prime Minister Mahathir has said repeatedly that Japan should assume the leadership in the Asian Renaissance. His "Look East" policy, which takes Japan and Korea as models for development, is an expression of that belief.

At our meeting, he said that Japan had provided other Asian countries with a fine example of a poor nation becoming wealthy. Other Asian nations want to learn from Japan's example, he said. They look to Japan to give them greater opportunities to do so.

PLEASE SEE MAHATHIR, NEXT PAGE

KNIGHT-RIDDER TRIBUNE



A Leader of the Coming Asian Renaissance

MAHATHIR, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

In the past, he observed, America acted as the engine for Japan's economic development, providing an enormous market for its goods and generously sharing its technology and business methods. This resulted in Japan's economic success. He hoped Japan would become the engine for Asia's development.

But Japan, I'm afraid, has not met Malaysia's high hopes. Though there has been a certain amount of sincere effort on the part of some individuals, Japanese government and industry essentially continue to view their neighbors in Asia not as partners but as economic colonies to be exploited for whatever profit they can derive.

Why does Japan only take and take? Why doesn't it extend a helping hand to its neighbors? Many Malaysians ask these questions in despair. The same disappointment and distrust can be heard from Malaysian students sent to Japan to learn from

its example. They decry the discrimination against non-Japanese Asians that is rife in Japan; the way Japanese often treat them condescendingly but then turn around and are all smiles to Westerners. Malaysian students also proudly assert that blind obedience — the rule between seniors and juniors at almost all levels of Japanese society — is not found in Malaysia.

Another criticism of Japan is that its young people have no interest in learning about other Asian cultures. Japanese youth are a spoiled and sorry lot, they claim. Given everything they want by their elders, they are utterly ignorant and indifferent to the hard work and sacrifice that made this possible. Japan, the Malaysian students point out, needs to be "opened" once again, just as it was in 1868's Meiji Restoration.

These criticisms pain me, because I know they are true. And there are further causes for concern. Because of Japan's insistence on distorting historical

record, the massacre of Malaysians by Japanese troops during World War II is not understood well by the average Japanese. Women, the elderly, even tiny infants were mercilessly slaughtered. Entire villages were wiped out. The invasion of Malaysia took place one hour and 50 minutes before the attack on Pearl Harbor, making it the true beginning of the Pacific War. But not even this is known by many Japanese.

I have dedicated myself to building bridges between our nations — not just talking about it, but really doing it. My beloved mentor, Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, told me to start with the most difficult thing. After that, he said, everything else would be easy. This is true of human relations and institutional reforms alike.

I have followed Mr. Toda's advice. First, I paved the way to cultural exchange with nations of the communist bloc. Next, I blazed a trail of peace with our Asian neighbors in an attempt to heal the deep scars of history.

Malaysia comprises various races and cultures. Its religions are different, as are its traditions. Reflecting on the difficulties national leaders of nations face, I asked Prime Minister Mahathir what the key is to steering a complex society in the direction of development, while preserving harmony among the constituent components. Concurring that a nation is indeed an agglomeration of diverse parts, the prime minister answered that culture is the most important factor. Because of this, he said, an understanding of the culture that supports a society is indispensable to harmonious development.

In the evening of the same day of our meeting, a joint performance to celebrate Malaysia-Japan relations was held. Prime Minister Mahathir and four of his cabinet ministers attended, viewing fine performances of Japan's Kikunokai (Chrysanthemum Troupe) and the Malaysia National Dance

Troupe affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

I'll never forget the performance of the Japanese folk dance from Tokushima Prefecture, the famous Awa Odori. The men bent low, dancing in a near squat, while the slim women, wearing large reed hats, swayed gracefully. The cheerful, humorous dance created a happy, harmonious atmosphere.

At the end of the dance, in the midst of tumultuous applause, we were all in for a surprise. As the women removed their reed hats, a gasp of astonishment rose from the crowd — many of the women were not Japanese but Malaysians! Later on, Japanese dancers joined in some of the Malaysian dances as well.

Here was a brilliant glimpse, I thought, of the rainbow-colored Asian Renaissance awaiting us in the future. ❧

1. From a feature on Prime Minister Mahathir in the weekly column "Watakushi no Rirekisho" (My Profile), in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (Japan Economic Journal), Nov. 28, 1995.

DISTRICTS, FROM PAGE 13

run with people who slander. (MW-1, 112)

Japan has become a land where shallow and superficial values run rampant, where people of insight and wisdom are persecuted. Because this is the nature of the age in which we

live, only if we each endeavor to build healthy human relations through dialogue can we advance kosen-rufu. The district is the stage on the forefront of our movement for carrying out this practice. And it is our sincere efforts in the district that above all enable us to polish our lives and become capable people.

Josei Toda, the second Soka

Gakkai president, said, "The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my life." The district is a most vital and precious institution for helping people become happy. And the linchpins of the district are the central figure's spirit and the members' many-in-body-one-in-mind faith. When everyone shares a strong determination

for kosen-rufu, our organization of warm and rich unity will definitely emerge. And like flowers in spring, fields of capable people throughout the world will bloom abundantly.

Focusing our efforts on the district, the jeweled castle of kosen-rufu, and making it the foundation for all endeavors, let us work valiantly and with

resilient spirit to expand still further the scope of our activities toward the new century. By forging our individual lives as we take center stage in society, we will further solidify the castle of capable people within the SGI and in turn build greater trust and support for the organization throughout the world. ❧

GLOSSARY

Buddha: One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature is inherent in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion, spiritual strength, hope and unshakable happiness.

daimoku: Literally, "title." Refers to the invocation, or chanting, of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Gohonzon: The embodiment of the law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the form of a mandala. *Honzon* means "object of fundamental respect"; *go* means "worthy of honor." The *Gohonzon* takes the form of a paper scroll inscribed with Chinese and two Sanskrit characters. Together, these characters represent life in its highest condition: Buddhahood. "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Nichiren" is written down the center of the Gohonzon.

gongyo: Literally, "assiduous practice." In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo means to recite the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter and the "Life

Span of the *Tathagata*" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo in front of the Gohonzon.

Gosho: Literally, "writing worthy of great respect": the writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

ichinen: Literally, "one mind." The life-moment, or ultimate reality, that is manifested at each moment in common mortals.

karma: Sanskrit word meaning "action." The life tendency or destiny that each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds. One's actions in the past have shaped one's reality at present, and actions in the present determine in turn one's future. This is the law of cause and effect at work.

kosen-rufu: Literally, to "widely declare and spread (Buddhism)." To secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of true Buddhism.

Latter Day of the Law: The period be-

ginning 2,000 years after Shakyamuni's death, when his teachings lose their power and the true Buddha appears to lead all people to enlightenment.

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo: The fundamental component of Buddhist practice, which expresses the ultimate truth of life and allows each individual to tap his or her innate enlightened nature directly. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is revealed only through the practice of chanting it, there is a literal definition for each of the component words: *nam* (devotion) means to fuse one's life with the universal law; *myoho* (Mystic Law) is the fundamental principle of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *enge* (lotus flower) refers to the lotus, which blooms and seeds at the same time, symbolizing the simultaneity of cause and effect; and *kyo* (sutra, or teaching of a Buddha) broadly indicates all phenomena or the activities of all living beings.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222-82): The true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. *Daishonin* literally means "great sage" and is used as an honorific title for Nichiren. He inscribed the Gohonzon and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as the universal practice to attain Buddhahood.

Shakyamuni: Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. The first historically recorded Buddha, he is the founder of Buddhism.

Soka Gakkai: Literally, "Society for the Creation of Value." The name of the lay organization of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Soka Gakkai International (SGI): The umbrella organization led by President Daisaku Ikeda, which includes organizations in 128 nations. It was established in 1975.

ten worlds: Potential conditions of life inherent in each individual. They are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.



'The Most Important Thing in the World Is People'

By CHAD McFETRIDGE
SALT LAKE CITY CORRESPONDENT

Lowell Bennion (1908–1995) — teacher, author, philosopher — was revered as a living legend by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Unlike the conservative LDS leadership, Mr. Bennion encouraged youth to develop a multifaceted philosophy composed of self, everyday experiences, the arts, science, philosophy, reason and religion. "To leave any one approach entirely untapped is to go through life with limited vision," he often said.

Bennion rose above the LDS position on issues of birth control, abortion, gender and race discrimination by taking the responsibility "from the church to the individual member." Instead of blindly supporting church authority, Bennion weighed his beliefs and actions based on people. "I do believe the most important thing in the world is people, and we need to think of the things we do in the terms of people," he said.

Bennion was sent to Germany on a mission for his church just prior to the outbreak of World War II. There he studied the writings of Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer. They offered Bennion a profound yet practical philosophy of life that was based on service for others.

When Bennion returned home at 26, he was appointed the first director of the LDS Institute of Religion adjacent to the University of Utah. He focused on "centering religious instruction in the life experiences of the students." However, church leadership questioned Bennion's teaching methods.

Unswayed, Bennion continued representing the needs of people. In 1945, he wrote to David O. McKay, then the president of the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, stating that he was having trouble defending the church's stance denying blacks official positions in the church. Twenty-three years later, Bennion was still writing about the injustice of the church's stance regarding blacks, calling it "the most critical issue facing the Mormon church today." He wrote: "Withholding the priesthood from the Negro is not a doctrine of the church; it is church practice.... No new revelation is needed to change doctrine; there need only be a change of practice."

On June 7, 1978, 34 years after Bennion's first official letter, the ban on blacks was lifted.

Lowell continued writing throughout his life, authoring 20 books and dozens of articles. However, in 1983 Lowell learned that his writings had been banned from official church publications because his ideas contradicted the official position of the church.

In 1962, Lowell became assistant dean of students at the University of Utah. In 1987, the university honored him by establishing the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center, which has 64 student-directed service projects.

Once a youth confided in Lowell that he was scared of the devil. Lowell responded, "Tell the devil to go to hell." This reflected Bennion's lifelong philosophy of "searching for the God within" and taking responsibility for your own thoughts, beliefs and actions.

Bennion once said: "Happiness does not come from without. We get pleasure from a good show or a party or a ball game, but real happiness comes from what is inside us, out of our thoughts and values. The basic human values are love and integrity. If you have these two values, you have all the ethical virtues of life."