

Writing to Move the World

WORDS ARE LIVING THINGS, SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA SAYS IN THIS ESSAY ABOUT WRITING 'THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION.' 'I WANTED TO REACH OUT TO PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE THROUGH THE POWER OF WORDS,' HE SAYS. 'THAT WISH, SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND, WAS BEHIND MY DECISION TO PICK UP MY PEN AND WRITE "THE HUMAN REVOLUTION" AND "THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION."'



SPEECH
'Let's get to work,' SGI President Ikeda says at the 24th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders meeting.

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DIALOGUE
'The only indestructible, unchanging thing is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo,' says SGI President Ikeda.

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No. 3208

SEPTEMBER 11, 1998

By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

On Aug. 6 it was five years since I began writing *The New Human Revolution*. The eighth volume of the serialized version appearing in the *Seikyo Shimbun* will soon be finished. How quickly those five years have passed!

Time flies. That is precisely why I cannot allow myself to waste even a single moment.

President Abraham Lincoln wrote his famous Gettysburg Address — which contains those well-known words, "government of the people, by the people, for the people" — on the train on his way to that city. I, too, am always writing on the run, in the midst of my hectic schedule. The *Seikyo Shimbun* editor who edits the installments of *The New Human Revolution* once said to me, "Usually, editors are chasing after their authors for the manuscript, but in your case, President Ikeda, I am the one being chased!"

I always try to submit each batch of manuscripts at least one month in advance of publication. The sooner I can finish them, the sooner I can move

PLEASE SEE MOVE, 4



The Search for My Mother

Bethany Wild, *New York City*
**Adopted at birth,
Bethany Wild's search
for her birth mother led
her on a parallel
journey to discover
more about herself.**

*Let the flowers of the Law
Bloom with beauty and purity
Throughout this land of America*
— SGI President Ikeda, Feb. 27, 1990

When I read this poem eight years ago in President Ikeda's "clear mirror" guidance to the women's division, I thought it was very nice. I didn't feel that it had much to do with me, though, because I had never thought of myself as flowerlike in any way.

In fact, I felt that I was more like a freight train or a jet — dynamic and driving — pushing toward one goal at a time.

But what I've discovered recently is that my life has been opening just like a flower, unfolding in ways that I never expected.

I was adopted as an infant and had a wonderful family. My parents even gave me an extra birthday. It was Nov. 18, and

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STUDY

Oct. 12 marks the anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin's inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon.

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EXPERIENCE

Araana Black finds herself on remote Edisto Island, afloat in a sea of racism and controversy — and faces it with courage.

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SPANISH

Gosho study material for September and October.

pullout section

WOW!

BREAKTHROUGHS IN UNDERSTANDING

Why More?

By MITCHELL WILLIAMS
KANSAS CITY, MO.

In "Letter to the Brothers," Nichiren Daishonin puts all his energy into encouraging the Ikegami brothers to remain steadfast in their faith. He gives the three reasons why believers meet hardships in spite of their Buddhist practice: First, strong faith enables us to rid our lives of the negative karma caused by our past slander of the Law. Second, hardships arise to test our faith. Third, hardships arise as a function of the fundamental darkness innate in our lives, which acts to keep us ignorant of our Buddha nature.

Also, according to the Daishonin, hardships such as sudden death, torture, slander, or humiliation are relatively *minor* sufferings. The greatest suffering is to have our faith destroyed. Losing faith in the Mystic Law is losing faith in our unlimited potential. And this is the single greatest cause of future hellish sufferings.

Personally, I feel that this letter should be titled "A Letter to Mitchell." I can relate to it because I have been practicing for more than 20 years, and the circumstances in my life are not the way I envisioned them. I thought that I would be "Superman! Faster than a speeding bullet, stronger than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound."

I keep asking myself: "Why do certain problems keep occurring in my life? I chant to overcome them, but they keep reappearing. Why?"

Eventually, doubt sets in; my faith starts to weaken; I can see the face of fundamental darkness smiling, saying, "I got you now!" Then, I find that my best friends are the worlds of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger, that my life is dominated, by these four.

Fortunately, my fellow members and leaders tell me that this is all a test. "Don't look at your problems as obstacles but opportunities to change your negative karma," they say. I feel encouraged, and then I become determined again to win — to not lose. There is no in between.

Did you ever say "Wow!" after studying Buddhism? Send us your story (see p. 10 contact information).

Until the Very End

STANDS TO REASON

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM
THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in your life.... ("Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 25)

As this letter progresses, Nichiren Daishonin moves from talking about how the people united can inherit the Law to how individuals can — and must — do it. And to what Sairen-bo, the recipient of this letter, must do as an inheritor.

Part of Sairen-bo's motivation in asking the Daishonin about the inheritance of the Law was his questioning of his former role as a Tendai priest, someone supposed to be an interme-

diary between the people and the Law. The Daishonin thus makes it clear to him that no one needs priests to inherit the Law — this may have been a relief for Sairen-bo — but then moves on to Sairen-bo's individual responsibility, the duty we all have as individuals, to inherit the Law. Sairen-bo wasn't off the hook; none of us are. "With the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death" — crucial to Sairen-bo fulfilling this responsibility is that he practice the Law to the end of his life, the Daishonin says. To his very last breath. And it's the same for each of us.

Nichiren Shoshu, when it comes to inheriting the Law, emphasizes "secret transmissions" of the Law between successive high priests, and says that "there is no reason to expect that we [ordinary people] would understand" these things (*100 Questions and Answers*). Inheriting the Law in their world has nothing to do with us as individuals.

The Daishonin's view of the life-blood/heritage is simple, practical, unsecret and individual: Inheriting the Law is for you to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith. It is for you to become part of a family of people practicing correctly. It is for you to never give up, to continue your faith to the very end.

Inheriting the Law is up to you.

The Daishonin's view of inheriting

the Law is, interestingly, something like a how-to guide — how to get the most out of practicing this Buddhism. He says: 1) Chant with faith; 2) Chant with friends; and 3) Chant your whole life. Inherit the Law and completely fulfill yourself. It's simple.

This point about chanting your whole life is one that the Daishonin emphasizes in many places. He teaches that the end of your life sets the stage for your next life — ending victoriously equals beginning victoriously once more. SGI President Ikeda likewise speaks of the "supreme orbit of Buddhahood inherent in the cosmos"; at your life's end, you want to be securely in this orbit, thus starting your next life in orbit, too.

Seven hundred years after his death, the Daishonin's thinking is still fresh, clear, revolutionary — in orbit with people's aspirations today. In 700-plus years, he has gone from being Japan's most dangerous priest (in the eyes of most of his contemporaries) to the most internationally influential of all Japanese Buddhists. In the emphasis he places on independence — on how the Law is in us, on how we depend on ourselves to be in orbit with it — he offers hope to all people seeking spiritual fulfillment today.

All people.

Eighteen in a series

OCT. 12, 1279: INSCRIPTION OF THE DAI-GOHOZON

The Spirit To Help All People

SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF
THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By ULISSE GALLO
CHICAGO

Over the past year or so, I have been studying the issues between the SGI and the Nikken sect regarding the correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. One morning during gongyo, the question came to my mind as to why we offer prayers praising the Dai-Gohonzon in the second silent prayer, especially since we have been excommunicated by Nikken, who has the Dai-Gohonzon. In searching for an answer, I reviewed the history surrounding the Dai-Gohonzon's inscription:

In 1274, the same year that Nichiren Daishonin was pardoned from his exile on Sado Island, he moved to the Minobu region. Over the years, his disciple Nikko Shonin propagated the Daishonin's teachings in the surrounding area, converting many friends and relatives, as well as the farmers in Atsuhara Village.

He also converted several of the priests from the Tendai temple Ryusen-ji. Even-

tually, these actions upset various officials, including the deputy chief priest of Ryusen-ji, Gyochi. Tensions escalated until Sept. 21, 1279, when 20 farmers were arrested on false charges and taken to Kamakura to be tried.

On Oct. 1, the Daishonin sent a letter to the farmers and other lay believers, encouraging them to deepen their faith through the persecution that they were experiencing. Sadly enough, some of the farmers were tortured, and three of them were executed.

The willingness of these farmers to sacrifice their lives rather than renounce their faith and their practice of Buddhism led the Daishonin to believe that strong faith had become the rule rather than the exception among his followers. The time was right to inscribe the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity, he felt.

It is, after all, as the Lotus Sutra teaches, the seeking spirit of the people that causes the Buddha to reveal himself. It was with this spirit — to make this Buddhism available to all people who sought it — that the Daishonin inscribed the Dai-Gohonzon on Oct. 12, 1279. For all humanity.

The significance, therefore, of the Dai-Gohonzon was the Daishonin's heart in inscribing it. That is, his spirit to help all people — no matter what country they are from or their economic or religious background — manifest the

life-condition of Buddhahood as foremost in their lives.

By inscribing the Dai-Gohonzon for all humanity, the Daishonin's message was that it was possible for all people to break through their circumstances and establish Buddhahood in their lives. The Nikken sect's excommunication of millions of believers seems to be the antithesis to the Daishonin's spirit to teach all people of their Buddhahood.

For more than 700 years, the Fuji School has had the Dai-Gohonzon. Even so, Nikko Shonin had to correct the five senior priests after the Daishonin died. And a few hundred years after that, Nichikan Shonin had to correct the priests of his time for their lack of faith, their corruption of the Daishonin's teachings. Being physically close to the Dai-Gohonzon thus has nothing to do with being able to attain enlightenment — nothing to do with developing the desire to help all people, with capturing the spirit with which the Daishonin created the Dai-Gohonzon or with understanding the message of the Dai-Gohonzon.

Being *spiritually close* to the Dai-Gohonzon, however, has EVERYTHING to do with leading ALL people to happiness. The Daishonin says, "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, then you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93). This is the spirit with which I offer prayers to the Dai-Gohonzon during gongyo. ❧

A Phenomenon in the Heartlands

Whatever it is that they want — less anger, more peace of mind, clarity, happiness, optimism — young men and women are finding it here.

By BARBARA FORD

Aug. 23, Kansas City, Mo.

It is shortly after 7:00 a.m. As today's meeting gets under way, young men and women in Army fatigues (required attire on base) sign in at the door of the Fellowship Building and take their seats while district members conduct morning gongyo. The doors open continuously as more people arrive. The gathering swells until, by 8:00 a.m., there are no empty seats. There are 137 guests.

A phenomenon is taking place at Fort Leonard Wood, a U.S. Army base two hours from either Branson, Mo., or St. Louis, where Army basic training takes place in six-week intervals.

For the last year, members of Fort Leonard Wood District and Waynesville District, part of St. Louis Headquarters, have been meeting every Sunday at 7:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Building on the base.

Brent Oberholtzer, Fort Leonard Wood District leader and also a sergeant stationed there, explained that the combined districts have been placing a weekly announcement of their Sunday meeting in a couple local newspapers. The original intention was to inform SGI-USA members who might be among



Photo by BARBARA FORD

Fort Leonard Wood District Leader Brent Oberholtzer (back row, 3rd from right) stands with fellow soldiers who began chanting weeks earlier.

new privates arriving at the base that there are activities nearby.

But, as the weeks went by, more and more young men and women came to the Sunday meeting to find out about Buddhism, and many started chanting. When they returned to their barracks, they told their friends until, one Sunday, the doors kept opening as more and more privates took seats. There were 100 guests that day.

By the end of the first six-week period of basic training, just before graduation, there were 240 guests.

As today's meeting progresses, Mr. Oberholtzer invites people to share their experiences. Private Joel Haq, who has been chanting for six weeks, says, "When I chant, I ask a question and get an answer."

A few others shyly stand up to say that chanting has cleared their minds, made them less angry, and so on. "I feel peace of mind," says one private.

After the meeting, several privates gather to continue sharing their experiences.

Private David Barrow, who has been chanting for four weeks: "I improved my temper, gained peace of mind, and can carry on a conversation without getting mad."

Private Jeremy Higgins says that he has learned much; that he can focus, and his attitude is better. He has been getting perfect scores in testing, and he feels good about himself after chanting only a few weeks.

The experiences are all similar — less anger, more peace of mind, clarity, happiness, feelings of optimism.

Mr. Oberholtzer says: "There were many Sundays that no one came, but we [continued]. The key is the philosophy of Buddhism and the warmth that we bring from the SGI-USA; and chanting to introduce people to Buddhism, as many people as possible." W

NEWS BRIEFS

Phoenix 'Voices of Faith' Build Harmony

More than 400 representatives from nine religions — Buddhist, Baha'i, Catholic, Mormon, Protestant, Christian Science, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh — raised their voices in song, chants and meditations at "Voices of Faith," Aug. 20 at the Phoenix Civic Plaza.

The program was organized by the InterFaith Action Coalition of Arizona to explore how music affects various faiths, and also to foster understanding, respect and support of common spir-

itual values. The groups ranged in size from a single Jewish cantor to the Mormon choir of 100 voices. The 75-member SGI-USA chorus, directed by Linda Caldwell, sang "We Are One," originally recorded for SGI President Ikeda.

"The SGI folks did a beautiful job," Priscilla Sharp, Coalition secretary, said. "Hearing everyone chanting at the same time...was one of the highlights."

— DIANA DECKER, Correspondent

Ikeda School Opens in India

The Dr. Ikeda School, named after SGI President Ikeda, opened on Aug. 11 in the city of Chennai (formerly Madras) in southern India. The school, founded by Dr. Sethu Kumanan, an Indian poet and educator, provides children who are orphans with free education along with room and board. Teachers and students were joined at the opening by a number of distinguished guests, including World Poetry Society President Krishna Srinivas and Vice President S. Mohan, and Central Social Welfare Board Assistant Director A. K. Rohini Devi.

At the ceremony, Dr. Srinivas lauded the SGI president for forging a network

of hope for the new century, which he characterized as an achievement possible only by a person of genuine religious faith.

Bharat (India) Soka Gakkai Vice Secretary Akash Ouchi read a message from President Ikeda. The SGI leader wholeheartedly praised Dr. Kumanan for his efforts to make education accessible to all children. He also gave the students three guidelines: 1) Be a person who overcomes all hardships and never loses hope; 2) Be a person who treasures friendship; and 3) Be a person who strives to work for humankind and the world.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER

French Publisher Applauds SGI Leader

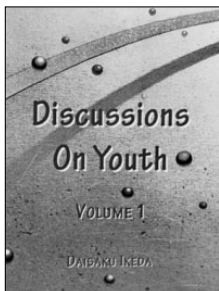
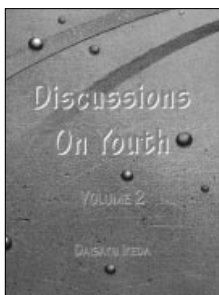
On July 29, the leading French publishing company Editions du Rocher bestowed a Peace and Humanism Award upon SGI President Ikeda in recognition of "his efforts to defend justice and create a new age of humanism through the power of the pen." SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda received the award on the SGI leader's behalf from company president Jean-Paul Bertrand in Paris.

Founded in 1943, Editions du Rocher has published a wide variety of books, including a number of French-language editions of President Ikeda's works.

Remarking that people who work for justice and make outstanding achievements are

not always appreciated in their own country, Mr. Bertrand stressed that it is for that reason that such people must never cease their efforts, but continue to bring forth new thoughts and ideas through the written word. To be recognized on a global scale is of utmost importance, he declared. Regarding the French edition of President Ikeda's dialogue with former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev scheduled for publication by his company next year, Mr. Bertrand stated that this exchange between two great philosophers representing East and West has profound significance as we prepare to face the new century.

— SGI NEWSLETTER



Two More Reasons To Study

Compilations of dialogues among SGI President Ikeda and high school division representatives on a variety of subjects are available in *Discussions On Youth*, volumes 1 and 2. Topics include: human rights, the benefits of reading, knowing history, the importance of art, our integral relationship with nature, the fundamentals of faith, the purpose of the SGI and world peace, love, dealing with hardships, friendship, finding happiness at school and in the workplace, and how to bring out the best in oneself.

Available at SGI-USA Bookstores or call (800) 626-1313; mail order #0110 (vol. 1) and #0111 (vol. 2). Price: Just \$5.00 each.

SGI President's Essay: Writing To Move the World

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

MOVE, FROM PAGE 1

on to other tasks. At the same time, I am always concerned that haste will result in careless writing.



Speaking of writing, I am reminded of an experience I had when I was working at a printers in Tokyo's Shimbashi area just after the war ended. Once, when I was pulling out the type from the trays, I had a profound insight. Each piece of type was only a blob of lead, but when those lead fragments were combined into sentences and printed, they acquired enormous power. Words are living things, I realized. They are brimming with immense vitality and life.

One day I shared that insight with the principal of the night school I was attending. His face broke into a warm smile, and he said to me:

"That's a wonderful observation. You're right. Look at Tolstoy. Look at Hugo. Literature not only moves individuals, it moves society and the world."

His words made a deep impression on me. I decided that someday I, too, would reach out to people across the globe through the power of words. That wish, somewhere in my mind, was behind my decision to pick up my pen and write *The Human Revolution* and *The New Human Revolution*.



The father of popular Japanese literature, Eiji Yoshikawa (1892-1962), once wrote, "Those on the very front lines of human existence, those who are striving in the real world, are living and breathing true literature; they are the true protagonists of our age."

He further continued that a writer whose work is truly vibrant and alive is one who learns from and labors to give expression to people's real-life experiences.

If that is the case, the members of the SGI are the true protagonists of our age who embody a living literature, because amid the realities of society they teach those who are in pain and anguish that the Daishonin's Buddhism offers a



Coming soon in *'The New Human Revolution'*: SGI President Ikeda's second visit to the United States in 1963. Here, President Ikeda picks the location for the first community center outside Japan — the Los Angeles Community Center in East Los Angeles, which opened its doors in spring 1963.

practical way to improve one's life, and they are proof of the happiness that can be thus attained through their own examples.

The history of kosen-rufu has been filled with the moving, painstaking struggles of many comrades. Countless noble, courageous individuals have devoted their lives to the sacred task of kosen-rufu alongside me.

I am keenly aware that kosen-rufu only advances because of the efforts of such staunch individuals. And it is my truest wish to search out these heroes and to pay enduring tribute to their commendable efforts.



Times change, and the environment surrounding the Soka Gakkai has changed with them. But there is one thing that must never change: our spirit.

When a religious organization allows its founding spirit to die, it invariably succumbs to formalism and authoritarianism, turning into a soulless shell. For a religion, this is the kiss of death.

Why did the Tendai (T'ient'ai) school of Buddhism in Japan, which established an ordination platform of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra on Mount Hiei, incorporate alien, esoteric teachings

into its doctrine?

Why did Nichiren Shoshu trample the spirit of its founder, Nichiren Daishonin, and turn into the slanderous Nikken sect?

The reason for the corruption and degeneracy in both cases was a failure to understand the original teacher's intent, a loss of the true spirit of faith.

The Soka Gakkai must forever carry on the spirit of its first and second presidents — of Mr. Makiguchi, who was unafraid of martyrdom and steadfastly upheld the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin until the last moment of his life, and of Mr. Toda who in the aftermath of war embarked alone on his journey to make the dream of kosen-rufu a reality.

The same goes for the unflinching commitment demonstrated by pioneering members who braved opposition and persecution in their efforts to introduce others to the Daishonin's teachings; and also for the sincere devotion of all who, with deep pride in their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, have worked tirelessly for the sake of Buddhism, for their friends and for society at large, without seeking personal fame or fortune.

My purpose in writing *The New Human Revolution* is to transmit and pass on this noble

Soka Gakkai spirit to future generations.



The second volume of *The New Human Revolution* (in Japanese) will soon be published in book form. I want to pass the Soka Gakkai spirit on to the 21st century. I see it as conveying the way to a new humanism.

Writing a serialized novel is extremely demanding work, but since I regard it as my mission, I am determined to give it everything I have. I write again today, with all the earnestness and concentration as if I were composing my last will and testament.



COLLECT ALL 6 VOLUMES

The cause of the social disorder and many tragic events we've been seeing lies in people being caught in a way of thinking that forgets to accord prime importance to the human being.... 'Let us return to humanism.' (*The New Human Revolution, vol. 4, p. 243-44*)



Volume 6 of *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai's world peace movement since 1960, contains Shin'ichi Yamamoto's travels to the Middle East, the contribution campaign to build the Grand Reception Hall, the Mikawashima train crash, early Komei elections, advice to the student division and more.

Available in all SGI-USA bookstores. The price is \$10.00. Mail orders may be placed by calling (800) 626-1313.

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SEARCH, FROM PAGE 1

they called it my family birthday. It was the day that we celebrated their bringing me home from the hospital.

When I started my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism 11 years ago, I began to make inquiries to the adoption agency about my birth name and family. The agency said that I was not permitted to have any identifying information because neither birth parent had been searching for me. I sent in a couple of requests after that but received no further information.

It bothered me sometimes that I was not allowed to uncover these secret facts about my own life. But I accepted it and continued to practice and move forward.

I often found myself chanting for my birth mother's happiness (especially around my birthday). I wondered if she wondered about me. I wondered if she were healthy. I wanted to tell her what a great family I had. (Even though my adoptive parents are deceased, I still feel very close to them.)

Then, last year I tried once more to find her. I made the determination to really work on my life and started seriously looking for my fundamental flaws and how to challenge them. The main guidance that helped me persevere is a remark that SGI President Ikeda once made about how opening the door to your own life is more difficult than understanding all the mysteries of the universe.

I had just been through what seemed like a storm of difficulties with my career in music and with personal relationships. I think that by directly confronting difficulties and making efforts to practice Buddhism correctly, I was starting to transform some of my deep life tendencies: To reject and be rejected...to cut off and be cut off...to not trust or be trusted. All in all, I was on a campaign to "work on my own life," as SGI-USA Women's Division Leader Wendy Clark had once advised me to do.

I started making phone calls again to the adoption agency. This time, I was directed to a woman named Marilyn, who had lots of success with adoption searches. (In my prior attempts to find my birth mother, I never found anyone who could help me — but this time my determination was stronger and more expansive than before, and my environment changed in response to my inner change.)

The minute I spoke with Marilyn, I knew something was going to be different. She was wise and caring, and she clearly

explained the process. We would petition the court to appoint Marilyn as confidential intermediary, and it would be her job to try to locate and talk with my birth mother. That was in August 1997.

On Dec. 10, 1997, five days before I married my husband, I received a phone call from Marilyn. She had found and spoken with my birth mother, who had kept my birth a secret all her life. I was told that she had been extremely shaken by the news that I was trying to make contact.

I remember that day so well. It was a very cold and rainy afternoon. I was getting ready for a performance with the Sunrise Chorus and was supposed to be getting dressed, but instead I kept pacing around in my bathrobe full of tears and deep sighs, stunned. My birth mother and I were suddenly connected and aware of each other for the first time since birth.

Marilyn wouldn't tell me where my birth mother lived or what her name was, but she said that she could hear similarities in our voices. I learned that my mother had a brother, a sister-in-law, nieces and a nephew — and that she never had any other children. At this point, she hadn't decided if she wanted to have a relationship with me, but at least she was interested in learning more about me.

The next day, I sent her some photographs and a letter through Marilyn. I could hardly believe I was getting the chance to tell her things that I had wanted to say my whole life: That I thought she had done the right thing. That my family who adopted me was warm and wonderful and loving. And that I was so appreciative to her for giving me the treasure of life.

I chanted a lot for her to be supported by her family and protected from any negative feelings. At Christmas, I received (through Marilyn) an unsigned card from her. It was a picture of two red birds on a tree branch overlooking a snow-covered barn. It was the first tangible item I ever received from her. I cherished it, put it on my altar and sent her daimoku.

On Jan. 1 this year, I got my first e-mail from her, and we began e-mailing back and forth to each other almost daily.

I remember how I felt when she sent me a photo of herself. I was overwhelmed by how much I look like her. I also thought: "Gee, she is amazingly young looking. I've got a great future!"

She explained to me that she had gone away to a home for unwed mothers when she was in



'This wonderful benefit — this reunion with my birth mother — has helped me get closer to my true self and to realize that with sincere prayer and honest efforts, I can develop beautiful, genuine and heartfelt bonds of trust and friendship with many other people. Up until now, I never honestly thought I could accomplish this.'

her early 20s. There, all alone, she delivered a baby girl, named her Denise, held her for a moment and said good-bye, putting the birth behind her as if it had never happened. She had called home after the delivery, but her mother had someone over at the time and couldn't talk. I cried when I heard that — how alone she must have felt.

As we strengthened our new relationship, she decided to tell her brother and his family about me. It took so much courage for her to face all the questions and reactions of her family, but she did it. I thought of how many baby showers she had attended and how much celebrating there probably had been at each of her friends' births. And I thought of it in contrast to the shrouded situation she had to endure with her own birth experience.

I wondered how many times people had asked her why she didn't have any children. Or said things like "You can't imagine how it feels to have a baby."

As we continued to write, we began making plans for our reunion. I was scheduled to attend a chorus conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, and she and her husband arranged to stay in a condo in Fort Lauderdale at the same time. It was early in May, around Mother's Day.

I sat there on the runway at Miami International Airport with my palms sweaty and my heart pounding as I waited for the captain to turn off the seat-belt sign. I was about to meet my mother for the first time.

At the gate, I saw a woman addressed in a green outfit like the one my mother said she would be wearing. My first words to her were "Are you my mom?"

Later in the car, I kept touching her hair saying, "Oh, so

that's where I got my baby fine hair!" We spent three days together and had a magical time connecting and just being together. It felt very natural — like I already knew her. We walked on the beach, and I asked her lots of questions. We shared our story with people in restaurants, and they were touched.

When it was time for me to go to the chorus conference, my mother and her husband drove me to the FNCC. We got there early, and I gave them a short tour and even had a chance to introduce them to Wendy Clark. In my wildest dreams, I would never have imagined that this could happen...my mom, her husband and I sitting in front of Toda Lake...my mom and I talking about treasures of the heart, walking past the swimming pool...it was miraculous!

I recently told my mom that I was working on my experience. In an e-mail, she wrote: "You really got me thinking. Your 'experience' is also my experience. You asked once how I felt when I heard the news about you? Well, to be honest, I didn't like it. I almost had myself believing that it never happened. I was pretty sick for a while. Can't understand now how I carried on with my life without everyone knowing that something was wrong. Maybe I should have been an actress. Now I think you are the best thing that has happened in my life. And learning from you, I am searching DEEP inside trying to make sense of my life.... I like the [concept of] human revolution that you talked about. That really makes sense.... I hope we will become 'the happiest women ever.' With your help, maybe we will be. Thank you for being in my life now."

SGI President Ikeda said in

volume 4 of *The New Human Revolution*, in the chapter titled "Rishso Ankoku," that the surest way to bring peace to the land and transform society is to establish the truth in one's own heart. Is it possible that I actually removed some lifelong barriers to the truth in my heart with this practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism? Is this the kosen-rufu of my life? I feel so much more happy and peaceful and whole.

With this wonderful benefit, I've opened an area in both my mom's life and my own that had been closed for many years. As a result, I find myself reforming some deeply entrenched false beliefs about myself. I've found new confidence in myself and in my practice and really believe that I will make great dreams come true. In President Ikeda's poem "To My Beloved Young American Friends," he says: "Create and complete / for yourself and with others / wondrous lives / of eternity, happiness, true self and purity."

This wonderful benefit — this reunion with my birth mother — has helped me get closer to my true self and to realize that with sincere prayer and honest efforts, I can develop beautiful, genuine and heartfelt bonds of trust and friendship with many other people. Up until now, I never honestly thought I could accomplish this.

I am more hopeful than ever. My faith and understanding of this Buddhism is deepening, my trust in the Gohonzon and this practice feels brand new, and I'm determined to make all my dreams come true.

I feel my life is becoming truly wondrous, opening beautifully, splendidly and petal by petal like a blossoming flower. ❧

Photo by ROB HENDRY



'As SGI members, our work, our mission is quite clear. We have the unparalleled task of working for the happiness of all humanity in an endeavor we call kosen-rufu. To participate in SGI activities and challenge ourselves earnestly on the path of our mission is itself the greatest happiness. It all comes down to whether we can appreciate this.'

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech upon receiving honorary citizenship from Brazil's Federal District of Brasilia during the 24th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, July 16.

Today, Chairperson Lúcia Carvalho of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Brasília has traveled all the way from Brazil to join us. I would like to welcome her and her distinguished colleagues, and express my most heartfelt gratitude.

May I say that people around the world were excited by Brazil's superb performance in the Soccer World Cup recently.

Let's Get to Work!

Where is happiness to be found? The famous Roman philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180 CE) said, "A man's true delight is to do the things he was made for." Human happiness, he maintains, lies in doing those things that only humans can. In other words, seeking the truth and acting to help those who are suffering.

The German writer and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) also asserted that those who work cheerfully and take joy in the fruits of their labor are truly happy.

These are the words of great thinkers, and as you can see they are in complete accord with the teachings of Buddhism.

The Scottish historian and thinker Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) wrote, "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness," and "It is, after all, the one unhappiness of a man: that he cannot work; that he cannot get his destiny as a man fulfilled."

These great philosophers tell us that we all have a mission or life-purpose, and that those who work earnestly to accomplish that mission are truly happy.

The renowned British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) held the same conviction. When I asked him what his motto was, he replied: "Laboremus!—Latin for 'Let's get to work!' That's my motto, Mr. Ikeda." He said this to me when I was in my mid 40s.

"All right, let's get to work again!" — This is the spirit of people of genuine substance. Those who avoid hard work or neglect the things they have to do, who just while away their time, eating, sleeping, watching television, playing — such individuals will never experience true happiness, satisfaction or joy.

Absorbed in mindless diversions, life passes by in an instant. Those who die without accomplishing anything of value are no different from animals.

As SGI members, our work, our mission, is clear. We have the unparalleled task of working for the happiness of all humanity in an endeavor we call kosen-rufu. To participate in SGI activities and challenge ourselves earnestly on the path of our mission are themselves the greatest happiness. It all comes down to whether we can appreciate this.

Once again, congratulations on your outstanding efforts to further advance the kosen-rufu movement! Thank you for all your hard work! My gratitude and respect to every single one of you.

Today, we have with us members from 27 countries. Welcome! We are also joined by a number of reform priests and by representatives of our dedicated members who deliver the *Seikyo Shimbum* each day as well as leaders of the future division from all across Japan. My

most heartfelt congratulations to representatives of the Young Phoenix Group, which is celebrating its 32nd anniversary.

The Limits of Authoritarian Power

Several decades ago in Brazil, there was a farmer who stood up against harsh oppression. The authorities, cruel and insolent, insulted and threatened him, flourishing pistols. "We'll throw you in prison! We'll kill you!" they snarled.

But the farmer replied calmly: "I know that with the power you have, you can harm me any way you wish. But there is one thing you cannot do to me." He struck his hand against his breast and shouted: "You cannot take away the freedom of my soul!"

"No matter how powerful you are, you cannot kill my spirit! Do what you will!" — to be able to say that is true conviction. The same invincible spirit of faith burns in our hearts.

The individual must have courage and speak out against injustice when it occurs. The outraged cry from the heart of a single individual has great power. How much more powerful, then, is the uprising of an entire gathering of people dedicated to justice and truth! No matter how powerful the authorities may be, or how long they have been in power, they will collapse with a thud in the face of such momentous people power.

There is a famous Brazilian proverb, "Uphold justice, and you will be strong." There is no greater strength than standing up for what is right, and all of you are proof of that truth. Our noble members have stood up for truth and just causes all over the world, in their cities, towns and local communities, and they have scored admirable victories. I hope you will all congratulate and praise each other for your wonder-

ful efforts, and those of your friends and comrades.

Working for the Welfare of the People

My wife and I have just been conferred honorary citizenship by the Federal District of Brasília, which, incidentally, was lauded by the French writer André Malraux (1901-76) as "the city of the future." I accept this honor on behalf of all my fellow SGI members; let us share and celebrate this award together.

Once again, I welcome Mrs. Lúcia Carvalho, chairperson of the Brasília Federal District Legislative Assembly — the first woman to head a legislative assembly in Brazil — and Mr. Amauri Barros, secretary to the assembly and renowned Brazilian businessman. Thank you so much for traveling the 10,600 miles from Brazil to join us today! We will never forget your warmth and kindness, and are determined to respond to the trust you have placed in us.

Chairperson Carvalho, while raising four children, has played a leading role in activities promoting the rights of women and the elderly, protecting the environment, and enhancing the education of youth. She is very well known as an educator in her own right, and our local SGI-Brazil members have often commended her and her achievements to me. Though several times busier than most people, Mrs. Carvalho has always believed that if you have a big heart, every challenge is worthwhile, and she has thrown her full energies into every project she has undertaken.

The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca (4? BCE-65 CE) said that work nourishes a noble spirit. In her eight years in the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Brasília, Chairperson Carvalho has

submitted more than 500 human rights protection achievements, political proposals also has been active, together with other members of Brasília's Buarque program, all needed for UNESCO as a model.

Governor's invitation to Ikeda to

Why Mrs. Carvalho cause she philosopher the common true political a master slogans, for the that com to change

In other one's conviction; the philosophy for beliefs. who decided for the voters who own person who influence on people position be a leader strength such expertise That's the Don't you

Chairman "Why are To make progress Every man about m

Advance with us Conviction

this is the key to happiness, SGI President Ikeda neglect the things they have to do, who just while watching television, playing — such individuals will faction or joy!



'The first signs of the end of the cold war began with small examples of tact and diplomacy.'

submitted for deliberation more than 500 bills promoting education, human rights and environmental protection. This is a brilliant achievement and an example for all political leaders. Of particular note also has been her successful initiative, together with Federal District of Brasilia Governor Cristóvan Buarque, to introduce a scholarship program that makes it possible for all needy children to attend school. UNESCO has praised this program as a model for the world.

to assist activities urging authorities to reform policies that destroy the environment or may lead to war." What a wonderful example of humanistic action! Let us give a hearty round of applause to Mrs. Carvalho, who burns with the same enthusiasm as our women's division members and pursues the same lofty goals.

Chairperson Carvalho stood up and put her hand on her heart, acknowledging the applause.

Governor Buarque has extended an invitation to President and Mrs. Ikeda to visit Brasilia.

Why have the reforms proposed by Mrs. Carvalho borne fruit? Because she has a firm conviction and philosophy: to fight for the cause of the common people. This is what a true political leader should be, not a master of appearances or clever slogans, but someone ready to die for the people if need be. Without that commitment, how is it possible to change the world?

In other words, the strength of one's convictions spurs one to action; the strength of one's philosophy forces one to stand up for one's beliefs. Genuine leaders are those who dedicate their lives to working for the welfare of the people. Leaders who use people to advance their own personal power and prestige, who inflict suffering and hardship on people, betray the trust of their position and everything it means to be a leader. People must have the strength to challenge and reprimand such exploitive, self-serving leaders. That's the meaning of democracy. Don't you agree?

Chairperson Carvalho once said: "Why are we born into this world? To make it a better place, to achieve progress, to eliminate inequality. Every morning on waking I think about my mission. That mission is

delegation in Moscow that he would reconsider making any visit to Japan if it led to a deterioration in bilateral relations.

The Power of Language

Well-known television newscaster and commentator Kazuo Kobayashi, then head of the Moscow Desk of the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), communicated this breaking news, fully and accurately, on the 7:00 evening news in Japan (2:00 p.m. Moscow time). I still remember fondly riding in the same elevator with him as we went to the press conference.

The other day, Mr. Kobayashi sent me a copy of his latest book, *The Stage Curtain of the Hermitage*. I read it in one sitting and was very impressed. Mr. Kobayashi has won many prizes for his journalism to date, and this book is a brilliant achievement that has garnered the Japan Essayist Club Prize. Unfortunately, I cannot describe all the many fascinating episodes and insights he presents in the book, but I'd like to share with you a few.

Mr. Kobayashi was a reporter during the summit between Mr. Gorbachev (then secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party) and U.S. President Ronald Reagan, held in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986. It was an important meeting that could decide the future course of the world. Everyone held their breath, waiting and watching to see what would result.

The summit ended in failure, with no agreement being reached in the U.S.-Soviet negotiations. But Mr. Gorbachev was very careful in his press conference after the summit to avoid using the phrase "a breakdown" in the talks. Instead, he called the summit "the

first step to future talks." Mr. Kobayashi caught this subtle and carefully worded expression. The journalist's keen observation was very important.

In an interview sometime after this event, Mr. Kobayashi asked Mr. Gorbachev about the wording he had chosen.

"When I walked into the press conference," explained the Soviet leader, "I immediately noticed the strained atmosphere. An expression of disappointment was on everyone's face. I just couldn't say 'a breakdown.' No, I thought, I'll say, 'the first step to future discussion.' It just came to me."

As far as Mr. Gorbachev was concerned there had been no rupture. There was still room for further discussion. He wanted to drive this point home. So he chose his words carefully, leaving the door open for ongoing dialogue. It was a brilliant stroke.

Before Mr. Gorbachev's press conference, the American side had already said that talks had broken down. But when they heard Mr. Gorbachev's statement, they revised their own, giving a more optimistic interpretation to the meeting.

Mr. Kobayashi is always quick to recognize the importance of a certain word or turn of phrase. "The first signs of the end of the Cold War also began from just such small examples of tact and diplomacy," he says. Such perceptive insights are characteristic of Mr. Kobayashi.

With regard to Mr. Gorbachev, I have frequently been struck, when listening to him speak about various matters, by the deep thought that lies beneath his words. One of the things I sensed from our talks is that he is a person who does not want war.

To be continued in next week's World Tribune

Let's Talk!

With us in the audience today we also have SGI members from Russia. Eight years ago, on July 27, 1990, I met then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in the Kremlin in Moscow. It was our first meeting, but I said to him: "I have come to have an argument with you. Let's make sparks fly, and talk about everything honestly and openly, for the sake of humanity and for the sake of Japan-Soviet relations!"

Mr. Gorbachev smiled and replied: "All right. Let's do it!"

People of top caliber respond with lightning speed. Mr. Gorbachev and I quickly opened our hearts to each other and became friends. During our meeting, which began at 10:30 in the morning and lasted for an hour and 10 minutes, Mr. Gorbachev expressed his intention to be the first Soviet president to visit Japan. He said he hoped to come in the spring of the following year.

Up to that time, it had been touch and go whether such a visit would take place. But the Soviet president himself made a clear declaration of his intent. It was a very significant move.

Only two days before his meeting with President Ikeda, Mr. Gorbachev had told a Japanese

DIALOGUE SERIES — THE THIRD STAGE OF LIFE

GUARANTEED

To Open New Opportunities

SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda remember many of their struggles in traveling overseas for the organization. They faced many apparent dead-ends, like the time in 1974 when they couldn't get visas to enter Brazil, but opened new opportunities every time through their faith.

Participants in this installment are SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Mrs. Kaneko Ikeda, Seikyo Shimbun General Editorial Bureau Senior Director Osamu Matsuoka and Vice Director Katsusuke Sasaki.

MATSUOKA: With the increased number of President Ikeda's trips overseas, I'm sure that the demands placed upon you have grown, Mrs. Ikeda. We'd be happy if you could share with us what some of those travels have been like.

K. IKEDA: Certainly. As you know, in many countries, it is customary for a husband and wife to participate in social occasions as a couple. When our children were small, of course, I couldn't travel, but now I usually go along.

D. IKEDA: She often jokes that she's the garnish accompanying the main dish, but she's always a great help. When I meet with various dignitaries, they almost always have their spouses with them.

Over the years, in addition to attending SGI events and en-

couraging members, my meetings and dialogues with non-members have also increased significantly. That is why my wife started accompanying me.

The Secret of Leadership

K. IKEDA: In the early years, we had few headquarters staff traveling with us, and I took care of everything myself. We'd arrive at our hotel, and the first thing I'd do was unpack. My next task was to get him to rest.

Once I'd made sure he was relaxed, I'd cook some rice and prepare some simple food in the bathroom. That was my role, and it suited me perfectly.

SASAKI: As a *Seikyo Shimbun* reporter, I have accompanied you and President Ikeda on overseas trips, and I've always found your presence invaluable, Mrs. Ikeda. You contribute such warmth and ease to the atmosphere.

I found that especially true when President Ikeda first began visiting what was then the Soviet Union [1974]. The Soviet Union was, after all, a highly ideological nation. While its leaders did show an appreciation for the Soka Gakkai's movement for peace, culture and education, there were many pointed discussions on the subjects of religion and history.

Your warm smile was an important factor in those meetings. It helped both sides advance to a deeper mutual understanding, I thought.

K. IKEDA: As you know, wherever my husband goes, he's always breaking new ground, always pioneering. He's quite determined.

As a result, I think, he often comes on rather strong. I am

happy if my presence does anything to make things go more smoothly and contribute to mutual understanding.

D. IKEDA: The crucial issue for me has always been whether my health will hold out for the length of a visit. My wife's help on that score is invaluable. I also know that after I'm asleep, she often stays up late chanting *daimoku* for me on the sofa in another room.

K. IKEDA: I don't know whether I should say this or not, but my husband is always running at full speed. His mind is always working. He's always giving attention to a hundred things at once.

The only time his brain gets any rest is when he's asleep. That's why I make him go to sleep. The moment his eyes are open, he's running here and there again. Isn't that right?

D. IKEDA: It's just my nature, the way that I am. You can change many things, they say, but not your nature.

Mr. Toda was a wonderful mentor. Everything I am is the result of the training I received from him. He was incredibly sharp, always quick to discern others' thoughts and feelings. If he sensed I was holding something back, he would tell me to come out with it — otherwise I'd be making an enemy of my mentor.

He kept me on my toes at all times. I was just a raw youth when we met, but he trained, forged and polished me.

Mr. Toda stressed caring for the members' welfare, personally making oneself familiar with their needs and desires and giving them hope and courage. He pounded the secret of leadership into me.

In other words, working for the members is the key to the development of the Soka Gakkai.

K. IKEDA: In his youth, they used to call my husband the X-ray. I'm sure it was because of his deep concern for people, but they used to say that he knew what you were thinking, that he could see through you at a glance. That was how wholeheartedly he gave of himself to *kosen-rufu*.

Seeing this, I was determined to do everything in my power to assist him, so that he could dedicate himself to the work that I knew he alone could do. We often say that he's the speedy hare, and I'm the slow and steady tortoise.... No, let's make that the crane and the tortoise, so that we'll both live a long

time! [The crane and tortoise are symbols of long life in East Asia.]

MATSUOKA: I hope that you don't mind me asking such a personal question, but has President Ikeda ever taken you to task for something?

K. IKEDA: Yes, when I deserved it. I'm not perfect, after all.

Of course, he never reproved me without good reason.

One of the times I remember best was when he asked me to send a photograph to a member. He had paid a visit to the terminally ill brother of a member and took a photograph of him. When it was developed, he asked me to send it to the member.

But I delayed...not as long as a week, but perhaps four or five days. I thought that I should send a letter or note with it, and I was waiting until I had time to write one.

I finally sent it, late, and it arrived just two or three hours after the member's brother died. That's when he scolded me. I had no excuse. I felt so sorry for what I had done. If only I had sent the photograph when he asked. You cannot imagine the shock and remorse I felt. It was a good lesson. Yes, I still remember that.

SASAKI: Assisting President Ikeda is a demanding task. I'm sure you're under constant stress.

MATSUOKA: Incidentally, I understand that you also meet with prefecture women's division chiefs when they gather in Tokyo for the monthly prefecture chiefs meetings, and that they share with you news about their activities in each region.

K. IKEDA: Lately I've been so busy that I can't always attend on a regular basis. And when I do, it's not as if I'm offering guidance or acting in a leadership role.

Women — myself included — want to have someone to listen to their thoughts and ideas. They also have many things that they want to communicate to President Ikeda. I always have the spirit that if listening at length to what they have to say imparts some joy and encouragement, and helps them engage in their activities with renewed energy, I'm only too glad to do it. After all, they're all working so hard.



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

An early picture of Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda.

PLEASE SEE DIALOGUE, NEXT PAGE

Photo by JONATHAN WILSON



DIALOGUE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

When Things Really Started To Happen

D. IKEDA: I think it's important to listen to what women have to say. And men shouldn't berate women. They don't have the right. They should have nothing but praise for women's efforts.

Nichiren Daishonin said that we should respect people of strong faith, the people who have made vigorous efforts to propagate the Mystic Law, "as if they were Buddhas" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 781).

I never forget for even a fraction of a moment that it has been the hard work of our women's division members that has made the Soka Gakkai what it is today. Women bear an enormous burden. Many have to take care of their families, husbands, children and parents, facing the innumerable challenges of daily life and the larger issues of life that we all confront. That's no doubt why they know, from direct experience, how important faith is.

Men in our organization who do not value our women's division's contributions do not deserve to be leaders.

K. IKEDA: I'm grateful that my husband has always supported my growth.

Going back to our overseas travels, I especially recall 1974. We were busy that year with many overseas trips.

SASAKI: Yes, in January that year you went to Hong Kong, then North and South America in March and April. In the fall, you traveled to the Soviet Union. Your first trip to the People's Republic of China was in May, and you went there again

in December. You hardly had time to catch your breath in such a travel-filled year.

MATSUOKA: Brazil was also on the schedule that year, wasn't it?

D. IKEDA: We applied for visas while we were in the United States, and we waited at the Malibu Training Center outside Los Angeles for them to come through. While we were waiting, we spent our days meeting with local members.

At the time, unfounded, negative rumors about the SGI were circulating in Brazil, and there was strong opposition to us entering the country. In the end, we couldn't get visas and had to change our plans.

SASAKI: The night that it was decided you wouldn't go to Brazil, you called Roberto Saito, then SGI-Brazil general director, from the second floor of the training center. I remember you saying, in a forceful, determined voice: "I don't want you showing any disappointment. Please present a cheerful face to the members and encourage them with all your might! Give them my fondest regards, too! I'll definitely make it there one day!"

Afterward you said: "I may not be able to go to Brazil, but there's still the rest of the world. The universe awaits us!"

D. IKEDA: That's when things really started to happen, isn't it? The leaders and members of SGI-Brazil prayed earnestly and opened the way for kosen-rufu in their country. Their prayers were answered, and they made a firm foundation for tremendous future growth, all through the power of strong daimoku.

Everything is always changing. The only indestructible, un-

changing thing is Nam-myohorenge-kyo. If you chant daimoku, you are guaranteed to open new opportunities. You will achieve an unsurpassable state of being. Today, SGI-Brazil is making the best efforts in the world.

MATSUOKA: Eighteen years later, you finally visited Brazil. A wonderful culture festival was held, and we were all impressed by the vibrant energy of the Brazilian members, who were making remarkable contributions to their local communities and society at large.

After that visit, parks and streets were named after you, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, and a number of schools incorporated the principles of Mr. Makiguchi's value-creating education into their curricula. Today Brazil understands the SGI and has great hopes for the role it will play in Brazilian society.

D. IKEDA: Those who worked so hard together to achieve this deserve the highest praise. This only goes to show that those who fight with all their might to triumph over painful obstacles and setbacks win without fail in the end. They contribute to the advancement of kosen-rufu.

K. IKEDA: 1974 was a hard year, what with the busy schedule and the uncertainty of our itinerary during our travels. But I know that the struggles of the members in each country far surpassed anything we experienced.

My husband presented me with a poem during that trip.

SASAKI: Could you share it with us?

I never forget for even a fraction of a moment that it has been the hard work of our women's division members that has made the Soka Gakkai what it is today. Women bear an enormous burden. Many have to take care of their families, husbands, children and parents, facing the innumerable challenges of daily life and the larger issues of life that we all confront. That's no doubt why they know, from direct experience, how important faith is.

K. IKEDA: Yes. "Opening the path / As I walk with you / My irreplaceable support."

When we were young, he wrote me many letters. But when I received this poem, I was deeply moved. He saw our shared struggles side by side all those years as a joint effort to promote kosen-rufu.

Whenever one of his dialogues is published, he says to me, "You're the one who made this book possible." And one year on my birthday [Feb. 27], he wrote calligraphy for me that read, "I pay tribute to a golden history of global achievement for kosen-rufu."

(To be continued)

**THE POWER OF THE PEN!
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 2, 1998**

**The 1st Annual
'Seize the Day'
Essay Contest**

THEME: *The role of youth in improving the world these last couple of years before the 21st century.*

CATEGORIES: *Junior High School
High School
College
General Youth*

"Seize the Day" invites all youth division members to share their thoughts on the social responsibilities of youth in these last couple of years until the 21st century. These years have been likened to a runway to the next century. How can the power of youth change our world for the better as we rush down this runway?

Be as specific as possible about what you think youth need to change, and how you think that they can do it. The length is 900-1,200 words, typed, double-spaced. A special committee will judge the essays on the quality of writing, the depth of thought, originality and whether you include concrete examples. The top three finishers in each category will have their essays published in "Seize the Day" in 1999.

To enter: Send your essay and a photo of yourself to "Seize the Day," 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401 or seize@sgi-usa.org. Indicate which category you are entering and include your return address, phone number and e-mail address (if you have one). All essays become the property of "Seize the Day."

Directly Facing the Problem

EDITORIAL

Do we all have a 'little Nikken' inside us? No, says Dave McNeill — we shouldn't confuse combating our inner weaknesses with directly battling Nikken through the power of words.

By DAVE McNEILL
MANAGING EDITOR

I remember the first meeting I attended after the temple issue began. Someone asked me, "How can the high priest be so wrong?" After some discussion, we concluded that there was a lesson here: If the high priest — an ordinary person ostensibly entrusted with protecting the teachings — can become so deluded about the truth, so can we all. In Buddhism, we call this tendency to be diverted from our path to enlightenment our *fundamental darkness*, a tendency that we must win over every day.

Around then, too, the SGI started saying that our fight with the temple was a fight for justice,

a fight against authoritarianism — and that this is the Soka Gakkai spirit. This was only a year or so after the SGI-USA had begun its own self-reformation based on SGI President Ikeda's February 1990 guidance.

So it wasn't surprising when a young man expressed his frustration about the temple issue, saying, "The only people I know who are authoritarian are my boss and my Buddhist leaders." Of course, in the years since then, we've all learned that Buddhism really *is* about standing up for justice and against authoritarianism in *all its forms*.

From these two encounters, I learned that there are two broad applications of the spirit with which we are battling Nikken: the resolve to fight our own negative tendencies and the resolve to fight evil wherever it appears.

Indeed, many people have come to see personal relevance in the priesthood issue by way of grasping these two essential lessons. Some people have even gone so far as to say that, when fighting negative thoughts or self-perceptions, they are battling the "little Nikken" within them. Or when they stand up to some injustice in their daily lives that they are making a cause to defeat Nikken.

Personifying all forms of negativity as Nikken might be useful in some respects, but it also might lead to some confusion.

Nikken is not *in you* or in your unfair boss. Nikken is Nikken is Nikken. Fighting your inherent negativity or working for human rights are important tasks of the bodhisattva, who has pledged to battle all forms of evil that try to destroy people's happiness. But such actions in and of themselves do not *directly* work to defeat Nikken's influence in the world. Taking such actions go a long way toward defeating evil and bringing about your happiness and the happiness of all people, but working directly to defeat Nikken's influence is a whole other matter.

One of the best ways to directly fight his influence, of course, is to talk about it, with a solid determination to protect the purity of the Daishonin's teachings. Everyone can talk or write about Nikken's wrongheaded teachings, sharing their views and helping others understand the real issues.

And it's not only about having some new logic or sure-fire argument, either. When we talk with others about this issue, what is most important is the trustworthiness we can establish with

our listeners. President Ikeda once said that he joined the Soka Gakkai long before he understood this Buddhism — because when he heard Josei Toda talk about Buddhism, he knew this was a man he could trust.

When someone faces their crucial moment with the priesthood issue, they won't necessarily remember our impeccable logic. Striving for clarity is one thing, but what they'll remember most is our heart — our concern for their happiness, our sincerity, which comes through in whatever we say.

Directly speaking out about Nikken is a source of great personal growth. In fact, it is in standing up to Nikken, and the bastardization of the Daishonin's teachings that he represents, that we gain the life force needed to do our complete inner reformation. This in turn gives us the internal power and influence needed to affect change in society.

As the Daishonin writes, "Only by defeating a powerful enemy can one prove his real strength" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 35). To truly battle evil, we first must be able to identify it in all its manifestations. But Nikken's evil is unique to Nikken. ☐

From SGI President Ikeda:

- ✦ The SGI stands eternally on the side of the people. We will forever work on their behalf. That is why our movement will remain solid and flourish for all time. (Feb. 13 *World Tribune*, p. 14)
- ✦ Friendship is proof of our humanity. And Buddhism is what enables us to develop that humanity to the fullest possible extent. That is why it is so important for us to devote our lives to encouraging the flowers of enjoyable, worthwhile discussions to bloom. And to causing the fruit of friendship to grow and ripen. (June 5 *World Tribune*, p. 9)
- ✦ The Daishonin's Buddhism is concerned with the whole world, with eternity. Mr. Makiguchi's focus was the same. What is the purpose of life? Mr. Makiguchi believed that one's life must encompass a commitment to world peace. This he wished to teach. (May 15 *World Tribune*, p. 6)

WORDS TO THE WISE

HUMANISM

The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is expounded in the "Fukyo" chapter. What does Bodhisattva Fukyo's profound respect for people signify? The real meaning of Shakyamuni Buddha's appearance in this world lay in his behavior as a human being. How profound! The wise may be called human, but the thoughtless are no more than animals. ("The Three Kinds of Treasure," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 240)

- ✦ Nichiren Daishonin is the original Buddha, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. Shakyamuni and all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas

throughout time and space are his followers.

Yet the Daishonin proudly declares that he was born as a commoner in Awa Province

[present-day Chiba Prefecture]. What a noble declaration this is! It is the quintessence of humanism. (March 13 *World Tribune*, p. 13)

- ✦ The 20th century was a century of war and peace, and a century of politics and economics. The dawning 21st century holds the promise, however, to be a century of humanity and culture, and a century of science and religion. I hope all of you will advance on this wonderful, new path of humanism with pride and confidence as gallant young philosophers of action. (May 8 *World Tribune*, p. 15)
- ✦ The spirit of the Lotus Sutra is to resist the dehumanization of religion and religion's tendency to become divorced from reality; but rather to steadfastly redirect religion to the prime point of the human being. (March 1998 *Living Buddhism*, p. 38)



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The *World Tribune* welcomes reader submissions. If you are interested in contributing an article or photograph, please contact us for guidelines. Together we can make a great newspaper.

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Not About Pride

Let me first say that I really love all the wonderful efforts that you make to create the *World Tribune*. I live in Bowling Green, Ky., where the only members are my husband and myself. Never in my life have I depended on and needed the *World Tribune* so much in my practice, and you have not failed to come through for me every week. Thanks.

I must respond to the article about the gay pride parade (July 31). I read the article about that, and I just felt incredibly uncomfortable with the whole thing. First, let me say that I believe in gay rights. I myself am not a lesbian, but I have gay friends who have definitely suffered from the tremendous prejudice and hatred toward homosexuals that permeates our society. This prejudice is no less insidious than so many of the other sorts of discriminatory practices that exist in the United States today and should not in any way be tolerated or condoned. I think it is outrageous that homosexuals cannot marry and cannot carry insurance on their partners. It is quite absurd, and whenever I have a chance to defend the rights of homosexuals, I take it.

However, I thought the SGI marching in this parade was very inappropriate, and I just really felt uncomfortable with members using it as means for propagation.

The function of the SGI is to promote Buddhism and to teach the equality of all people based on Buddhism. It is not an organization to be used to further the political ideas of one particular group. I would feel just as uncomfortable if we had marched in a parade to promote the pride of Jews, African Americans or Spanish Americans.

We should embrace homosexual members. We should teach them the power of the practice, and we should encourage

them to use the power of their practice to fight for their basic rights. But I stop at using the organization to promote the rights of this group or that one. I am a woman and overweight, but I would never ask the SGI to march in a parade promoting the rights of overweight women....

The SGI is not an organization to promote gay rights, African American rights or overweight women's rights. We are an organization to promote human rights by helping people learn how to access their Buddha nature and overcome their circumstances. I hope marching in this parade does not start a trend toward marching in more parades like this.

— THEA MATTHEWS,
Bowling Green, Ky.

Returning to the SGI

Jeff Farr's fascinating editorial "Propagation by the Unwise" (Aug. 7) has inspired me to write. Although this letter could be about the foolishness of the priesthood's actions, it is not; it is about welcoming inactive members back to the SGI. I am a once active, then inactive member, and I know how difficult is the struggle to return.

I received my Gohonzon in January 1976 and practiced vigorously until 1983. At that time, my life-condition was such that I felt I needed a rest from SGI activities. I resigned from my leadership position in the young women's division and quietly practiced at home.

I did finally summon the courage to return to the community center, but believe me, I was shaking the whole time....

I practiced for a while, and it was a tremendous battle. At that time, I was struggling with health problems, and I once again felt that I couldn't keep up with all the activities. I should have told a fellow leader how I

felt, and I am sure that she/he would have encouraged me to rest, but I did not. I quietly dropped out of sight again and resumed my practice at home.

I tried to return to the SGI once more in 1993.... I called an old friend, and she hooked me up with a district near my house. I was so hungry for SGI encouragement that I ordered a year's subscription to the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. I devoured all the publications the moment I received them.

Oddly enough, no one called me to come to any other meetings. I kept calling the district leader, but he never got back to me. I managed to get to a few meetings each year with great determination and many, many unanswered phone calls. I guess this lack of response was just what I needed to generate enough determination to re-join the SGI.

I finally went to the community center again in the summer of 1995.... I bumped into some old friends, and to my undying gratitude they welcomed me with heartfelt warmth and joy. They did not ask any uncomfortable questions — one simply gave me the telephone number of an old friend, who had moved to my neighborhood, and encouraged me to call her. She, too, welcomed me back with sincerity and friendship. We did a lot of daimoku together, and she involved me in district meetings.

I am now fortunate enough to be an active SGI member once more. My struggle to return to the organization (I truly love) took 10 years....

When an inactive member wants to return to the SGI, I will always remind myself to embrace him (or her) with tremendous warmth and joy — and to imply NO hint of judgment, distance or negativity. That ex-

member is probably feeling enough of that already, especially if he (or she) is trying to return from the temple organization. From the bottom of my heart, thanks to my SGI friends whose wisdom made them kind!

— PATTI COVICH,
New York

Organizational Reform

In response to recent letters under the topic of organizational reform (Aug. 7 "Mailbox"), I would like to reply. Kazumasa Ishi mentions that we shouldn't put the blame on leaders' misconduct as the cause for members leaving the SGI. Rather it's their poor understanding of Buddhism that caused them to leave and that we should strengthen the foundation of faith through study. The need for a strong foundation in study is a given; however, I believe that he missed the main point. A passage in the *Gosho* states that a lion can defeat the harshest enemy from the outside but a parasite in the lion's bowels will destroy the lion.

Mark Koral states that we shouldn't confuse our efforts to reform our organization with our struggle to defeat Nikken, the third most powerful enemy. But Nikken does not have a monopoly on evil. To ignore the lesser evils that we perceive around us and only focus on the one great evil is cowardly and wrong! It will only allow those lesser evils to grow into greater evils. President Ikeda has repeatedly warned us to speak out against any injustice whether coming from the outside or within our organization. It's very easy to speak out against Nikken on the other side of the world but if we remain silent when we see injustice and arrogance right before us within our very own ranks then we become participants in that evil, and it will ultimately destroy the lion!

President Ikeda said: "If in the

future, there are leaders who sit back nonchalantly on the foundation built by their predecessors, who maneuver their way skillfully to avoid hard work or responsibility, who are reluctant to devote every ounce of their energy to serving the members, then it will spell ruin for the Soka Gakkai. I'm afraid that there are already such people in our organization. It is vital that you, youth division members, strictly remonstrate and take to task such negligent and self-complacent leaders.... To protect them [the teachings], you may have to strictly admonish people in senior leadership positions. There is nothing to be afraid of.... Any leader who takes lightly or abuses that grave responsibility is a disgrace that cannot be condoned. If such individuals come to prevail, then the very life and spirit of the Soka Gakkai will die" (April 17 *World Tribune*).

I believe that true organizational reform will start when the individual members have more power to make their voices heard and the leaders are made accountable to the members. President Ikeda's vision for the 21st century is a movement led by the people. Then, I believe we will truly defeat Nikken and be able to widely spread the Mystic Law.

— PHIL ORENSTEIN,
New York

Correction

In the Aug. 28 issue, we announced Soka University of America's street-naming contest for its Aliso Viejo, Calif., campus. The fax number listed is incorrect. The correct number is (949) 472-3059. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

Also, this contest is for students only. SUA appreciates your help in spreading the word.



Our Purpose: The SGI-USA (Soka Gakkai International-USA) promotes peace and individual happiness based on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Peace is inseparably linked with each individual's happiness; SGI-USA members, through their faith, seek to become happier and contribute to society. The SGI exists in 128 countries and was founded in Japan in 1930.

Our Practice: The basic practice is chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon, our object of devotion. According to Nichiren Daishonin, chanting this phrase allows us to be in harmony with the universe and create great value. Faith in this principle is gained through practical experience.

Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th-century Japanese reformer, championed the Lotus Sutra, which teaches that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living things — thus, all people can become Buddhas. He introduced the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Gohonzon is the mandala expressing this essence.

For more information, contact the SGI-USA community center nearest you or call (310) 451-8811.

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ARLAANA BLACK, EDISTO ISLAND, S.C.

Chanting for a Community Revolution

When educator Arlaana Black moved to Edisto Island, she wasn't expecting to see racism there. But in trying to establish an innovative new school for middle school students, she wound up face to face with it — and found out that she could make a difference.

In June 1995, when my husband, our 10-month-old son, Spenser, and I left New York for Edisto Island, a remote island off the coast of South Carolina, it was to seek out physically (but definitely not financially) greener pastures. And for Spenser to have the wonderful experience of growing up near his paternal grandparents, who retired to Edisto from New Jersey 10 years ago.

Overpacked, filled with wonderful guidance and a spectacular New York send-off, we pursued our new life.

Edisto Island is a nature-lover's paradise with stately Live Oak blanketing the island. Part of the Ace Basin wildlife refuge, many unusual birds — in particular, the egret — and varied sea life have made this pristine environment their home. It is not unusual to see a pod of dolphins playfully dancing in Edisto's many creeks and shallow bays.

Edisto Island is split into two counties and therefore two school districts. The beach seceded from the island about 20 years ago. Edisto's year-round population is less than 5,000 — and the beach population is about 10 percent of this number.

After the first week of living here, I realized I had entered the "Southern zone" that had little interest in me as a newcomer, a Northerner and a Buddhist.

My husband and I taught together in a high school here the first year. Although I got close to the students, I felt extremely stifled, having come from teaching at the innovative Renaissance School in New York City.

The Renaissance School is based on the philosophy that curricula should be child-centered, relevant and inseparable from the life of the surrounding community and society. Its primary focus is on fostering many confident and capable young people who are able and willing to maximize their potential and contribute to society.

The next year, my husband and I determined that I would take a leave of absence from teaching and live on one extremely low teacher's salary, so that I could put all of my efforts into starting a "renaissance" school on Edisto.

Everything seemed to be per-

fectly timed. The new superintendent of Charleston County schools — who was moving here from Wyoming — was enthusiastic about my school proposal. I was not only going to create a small, innovative middle school, but it was also going to be racially integrated. This was to be a first for Edisto Island, whose two school districts are somewhat racially separated.

I began my campaign with full force. Although I got tremendous support from members of the beach community, I was met with tremendous mistrust from members of the inland community. Although some politely acknowledged my presence, others wanted nothing more than to see me disappear.

After one year of tremendous effort, I did not succeed in achieving my dream of establishing a racially integrated middle school. I was exhausted, financially broke and devastated. In my endeavor to create a school, I felt I was under personal attack, not only because of my race, but also because I was a "foreigner," and I sought rapid change in a traditional environment. I had to deal with the fact that my aggressive (and seemingly egalitarian) New York attitude could not singly overcome hundreds of years of mistrust and resistance to change.

I received guidance that now was the time to plant many seeds rather than worry about seeing the flowers bloom. I chanted this way and received quick actual proof. One of the teachers at the elementary school that caters to the small Edisto beach population unexpectedly got pregnant and wanted me to substitute in her class for the last six weeks of the school year.

Since I desperately needed the money, I agreed. Simultaneously, the parents who had backed me so strongly in trying to establish the renaissance school fought hard to add an additional grade to the beach school.

They were successful in adding a 6th grade and needed to hire a 5th–6th grade teacher. (The school is so small that each teacher has to teach two grades.)

I vigorously started chanting about becoming that teacher, although I was only qualified to teach intermediate and high school. I had less than one month to accumulate



Arlaana and Spenser Black, working for better education.

nine additional elementary education credits.

I contacted several colleges and universities with long-distance learning curriculums and begged them to authorize me to complete the courses in half the prescribed time. I found one that agreed.

I cried, though, because in one weekend, I had to read more than 50 children's books and write more than 50 pages of text! My family was incredibly supportive, both physically and emotionally, and helped me through my daily nervous breakdowns.

I was one of 17 applicants for the teaching position. It was unbearable. I was fighting so hard to get the appropriate credentials, not knowing if I would even get the job! But I did.

And for the first few months, it was absolutely wonderful.

Then, in December 1997, a bomb dropped. I was once again having to face severe racial ten-

sions. A few days before Christmas, the county school board members — the majority of whom are African American — voted to close the beach school. They didn't even attempt to hide the fact that it was an issue of race. I was again devastated. If the school closed, it would mean bussing children more than 50 miles to the nearest school. I faced ambiguous feelings — I was angry and resentful, yet I chanted to be understanding and broadminded.

My husband and I were the only Buddhists on the island, and we took this as our campaign. We chanted to awaken the bodhisattva natures in everyone as we struggled to act with absolute conviction and confidence. Our campaign was twofold: Keep the school open, and lessen the hostilities. I vividly recalled the Goshō quote: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith" ("Reply to Kyo'o," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 120).

The result was spectacular. The beach community truly united, and many of the parents realized their wonderful potential as letter-writers, campaigners and spokespersons. They came out full force to school board meetings and spoke of the need for all people to unite and the importance of education for the future. At times, I felt as if I were at a Buddhist meeting. It was an experience in community revolution.

Although the school board members continued to be stone-faced and seemingly unmoved, they finally relented and voted to keep the school open for at least one more year.

Thanks to the encouragement of our school principal, the local newspaper did a cover story on the four teachers at our school. I was so encouraged!

From these past two years of struggle, many positive changes have resulted. There will be a lot more integration at the island school this year, and parents who had previously been behind the scenes are now taking a more active role in the school and the community.

Although I was unsuccessful in starting a school, the result was ultimately successful — for the first time in the history of Edisto, the "island" school, which had a 99 percent black student population, will be increasingly integrated with students who went to the previously all-white beach school. It's very exciting to see the beginnings of what I hope is beautiful racial harmony.

Even so, the future of the beach school remains shaky. I have no idea what the future holds, whether I will have a teacher's job next year or if my son Spenser will have a school to attend. I also have no idea why our destiny has brought us to such a beautiful, yet remote island. I do know that my family must live fearlessly, undaunted by immediate fears and worries, and do our very best always.

I naturally continue to be the proverbial fish out of water, but I am determined to keep on swimming with — and at times, against — the current. And to never give in to defeat.

COMING NEXT WEEK

President Ikeda's essay for educators

'Carta de Condolencia,' (Ueno Dono Gohenji [Gosho Zenshu, pp. 1567-68,] escrito en septiembre de 1280, cuando el Daishonin tenía cincuenta y nueve años, a Nanjo Tokimitsu, señor feudal de Ueno.

Disertación del Presidente Ikeda de la serie, Aprendamos del Gosho. La eterna enseñanza de Nichiren Daishonin.

El Buda comparte los sufrimientos de los demás

La persona fuerte se permite ser amable. "Los pájaros cantan, y los insectos chillan, pero no derraman lágrimas. Yo, Nichiren, no lloro, pero, interiormente mis lágrimas fluyen sin cesar". (Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pág. 94) Nichiren Daishonin escribió estas famosas palabras cuando sufría el exilio en la isla de Sado. Fue un hombre de misericordia profusa e ilimitada; encarnaba perfectamente una sensibilidad profunda y una sabiduría imponente.

Dostoyevsky ha escrito: "Las grandes ideas no surgen tanto de la noble inteligencia como de los nobles sentimientos" (Fedor Dostoyevsky, *The Eternal Husband* (el marido eterno)).

El Budismo es una religión basada en la sabiduría y en la misericordia; ambas son inseparables. La persona de sabiduría genuina posee, al mismo tiempo, una solidaridad sin parangón. Y la persona misericordiosa de verdad corporifica la sabiduría que expone el Budismo.

El ideograma japonés con que se escribe "misericordia, jiji, abarca el significado de "sufrir junto al otro" o de "clamar solidariamente con los demás." El Buda es el primero en compartir el sufrimiento de los demás.

Puedo hablarles, por ejemplo, de una madre cuyo hijo ha muerto. La mujer, absorta en su sufrimiento extremo, se sienta a la vera del camino. Para ella, no hay palabra capaz de mitigar el dolor. Por fin, se pone de pie, agotada de sufrir, y comienza a caminar. De tanto en tanto, se cruza con algún sacerdote que trata de orientarla con aire de afectada santidad. Pero nadie puede compartir el dolor de una madre... La ciencia podrá avanzar mucho, podrá enviar al hombre al espacio, pero no puede morigerar la angustia de una madre que ha perdido a un hijo.

MATERIAL DE ESTUDIO

(SEPTIEMBRE-OCTUBRE)

Gosho: 'Carta de Condolencia'

Tal vez sólo las palabras de otra mujer que ha pasado por la misma situación consigan conmovier su alma transida de pena.

¿Qué haría el Buda, en un caso así? Probablemente se sentaría al lado de la mujer. Y se quedaría allí, cerca de ella, mudo, sin decir una sola palabra. Pero aunque no intercambiasen una sola frase, la madre podría sentir igual el tibio abrazo que irradiaba la misericordia inmensa del Buda. Sentiría el latido vital que emite la vida del Buda. Al cabo de un rato, la mujer levantaría la mirada y vería, ante sus ojos, el rostro de un buda que comprende fielmente su extremo pesar. El Buda asentiría, y la madre también inclinaría la cabeza a modo de respuesta.

Aun sin proferir palabra, el aliento más profundo y eficaz que existe es el intercambio de cora-zón a corazón. Por otro lado, aunque uno diga miles de palabras, cuando no existe pureza en los sentimientos, lo que se transmite es un mensaje vacío.

Después de un rato, el Buda se pondría de pie, y la madre, siguiendo su ejemplo, también se erguiría. Juntos, comenzarían a caminar, de a un pasito por vez, bañado el camino por la luz mansa de la Luna. El Buda seguiría alentándola incesantemente, hasta que la madre alzara el rostro, hasta que pudiera extraer la decisión de vivir con inmenso valor, en bien de su hijo muerto.

A veces, el Buda es dulce y tierno; a veces, estricto y severo; en ocasiones, ofrenda palabras inapreciables; otras veces, actúa al lado de los que sufren. Para esa madre, el Buda es un aliado auténtico, porque comparte el peor momento con empatía y le infunda una absoluta paz espiritual. Por esta razón, cuando decide hablar, sus palabras impregnan el alma de la mujer hasta lo más profundo.

Esencialmente, la misericor-

La persona fuerte se permite ser amable.

'Los pájaros cantan, y los insectos chillan, pero no derraman lágrimas.

Yo, Nichiren, no lloro, pero, interiormente mis lágrimas fluyen sin cesar.' (Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pág. 94)



dia es el espíritu de sufrir junto a la gente que padece adversidades y de orar junto a ella. El Daishonin poseía ese espíritu, sin ninguna duda. Se acercó a Ueno-ama Gozen, madre de Nanjo Tokimitsu (el señor feudal de Ueno) cuando ella, entre lágrimas y gemidos inconsolables, sufrió la temprana muerte de Shichiro Goro, su hijo de dieciséis años. Y siguió alentándola hasta que la mujer recuperó la decisión de continuar viviendo.

Durante el primer año posterior a la muerte de Shichiro Goro, el Daishonin envió aproximadamente diez cartas a la familia Nanjo. Uno se imagina cuánto habrá consolado a la familia la preocupación afectuosa y sincera del Daishonin...

Desde este momento, comenzaremos a leer muchas cartas que el Daishonin envió a la familia Nanjo, para estudiar la gesta humana que de ellas se desprende.

Carta a una familia en pleno duelo

Sobre la cuestión de la muerte de Nanjo Shichiro Goro, todas las personas tienen que morir algún día, una vez que experimentan el nacimiento. Esto es algo que todos saben, desde el más tonto hasta el más sabio, desde el más rico hasta el más humilde. Por esa razón, cuando llega la hora de la muerte, nadie debería lamentarse o alarmarse como si por primera vez se percatase de que era un hecho cierto e inevitable. He sostenido esta idea y se la he enseñado a los demás. Pero ahora, ante el hecho consumado, no puedo dejar de preguntarme si [La muerte de Shichiro Goro] no será un sueño o una fantasía (Gosho Zenshu, pág. 1567).

Así como el nacimiento de un hijo constituye una epopeya de dicha, también hay una epopeya de dolor frente a la muerte de un ser querido. En el otoño de 1260, la familia Nanjo vivió estos dos dramas, prácticamente en forma simultánea.

¿Cuál fue el drama conmovedor de alegría? El nacimiento de un nuevo hijo en la familia Nanjo. En una carta que data del 26 de agosto de ese año, el Daishonin manifiesta su beneplácito al saber que Nanjo Tokimitsu y su joven esposa habían tenido un niño, que se sumaba a la pequeña hijita de la pareja. Él mismo escogió un nombre para el niño: Hiwaka Gozen (Ib., pág. 1566).

Debe de haber sido profundamente conmovedor para la pareja que el nombre del pequeño contuviera el ideograma chino con que se escribe "Sol" (en japonés, hi,) que también integra el nombre del Buda, Nichiren (aunque, en este caso, el mismo carácter se pronuncia "nichi.") Esto sucedía un año después de la persecución de Atsuhara; habrán sentido, entonces, que en un instante desaparecía todo el cansancio acu-

mulado durante esas horas tan trágicas y duras. Por sobre todo, la madre de Tokimitsu, Ueno-ama Gozen, se hallaba emocionada por el nacimiento de un varoncito que continuaría el apellido familiar y por el cálido mensaje de felicitaciones que había mandado el Daishonin.

Sin embargo, a los diez días, el 5 de septiembre, la desventura se ensañó con la casa de los Nanjo. El hermano menor de Tokimitsu, Shichiro Goro, murió repentinamente, a los dieciséis años, del modo más inesperado. No se sabe bien cuál fue la causa de la muerte, pero sí sabemos que todo sucedió de pronto y sin que se lo pudiera prever. El festejo del nacimiento se convirtió en duelo y aflicción por la muerte de Shichiro Goro. La familia entera no tenía consuelo.

Al Daishonin también lo sorprendió este revés de la suerte. No bien el mensajero arribó con noticias sobre la muerte de Shichiro Goro, el Buda tornó a escribir una respuesta para Tokimitsu, que es justamente la misiva que vamos a estudiar en esta oportunidad, "Carta de condolencia." Fechada en el sexto día del noveno mes.

La importancia de la vida es un hecho inexorable. En el Budismo, constituye una premisa fundamental sobre la naturaleza de la existencia. ¿Por qué la muerte debería conmocionarnos? Desde el punto de vista de la eternidad de la vida, podría decirse que el nacimiento y la muerte son hechos de importancia minúscula. Pero eso, claro, está bien sólo en la teoría; el corazón humano no puede terminar de digerir la realidad sólo mediante teorías.

El Daishonin era un ser profundamente humano. Era un individuo de humanismo sin igual. Ante la inesperada noticia, difícil de aceptar, se preguntaba si debía creerla o si era "un sueño, o una fantasía." Confiesa hallarse tan perturbado que no puede seguir escribiendo. Esas palabras tienen que haber reflejado el mismo sentimiento de la familia en medio de su duelo.

En la carta titulada "La triste noticia de la muerte del señor feudal Goro" (Nanjo Dono Gohenji) que supuestamente le fue enviada a Nanjo Tokimitsu una semana después, el Daishonin afirma:

Hasta ahora, vine pensando todo el tiempo que la muerte de Nanjo Shichiro Goro tenía que ser un sueño o una fantasía, o una falsedad. Pero otra vez usted volvió a mencionar el asunto en la última carta. Y

GOSHO, DE PÁG. A

entonces, por primera vez, comencé a aceptar que era verdad. (Gosho Zenshu, pág. 1566)

El Daishonin indica cuánto le costaba aceptar la muerte de Shichiro Goro. ¡Qué compasión y ternura muestra el Buda Original! Lloro la muerte del joven seguidor como si fuese la de su propio hijo.

En el Gohonzon, Nichiren Daishonin corporificó su inmensa misericordia hacia toda la humanidad. Dice: "Sufrir lo que tenga que sufrir, goce lo que tenga que gozar. Considere el sufrimiento y la alegría como hechos de la vida y continúe invocando Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, pase lo que pase" (Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin, vol.1, págs. 165-66). Tal como dice, en tiempos de dicha o de desconsuelo, todo resulta del mejor modo cuando uno mantiene la invocación del daimoku.

Alguien puede exponer una excelente enseñanza mientras vive en condiciones de comodidad y seguridad, pero así no es el Budismo. Un Buda de verdad vive entre la gente común, se conduce y sufre junto al prójimo, también comparte sus esperanzas y sus motivos de risa. Así se comporta el Buda Original, Nichiren Daishonin.

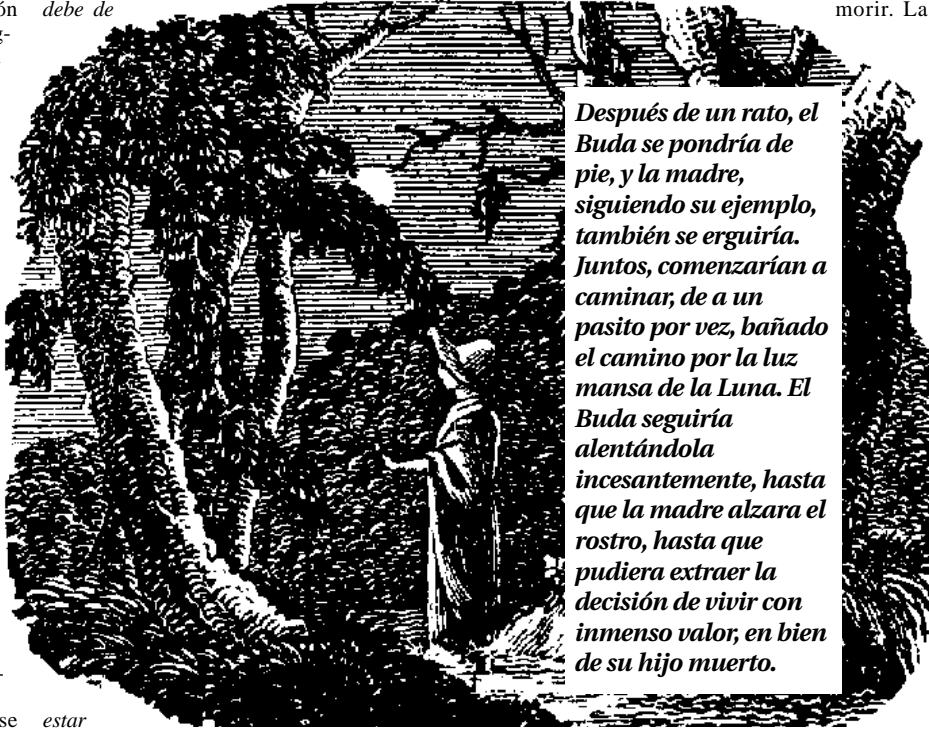
Por sobre todas las cosas, el Daishonin no andaba por la vida esgrimiendo teorías sobre el karma a la ligera. Uno sólo puede agravar el sufrimiento de alguien cuando se pone a formular pronunciamientos con aire condescendiente, como quien dice: "Es tu karma..." El que está batallando contra el destino siente como si un vendaval le estuviera arrasando el corazón. Cuando uno se encuentra con alguien en este estado, tiene que tener el espíritu de quedarse a su lado mojándose bajo la lluvia, empapándose hasta los huesos con él y desvanándose los sesos para encontrar una forma de salir de esa tormenta. En última instancia, es lo que, probablemente, todos puedan hacer en circunstancias así.

Aunque el intento no salga de todo bien, de todas formas, en esa relación humana, solidaria y sincera, uno forja un vínculo con el otro. Y acá no estamos hablando de simple amiguismo o de sentimentalismo. El esfuerzo de contemplar el sufrimiento del otro como si fuera el propio pesar, sumado a la oración para que el dolor se re-

suelva, crea vínculos de vida a vida que nos permiten llegar al corazón del que tanto padece.

La "Familia eterna" de la Ley Mística

Por sobre todas las cosas, ¡Cuánto debe de



Después de un rato, el Buda se pondría de pie, y la madre, siguiendo su ejemplo, también se erguiría. Juntos, comenzarían a caminar, de a un pasito por vez, bañado el camino por la luz mansa de la Luna. El Buda seguiría alentándola incesantemente, hasta que la madre alzara el rostro, hasta que pudiera extraer la decisión de vivir con inmenso valor, en bien de su hijo muerto.

estar sufriendo su madre [Ueno-ama Gozen]! La han precedido en la muerte sus padres y hermanos, y también el hombre a quien ella tanto amaba. Pero, aun en ese caso, habrá podido hallar consuelo en los hijos.

[Shichiro Goro] era un hijo encantador; pero, además, era varón. Su aspecto era apuesto y bravo, e irradiaba un halo que inspiraba confianza. Hacía que los demás se sintieran animados. El hecho de que haya muerto tan joven, al revés de todo lo que uno pudiese esperar, evoca en mí la imagen de unas flores o unos tiernos capullos marchitos por el viento, o de la luna llena que de pronto se apagara...

No puedo creer que esto sea cierto. No siento tampoco deseos de seguir escribiendo. Volveré a hacerlo después.

Con mi profundo respeto,
Nichiren

En el sexto día del noveno mes de 1280.

Posdata: Cuando estuve con él, el 15 de junio, me impactó por su gallardía y su espíritu excelente. Estoy tremendamente afligido por no poder volver a verlo.

Sin embargo, ya que él creía profundamente en el Buda Shakyamuni y en el Sutra del Loto, en su último momento halló una extraordinaria compostura. Por cierto, marchó hacia la tierra pura del Pico del aguila, donde habita su padre. Habrán

tonces, se alentó a sí misma y empleó los siguientes catorce o quince años criando a sus hijos. (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 7, págs.247-48)

El hijo del que habla es Shichiro Goro, el mismo que acababa de morir. La

Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 3, pág. 207).

El Daishonin enseña que alguien que abraza la fe en la Ley universal es un Buda, tanto en la vida como en la muerte, aun cuando haya vivido pocos años. En la posdata a la carta que estamos estudiando, afirma sin ninguna duda que Shichiro Goro ha de estar reuniéndose con su padre en el Pico del Aguila.

En otra carta, escribe a Ueno-ama Gozen:

Habrás sentido que si su hijo [Shichiro Goro] hubiese dejado alguna indicación de su paradero, usted, sin alas, habría remontado el firmamento, o que, sin bote, habría cruzado hasta la China con tal de encontrarlo. Si hubiese escuchado que se hallaba en las entrañas de la Tierra. ¿no habría acaso cavado a través del planeta?

Y, sin embargo, hay una forma de encontrarse con él fácilmente. Con el Buda Shakyamuni como guía, puede reunirse con él en la tierra pura del Pico del Aguila. (Ib., vol. 7, pág. 262).

El Daishonin le dice a Ueno-ama Gozen que puede encontrarse con su hijo en el Pico del Aguila. Una y otra vez, le brinda su cálido aliento.

Es extremadamente difícil que alguien comprenda el impacto que produce en una madre la muerte de su hijo. Hasta el día de hoy, no puedo olvidarme de la expresión de mi madre cuando le notificaron que mi hermano mayor había muerto en la guerra. Cuando recibió el telegrama oficial con la noticia de su muerte, se dio vuelta, dejó caer los hombros con pesar y fue como si el cuerpo se le desplomara de angustia. Mi madre no quiso llorar delante de nosotros, pero tuvo la clara sensación de que, desde ese día ella había comenzado a envejecer de golpe.

Así de cruel es la guerra. Yo lucharé con toda mi vida para oponerme a la guerra, pues sume a las madres de todo el mundo en un abismo de dolor y de sufrimiento.

Para que todas las madres e hijos sean felices, para crear una sociedad donde todas las mujeres y sus niños puedan mirar el cielo azul con una sonrisa en el rostro, para todo eso, estamos trabajando y creando una corriente subterránea de solidaridad dentro de la sociedad. Este es el gran objetivo de nuestro movimiento.

(Así concluye la disertación del presidente Ikeda sobre "Carta de Condo-lencias.")

tenido un reencuentro colmado de dicha. ¡Qué maravilloso, qué maravilloso de verdad! (Gosho Zenshu, págs. 1567-68)

Ueno-ama Gozen había experimentado muchísimos sufrimientos. Su marido, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, había fallecido en 1265. Todavía se hallaba en plena edad activa; le quedaban muchos años por delante. Dejó cinco hijos varones y cuatro niñas, todos ellos todavía pequeños en momentos de su muerte. Tokimitsu, el segundo, apenas tenía siete años. Shichiro Goro, el quinto varón y el hijo menor, todavía se hallaba en el vientre de su madre cuando el padre falleció. En otro Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin escribe a Ueno-ama Gozen:

Cuando su esposo, el difunto señor feudal Ueno, la precedió en la muerte, todavía se hallaba en la mejor edad; el dolor que usted pasó en esos momentos no es asunto para tomar a la ligera. De no haber estado encinta de ese hijo, sé que lo habría seguido a través del fuego y del agua. Pero cuando el niño nació a salvo, usted sintió que sería intolerable encomendarle su crianza a otra persona para poner término a su vida. En-

madre ansiaba ver a Tokimitsu y a Shichiro Goro hechos hombres; tenía inmensas expectativas en ellos, Shichiro Goro era apuesto, inteligente, querido por los demás. Al parecer, también era un hijo muy considerado y obediente con su madre.

Parece como si hasta el Daishonin le costara encontrar la forma de alentar a esta madre. Con total franqueza y honestidad, le confiesa sus sentimientos. La mujer, con el corazón sensibilizado por la tristeza, habrá sentido claramente la gentileza del Daishonin, que impregna cada renglón de esta carta de condolencias escrita para toda la familia y enviada a Nanjo Tokimitsu. ¡Cuánto habrá consolado la calidez del Daishonin su corazón transido de llanto! El solo hecho de que alguien comprenda todo lo que nos pasa puede darnos la fortaleza necesaria para seguir viviendo.

En la posdata, el Daishonin reitera su dolor ante la muerte de ese joven, de futuro tan promisorio.

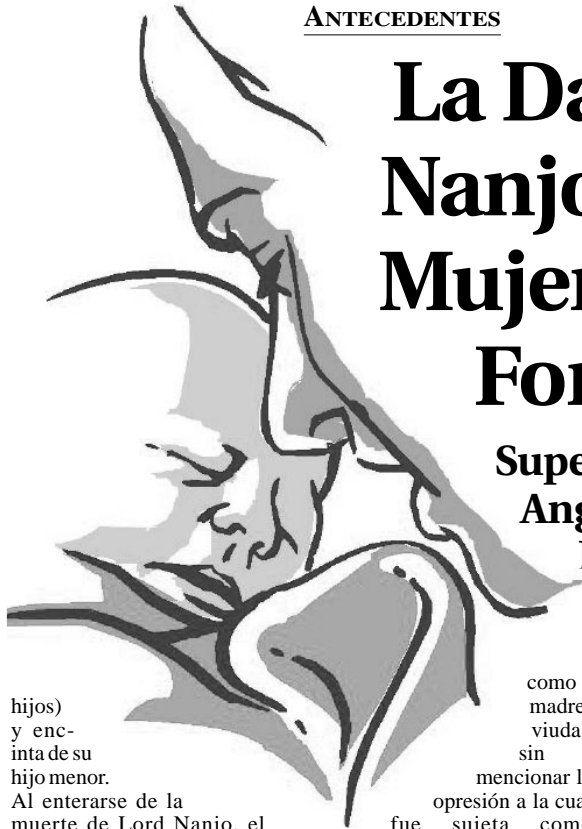
Cuando el padre, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, murió, el Buda escribió: "Mientras existió en este mundo, fue un Buda viviente; ahora, es un Buda después de morir. Su Budeidad va más allá de la vida y la muerte" (The

Nichiren Daishonin escribió "Una Carta de Condolencia" el 6 de septiembre de 1280 cuando tenía 59 años, mientras vivía en Monte Minobu. La carta fue dirigida formalmente a Nanjo Tokimitsu, a quien también se le conocía como Lord Ueno, Administrador del distrito de Ueno, provincia de Suruga. Tokimitsu es considerado discípulo ejemplar del Daishonin. Tuvo un rol valiente protegiendo creyentes campesinos de la opresión gubernamental durante la Persecución de Atsuhara del 1279, cuando fueron decapitados tres creyentes. A través de su vida, él ofreció consistente apoyo al Daishonin y a Nikko Shonin, incluyendo donar un pedazo de terreno para establecer el templo principal, Taiseki-ji.

Sin embargo, el contenido de la carta indica claramente que la intención era que la recibiera la madre viuda de Tokimitsu, Lady Nanjo. El Daishonin escribió su carta como respuesta a la súbita muerte del hijo menor de Lady Nanjo, Shichiro Goro. El adolescente murió el 5 de septiembre. La causa de muerte se desconoce, pero su muerte prematura a los 16 años causó profundo dolor y tristeza tanto a la familia Nanjo, como al Daishonin. Él no perdió tiempo alguno para enviar palabras que pudieran consolar a la acongojada madre.

El padre de Lady Nanjo fue Lord Matsuno Rokuro Zaemon y su madre, Lady Matsuno. La familia vivió en la aldea de Matsuno, en el distrito de Ihara, provincia de Suruga. Se cree que Lord Matsuno adoptó la fe en el Budismo del Daishonin a través de su hija o de Nikko Shonin. Lady Nanjo se casó con Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, servidor del Gobierno de Kamakura, quien originalmente estaba basado en el distrito Nanjo, provincia de Izu, de ahí el nombre de la familia. Más tarde, fue transferido al distrito de Ueno, Provincia de Suruga, y allí se hizo administrador.

Se cree que Lord Nanjo conoció al Daishonin en Kamakura y adoptó la fe en sus enseñanzas en algún momento entre febrero de 1263, cuando el Daishonin regresó a Kamakura de su exilio en Izu, y el otoño de 1264, cuando el Daishonin regresó a su nativa provincia de Awa para cuidar de su enferma madre. Alentada por su esposo, Lady Nanjo también adoptó la fe. Sin embargo, el 8 de marzo de 1265, poco tiempo después de que Lady Nanjo comenzara a practicar el Budismo del Daishonin, su esposo murió, dejándola con ocho hijos (cuatro hijas y cuatro



hijos) y encinta de su hijo menor.

Al enterarse de la muerte de Lord Nanjo, el Daishonin viajó desde Kamakura a la aldea de Ueno en la provincia de Suruga para orar ante su tumba. Probablemente fue en esta ocasión que, Tokimitsu, de 7 años de edad, conoció al Daishonin.

Según lo acostumbrado en esos tiempos, Lady Nanjo se convirtió en monja budista para orar por el descanso de su esposo mientras continuaba con sus responsabilidades seculares como madre de nueve hijos. Después de la muerte de su esposo. A Lady Nanjo se le conoció también como Ueno-ama Gozen, que quiere decir "La dama monja de Ueno". Es difícil imaginar hoy día las dificultades de Lady Nanjo para criar nueve hijos pequeños como madre soltera en el Japón del siglo trece, cuando las mujeres no tenían otra opción que depender de sus esposos o hijos adultos para sobrevivir, de lo cual, nada de esto ella tenía.

Aunque Lady Nanjo era muy joven en fe cuando perdió a su esposo, continuó en su fe a través de los años turbulentos durante los cuales el Daishonin casi fue decapitado y después exiliado a la norteña isla de Sado.

A esto le siguió una persecución amplia contra los seguidores del Daishonin por el gobierno del shogunato. La consistente fe de Lady Nanjo, sin duda, le ayudó a levantar a su familia, no obstante las dificultades y prejuicios que sufrió

ANTECEDENTES

La Dama Nanjo, Una Mujer de Fortaleza

Superando la Angustia de la Muerte de Seres Queridos

como madre viuda, sin mencionar la opresión a la cual fue sujeta como seguidora del sacerdote exiliado.

Cuando la familia Nanjo recibió noticia de que el Daishonin había regresado de Sado y relocalizado en Monte Minobu, inmediatamente le enviaron ofrendas en julio de 1274. Hacia fines del mismo mes, Tokimitsu, ahora con 16 años de edad, llevó regalos al Daishonin en las montañas profundas. Un mes más tarde, en agosto, el hijo mayor de Lady Nanjo, Shichiro Taro, falleció y su segundo hijo, Tokimitsu, se convirtió en cabeza del hogar y asumió la responsabilidad como encargado del área de Ueno.

Durante los nueve años que el Daishonin vivió en Monte Minobu, hasta su muerte en 1282, la familia Nanjo lo apoyó consistentemente. Está documentado que le enviaron ofrendas en más de cuarenta ocasiones durante este periodo. La vida del Daishonin en Monte Minobu era difícil, carente de las necesidades básicas de alimento, ropa y albergue. En una carta con fecha del 27 de enero del mismo año en que escribió "Una Carta de Condolencia," el Daishonin describe su vida en Minobu:

En medio de estas cuatro montañas y cuatro ríos hay un área plana no más amplia que la palma de una mano, y aquí he construido una pequeña choza para escudarme de la lluvia. He pelado corteza de los árboles para construir mis cuatro pare-

des, y llevo una vestimenta hecha de las pieles de venado que han fallecido de muerte natural. En primavera arranco helechos para nutrir mi cuerpo, y en otoño recojo frutas para mantenerme vivo. Pero desde el undécimo (11) mes del año pasado, la nieve se ha estado acumulando, y ahora, cuando estamos ya en el primer mes del nuevo año, continúa nevando. Mi choza tiene siete pies de altura, pero la nieve se acumula a una profundidad de diez pies. Estoy rodeado de cuatro paredes de hielo, y carámbanos penden de las cuevas como collares de joyas que adornan mi lugar de práctica religiosa, mientras dentro de la choza, en vez de arroz, se amontona la nieve. (MW-7, 207-08)

Para finales de los 1270, las epidemias y hambrunas arribaban a través del Japón, así que no es difícil imaginar cuán agradecido se sentía el Daishonin por el apoyo de la familia de Nanjo aún cuando ellos experimentaban sus propias dificultades económicas.

La muerte repentina del hijo más joven, Shichiro Goro, en 1280, justo a finales de la persecución de Atsuhara, fue devastadora para Lady Nanjo. Para ella, él ocupaba un lugar especial, ya que lo había criado sola. Lady Nanjo debe haber sentido que todas sus luchas después de la muerte de su esposo habían sido recompensadas con el florecer de su hijo más joven. Como afirma el Daishonin en la postdata a Carta de Condolencia, alrededor de tres meses antes de él morir, el 15 de junio de 1280, Shichiro Goro, acompañado de su hermano mayor, Tokimitsu, visitó al Daishonin en Monte Minobu. Con la ima-

gen de Shichiro Goro fresca en su mente, el Daishonin sintió un gran dolor por la pérdida de este buen joven discípulo.

Como escribe el Daishonin en su carta, la vida de Lady Nanjo no era fácil. Ella experimentó la muerte de miembros de la familia, una tras otra. Perdió a padres, hermanos, y esposo. Entonces, en medio de numerosas dificultades para criar a sus nueve hijos como madre soltera, perdió a su hijo mayor, Shichiro Taro. Después de esto vino la muerte de su hijo menor.

La pena de Lady Nanjo era profunda. En "Una Carta de Condolencia," el Daishonin comparte el dolor de la madre y la abraza con el calor de su humanidad. En la carta, el Daishonin honradamente expresa su pesar y empatía sobre la repentina muerte de Shichiro Goro. Claro está, la muerte es natural y el Budismo enuncia ampliamente sobre ella. Como maestro de Budismo, el Daishonin pudo haber predicado a la madre sobre las teorías budistas de la muerte. Pero no lo hizo. A través de su carta, el Daishonin le habla a la madre como su amigo, como un ser humano común que se pena de igual manera por la muerte de Shichiro Goro.

La actitud del Daishonin expresada en "Una Carta de Condolencia" contrasta con la de muchos sacerdotes budistas japoneses que considerarían la muerte de sus creyentes como una oportunidad para hacer dinero dirigiendo servicios. Cuando las personas estudian Budismo y su visión sobre la muerte, algunos podrían enajenarse de la realidad de la muerte — especialmente, la tristeza y sufrimiento de aquellos que han perdido seres queridos. No es suficiente decir a las personas que están sufriendo que "Es tu karma perder a tal o más cual" o "Es cuestión de fe aceptar la muerte de tal o más cual."

En "Una Carta de Condolencia," el Daishonin muestra la importancia de desarrollar nuestra humanidad y compasión a través de la práctica y el estudio. El conocimiento de principios budistas es de valor máximo cuando sirve para desarrollar nuestra compasión. No es sino natural para una madre sufrir por la muerte de su hijo. Y es compasión budista compartir su sufrimiento y abrazarla. Lo que más necesitaba Lady Nanjo era alguien que compartiera sus sentimientos, no una disertación sobre la teoría de la muerte. Ciertamente, la intención del Daishonin no era permanecer por siem-

SUPLEMENTO DEL MATERIAL
DE ESTUDIO PARA EL EXAMEN ELEMENTAL**‘Carta a los Hermanos’**

Para contestar la pregunta modelo No.7, del cuestionario publicado en el World Tribune ‘Spanish Pages’ el 14 de agosto de 1998.

Fragmento del Goshō

El demonio de la oscuridad fundamental puede incluso entrar en la vida de un bodhisattva que ha llegado hasta el nivel más elevado de su práctica e impedirle lograr el beneficio supremo del Sutra del Loto — la Budeidad. Por eso, le es fácil obstaculizar a cualquiera que se encuentre en los niveles inferiores de la práctica. El Demonio del Sexto Cielo se apodera de la vida de la esposa y de los hijos de un hombre para confundirlo. También posee al soberano, para amenazar al devoto del Sutra del Loto, o hace que los padres se opongan a la fe de sus hijos creyentes. (*Los escritos principales de Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pág. 137)

La fe es una batalla continua contra nuestra propia oscuridad fundamental

Los hermanos Ikegami habían estado practicando el Budismo del Daishonin por aproximadamente 20 años cuando ellos recibieron esta carta. Eran oficiales de mucho éxito en el gobierno Shogunato de Kamakura y líderes laicos de la orden del Daishonin. Con la súbita desheredación de Munenaka, puede que los hermanos pensarán: “¿Por qué tenemos que sufrir esta dificultad después de tantos años de práctica?”

El Daishonin al darse cuenta de la duda y preocupación que crecía en los corazones de los hermanos — especialmente, en el menor, Munenaga— les escribe: “El demonio de la oscuridad fundamental puede incluso entrar en la vida de un bodhisattva que ha llegado hasta el nivel más elevado de su práctica e impedirle lograr el beneficio supremo del Sutra del Loto— la Budeidad. Por eso, le es fácil obstaculizar a cualquiera que se encuentre en los niveles inferiores de la práctica.”

De esta forma, el Daishonin nos amonesta a jamás descuidarnos en la vigilancia de nuestra propia oscuridad fundamental. Debemos de continua-

mente fortalecer nuestra fe y práctica hasta el último momento de nuestras vidas para así poder establecer una felicidad absoluta y duradera. Después de todo, debido a que la oscuridad fundamental es parte de nuestras vidas, tenemos que hacer esfuerzos constantes para mantenerla bajo control.

La meta de nuestra práctica budista es el logro de la felicidad absoluta, o nuestra iluminación, en esta existencia. No importa cuanto tiempo hemos practicado o lo que hallamos logrado en la sociedad o en el ámbito de la fe, si dejamos de practicar no podremos lograr la iluminación.

En ningún momento nadie podría decir, “he practicado lo suficiente,” o “ya me he convertido en un Buda, así que desde ahora en adelante voy a descansar.” Cuando cesamos en nuestros esfuerzos de construcción, creamos una causa para la destrucción. En este sentido, podemos decir que los Budas constantemente van hacia adelante buscando su propia superación.

En otras palabras, los budas se esfuerzan incesantemente en su “revolución humana.” En este aspecto, el logro de la iluminación podría ser descrito como un proceso continuo de auto-perfección.

El Daishonin explica a los hermanos que los obstáculos y dificultades son una realidad en nuestra práctica. La iluminación o felicidad absoluta no es la ausencia de problemas u obstáculos. Sino más bien, es un estado de vida en el cual podemos superar con confianza cualquier obstáculo y dificultad a la vez que calidamente abrazamos a los que sufren.

“El demonio de la oscuridad fundamental” o el “Demonio del Sexto Cielo” es una expresión metafórica de la naturaleza inherente en la vida para destruir no sólo a sí misma, sino también su ambiente y otras vidas. A menudo nos repugna observar lo que otros seres humanos son capaces de hacerse unos al otro o a sus alrededores. Tanto la guerra, el terrorismo o la destrucción ambiental a un nivel mundial, como el asesinato, el ultraje y el abuso de menores en nuestra vida cotidiana—constituyen la prueba innegable de que el “demonio de la oscuridad fundamental” abunda en nuestra sociedad actual.

Ya que la fuente fundamental

de la violencia y destrucción yace dentro de nuestras vidas, cualquier reforma económica o política en nuestra sociedad ha de fallar, si ésta no cambia la espiritualidad interna de las personas. En este sentido, la poderosa influencia espiritual de una religión o filosofía se hace cada vez más importante para guiar a la humanidad a forjar valores y así abandonar sus tendencias destructivas.

En el “El Registro de las Enseñanzas Transmitidas Oralmente,” el Daishonin dice: “La espada afilada con la cual cortar la oscuridad fundamental sólo se encuentra en la fe.” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 751.) Nuestra fe absoluta en la naturaleza fundamental de la iluminación o la Budeidad dentro de nuestras propias vidas es la clave para vencer la oscuridad fundamental. En otras palabras, la clave para establecer la paz en la sociedad y la felicidad de cada individuo yace en la fe de las personas en el supremo Estado de Buda.

Hacer gongyo y entonar daimoku son actos de alabar y nutrir nuestra Budeidad y controlar la oscuridad fundamental. En este sentido, nuestra práctica puede ser descrita como una lucha continua contra nuestra oscuridad fundamental. A través de nuestra victoria a cada momento en esta batalla, es que podemos establecer nuestra Budeidad como la base de nuestras vidas.

Más adelante, el Daishonin explica que el Demonio del Sexto Cielo puede manifestarse en nuestros cónyuges, hijos, soberanos, o padres para obstaculizar nuestra práctica. En otras palabras, influencias negativas que impiden nuestra práctica generalmente emergen en quienes amamos profundamente, en quienes ejercen una influencia poderosa sobre nosotros, o en aquellos con quienes nos sentimos endeudados.

El Daishonin asegura a los hermanos que lo más importante es continuar en la fe porque a través de su práctica, ellos finalmente pueden también beneficiar a sus padres.

(Traducción del SGI-USA Elementary-level Textbook, págs. 54–57, por Cesarina Caro)

El Presidente de la SGI se reúne con educadores peruanos

Durante la tarde del 24 de julio, el presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda, fundador, asimismo, de la Universidad Soka, en compañía de su esposa Kaneko, se reunió con invitados de la Universidad Ricardo Palma, del Perú, en el Centro de Memoria del Presidente Makiguchi de Hachioji, Tokio.

Una comitiva de dignatarios académicos de la institución educativa peruana viajó especialmente desde Sudamérica hacia el Japón para hacer entrega al presidente de la SGI de sendos doctorados honorarios de la Universidad Ricardo Palma y del Colegio de doctores en Educación del Perú. Dicha comitiva estuvo conformada por el rector de la universidad peruana, Iván Rodríguez Chávez; el director de la Oficina de Extensión Universitaria y Proyección Social, Manuel Pantigoso Pecero; el director de la Oficina de Relaciones Universitarias, Alfonso Jaguande D’Anjoy, y la profesora Margot Santa Cruz.

En el curso del diálogo abordaron diversos temas, sobre uno de éstos, el rector Rodríguez señaló que la exhibición “Armas nucleares; una amenaza para la humanidad,” auspiciada en forma conjunta por la Universidad Ricardo Palma y la SGI en junio de este año, había concitado la atención de una cantidad sin precedentes de espectadores, unos sesenta mil, durante su exposición de un mes en la escuela de estudios superiores de Lima.

El funcionario académico manifestó su elogio por las acciones emprendidas por el señor Ikeda en pro de la causa de la paz y subrayó el énfasis incesante que éste depositaba en la educación como un medio para lograr ese excelso cometido.

Antes de concluir la reunión, el Presidente Ikeda señaló que existía una larga tradición amistosa entre el Perú y el Japón, y expresó su esperanza de que ambos “vecinos del Pacífico” consolidaran un lazo fraterno tan ancho como el océano que los unía.

— información tomada de la SGI NEWSLETTER

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pre en el estado infernal con la madre, sino infundir valentía en el corazón de ella y así ayudarla a superar la angustia experimentada con la muerte de su hijo. Sin embargo, el Daishonin estaba profundamente consciente de qué era lo que aminoraría la carga de tristeza en el corazón de ella. Era el que ella supiera que, a su lado, había alguien que sabía exactamente lo que ella estaba pasando.

El Daishonin demuestra en esta carta a Lady Nanjo que la mejor forma de definir la filosofía budista es a través de nuestros actos. El sólo recitar principios budistas sin preocupación o compasión por otros es la antítesis del estudio budista. En “Una Carta de Condolencia,” podemos ver que nuestra práctica y estudio del Budismo debe estar dirigida hacia la expansión de nuestra humanidad.

El Daishonin continuó alentando a Lady Nanjo no obstante la pobre salud de él. Como resultado, Lady Nanjo se fortale-

ció en la fe. Aunque sentía una enorme tristeza por la muerte de Shichiro Goro, ella no permitió que se quebrantara su espíritu. En cada carta que el Daishonin escribió a Lady Nanjo después de la muerte de su hijo menor, lo mencionaba. Alrededor de un año antes de su propia muerte, el Daishonin escribió a Lady Nanjo: “Si veo [a su fenecido hijo en Pico del Águila] antes que usted, le haré saber cuánto su madre se lamenta” (*Goshō Zenshu*, pág. 1584). El Daishonin murió el 13 de octubre de 1282. Alrededor de dos años más tarde, Lady Nanjo serenamente dio su último respiro mientras Tokimitsu y el resto de su familia la acompañaban. Hasta el final, mantuvo su fe en las enseñanzas del Daishonin.

(Traducción de los antecedentes del Living Buddhism, septiembre de 1998, por Andy Sanchez, Puerto Rico.)