



## FEATURE

Sheldon Flemming of Atlanta was inspired to create Wonderland Gardens.

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## ESSAY

'Words that have sprung from the depths of great souls' are our precious spiritual heritage.

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# The Ultimate STRUGGLE

What kind of life should we choose to lead? One of selfish interests defined only by social standing or fame? Or one dedicated to benefitting all humanity?

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech upon accepting the Abdumomunov Award from the Kyrgyz Republic in Tokyo, Sept. 19. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the SGI Youth Peace General Meeting, attended by members from 51 countries and territories.*

The distinguished Kyrgyz writer Toktobolot Abdumomunov (1922-92) wrote with great lyricism: "O Earth! You turn ceaselessly, never resting, embracing so many joys and so many sorrows. Sadness, joy, folly, wisdom, forbearance, betrayal, sincerity, cruelty, and life and death — all of these you gather in your embrace as you turn."

It is certainly true that during even the brief hour in which this gathering is being held, our blue Earth continues to move on its inexorable path through the universe, spinning on its axis at a speed of 1,000 miles per hour while revolving around the sun at the tremendous speed of 66,000 miles per hour.

The universe and all life are in motion; they are dynamic. Youth, too, is another name for ceaseless, dynamic activity.

What kind of life should we choose to lead, then, on this vibrant, ever-moving, never-resting planet that is our stage? Abdumomunov urges: "Let us not think, act or concern ourselves with selfish interests, with social standing or fame, but always quest and work ungrudgingly for the billions of our fellow human beings and for the future of humanity itself." What a noble call to dedicate ourselves to what is right and good! Working to benefit all humanity is also the goal of the SGI.

Today, outstanding youth leaders from 51 countries and territories, who are taking active responsibility for the world's future, have gathered here in this hall in that very same spirit. You are all exponents of a profound life-philosophy, who are challenging and surmounting the sufferings of life and death, the ultimate struggle of all human beings. I am very aware of the many difficulties you have had to overcome in these hard economic times to make this trip to Japan. I humbly accept this most distinguished culture award, together with all of you, my dear young friends from around the world.

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6



## L.A. Friendship Center Opens



SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda plants a tree in commemoration of the opening of the Los Angeles Friendship Center, Sept. 21. This is the first SGI-USA building to be built from the ground up in the City of Los Angeles. (See p. 5 for story and more photos). Center courtyard photo above by Lisa Hollis.

## STUDY

Ted Morino sheds light on fundamental darkness.

## PERSPECTIVE

Andy Hanlen looks back at 25 years of Buddhist practice.

## SPANISH

Timely study material.

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# WOW!

BREAKTHROUGHS IN UNDERSTANDING

## The Secret of Seeing

By BILL ENDSLEY  
CHICAGO CORRESPONDENT

When you read excellent novels through the eyes of Buddhism, you can develop the kind of ability with which to reach deeper into the world of Buddhism, especially when you read the writings of Nichiren Daishonin. (Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism in Action*, vol. 4, p. 5)

I recently reread *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* by Annie Dillard, a book I had read in high school. I was deeply touched by insights the book illustrates through natural metaphors. The book reminded me of Sunday afternoons I used to spend wandering around my grandmother's farm as a child. Because my mind wasn't full of worries, the limestone and the cedar seemed to speak to me. As I took up the practice of faith and was able to get outside my anxieties, the candles and the incense seemed to speak the same language.

I have also been studying the writings of Nichiren Daishonin lately, one sentence at a time. Each sentence brings a new understanding. The sentences are stones along the path, and when you stop to look at them, they contain jewels.

Through careful reading of the Daishonin's writings and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, I have come to see a connection between the larger natural world and my daily travails. Writing about her experience of seeing sunlight seeming to radiate from a cedar tree, Annie Dillard says: "The secret of seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail, whetted, translucent, broadside to the merest puff."

Our practice of faith allows us to see the light that radiates from everyday things. It is this kind of deeper understanding that President Ikeda says is vital if we are to bring about change in the world. WTT

Did you ever say "Wow!" after studying Buddhism? Send us your story (see p. 14 for contact information).

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

# What Is Fundamental Darkness?

By TED MORINO  
STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

**Q** What is meant by fundamental darkness?

**A** Darkness here means the ultimate illusion or ignorance inherent in one's life, which gives rise to doubts, delusions and worries.

In terms of our practice, the fundamental darkness is the ultimate illusion we must finally conquer in the course of practicing, the one fundamental evil within us that will continue to prevent us from growing in faith.

In Buddhism, illusion is the inability to realize that we inherently possess Buddhahood, a life-condition in which enlightenment is manifested.

In "Letter to Brothers," Nichiren Daishonin states, "The devil of fundamental darkness can even enter the life of a bodhisattva who has reached the highest stage of practice and prevent him from attaining the Lotus Sutra's ultimate blessing — Buddhahood itself" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 136-37). In "The Treatment of Illness," the Daishonin writes, "The funda-

mental darkness manifests itself as the Devil of the Sixth Heaven" (MW-3, 279).

We can say that the Devil of the Sixth Heaven works to prevent us from becoming enlightened to our innate Buddhahood.

Human history is filled with examples of individuals controlled by their egotism. As the Daishonin points out: "This world is the province of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. All of its people have been related to him since time without beginning" (MW-1, 135-36). This egotism, which gives rise to all forms of selfish desires for power and fame, can be considered equivalent to the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. When one is rooted in egotism, he or she functions as this devil.

From yet another perspective, the fundamental darkness is expressed as a life-condition where one's lesser self holds sway. In this life-condition, we are held prisoner to our own desires, passions and hatreds and are therefore prevented from manifesting our greater self, the life-condition of Buddhahood connected with the life of the universe. When the Daishonin says, "Doubt signifies the fundamental darkness" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 772), he points to the function of one's lesser self,

which causes one to doubt the absolute power of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Modern society is steeped in fundamental darkness. As SGI President Ikeda says: "The fundamental cause of the most tragic nuclear war can be triggered by the fundamental darkness that lies on the deepest level of human life. This unenlightened nature innate in human life gives birth to devilish hearts and minds, such as those characterized by distrust, hatred, jealousy, the desire to control and the urge to kill."

The way to conquer this ultimate darkness, according to the Daishonin, is faith in the Gohonzon. As he writes, "Faith is the sharpest sword that enables us to defeat the fundamental darkness" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751).

Our daimoku chanted to the Gohonzon enables us to tap the great self of Buddhahood that is instrumental in overcoming the smallness of our ego. As the Daishonin encourages us, "No matter what, all my disciples must cherish the great desire of attaining enlightenment" (MW-1, 250). Taking courageous, compassionate action for humanity and for peace is the key to establishing a lofty, altruistic greater self. WTT

## 'RENGE' (LOTUS)

# What's a Flower Like You Doing in a Swamp Like This?

WHAT A  
**Concept**  
ON THE BASIC IDEAS  
OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

By LISA JONES  
STAFF WRITER

The lotus blossom is symbolic in Buddhism; it illustrates the idea that although human beings live in the muddy, mucky world of suffering and attachment, we can draw forth our Buddhahood and thus blossom in the same way that a lotus flower blossoms in a swamp. The flower is inseparable from the muck; the muck, in fact, makes it possible for the flower to thrive. *Renge*, one of the components of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, literally means lotus blossom.

In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, there are two other ways to interpret the meaning of *renge*. First, it's a metaphor for the Mystic Law; because the lotus blooms and seeds at the same time, it represents the simultaneity of cause and effect, which is the essence of the Mystic Law. Second, *renge* is not a metaphor but is itself the principle of simultaneous cause and effect; it is the Mystic Law.

This second point is difficult to grasp — just as the subtleties of cause and ef-

fect are difficult to grasp. The Daishonin's teachings do not simply emphasize the law of cause and effect. Rather, the Daishonin sought to liberate people from the chains of conventional causality. The moment we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, he teaches, we orient ourselves in the present and toward the future. While humble self-reflection is always necessary, to dwell on the past or worry about correcting past causes is not the point of Buddhist practice.

In "Letter from Sado," the Daishonin explains the general law of cause and effect — essentially, that one's present sufferings are due to negative causes made in the past — but then goes on to say, "Nichiren's sufferings, however, are not ascribable to this causal law" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 40). Through chanting, we discover our mission in life and come to see our circumstances (or karma) as the path of our mission rather than punishment or reward for past causes.

SGI President Ikeda explains this further in *The New Human Revolution*, volume 1: "It is true that Buddhism teaches that one who commits evil deeds against others will receive the negative effects of those actions and live an unhappy life. This is just one aspect, however. Were it the entire teaching on karma, then people would be doomed to live under a cloud of

guilt and vague anxiety, not knowing what offenses they might have committed in past lives. It would also mean that people's destiny was fixed — a concept that could easily rob them of their energy and passion. It might also cause people to lapse into a passive way of life, simply concerning themselves with not doing anything bad.

"The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin goes far beyond the framework of superficial causality," he writes. "It elucidates the most fundamental cause and shows us the means for returning to the pure life within that has existed since time without beginning. This fundamental cause is to awaken to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and dedicate our lives to the widespread propagation of the Law."

Interestingly, the name Nichiren means Sun Lotus, and he writes, "Giving myself the name *Nichiren* signifies that I attained enlightenment by myself" (MW-1, 236). He also writes that "the Lotus Sutra is the sun and the moon and the lotus flower. Therefore it is called Myoho-enge-kyo (the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Mystic Law)..." (MW-4, 87).

*Renge*, then, expresses not only cause and effect but the well-spring from which Buddhist teachings arise.

*Nineteen in a series*

# SGI President's Essays To Be Aired in Los Angeles

By **TED MORINO**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Another series of readings in English and Japanese from SGI President Ikeda's book *Values and Visions: Portraits of Global Citizens* began airing on Oct. 4 in the Los Angeles area. The 26-week series on radio station KALI (AM 1430) is broadcast Sundays from 10:00–10:30 a.m.

The first four installments of this new series will be rebroadcasts of earlier broadcasts. The first series aired from April 1997–March 1998 in several Western states both in English and Japanese and in New York and Florida from June–August 1998 in English only.

Among those Mr. Ikeda recalls in this new series are Zhou Enlai, the late prime minister of China; Aleksei Kosygin, the late premier of the Soviet Union; and Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

The series is based on the SGI president's essays, which have appeared in both the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*.

Producer Keiko Kimura says her motivation for these series stems from her desire to bring Mr. Ikeda's humanitarian ideals to a wide-ranging audience, many of whom only know of him by name.

"I wanted to introduce Daisaku Ikeda as the great global citizen that he is," she

says. "Through this broadcast, many people who had initially misunderstood him and the Soka Gakkai have changed their views 180 degrees. This made me realize the power of his writing and his message. Listeners of this program said that Mr. Ikeda's words had given them hope and courage. I am not an SGI member nor a Buddhist. However, as long as there are people who are struggling in hopeless desperation, I feel it is my duty and responsibility to inspire these people through broadcasting Mr. Ikeda's essays."

Recently, in Los Angeles, a Japanese-language broadcast series of SGI President Ikeda's book *Song for Mothers* was concluded as well. □

## NEWS BRIEFS



### Alaska Youth Study 'Discussions On Youth'

More than 30 Alaska youth division members met at Big Lake in August to discuss SGI President Ikeda's book *Discussions On Youth*, volume 1. They focused on the chapters on "Friendship and Perspectives on Life During Youth." President Ikeda there shares President Toda's wish that "young people ought to be talking about their future

by the lakeside or shaping their hopes and dreams while gazing up at the stars." That's exactly what happened at Big Lake — there was a barbecue by the lakeside, canoeing, hiking, swimming and the building of valuable friendships and renewing of determinations.

— GRACE CHRISTIANSON,  
Correspondent

### Cherry Tree Garden

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



Recently, Denver youth division members install a plaque and bench donated by SGI President Ikeda in an area of the city's Jacobs Park designated The Cherry Tree Garden. SGI-USA members planted 50 cherry trees earlier this year in this area of the park. The dedication plaque in front of the bench contains a quote from Mr. Ikeda's 'The New Human Revolution.'



### Children's Rights Exhibit Opens in Minneapolis

The SGI-USA-sponsored exhibition "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" opened Sept. 13. The exhibition ran for three weeks in the Minneapolis Public Library in downtown Minneapolis. Almost every weeknight and all day on Saturdays during the three weeks, various workshops, panel discussions and children's programs were held in conjunction with the exhibition,

bringing experts in all realms of children's issues into contact with the public. The library staff put together window displays and a reading resource list for the exhibition. For the SGI-USA members in Minnesota, this was the culmination of more than a year of efforts. Twenty-seven local organizations co-sponsored the event.

— NANCY DUNLAVY,  
Correspondent

## SGI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Most Valuable Are Those Who Work for Peace

SGI President Ikeda sent the following message to a gongyo meeting at the San Francisco Ikeda Auditorium commemorating the opening of the Linus Pauling exhibition, Sept. 20.

**M**y dear friends of San Francisco, whom I trust and love from the bottom of my heart! Congratulations on this commemorative meeting, held in bright spirits and with high hopes!

I feel a profound connection to each of you, vibrantly active in this proud city from which the kosen-rufu movement in America began. I know how hard you have worked, exerting yourselves selflessly for the sake of Buddhism, to contribute to the well-being of society and of all those around you. I would like to take this occasion to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to each of you; I am confident that the brilliantly successful opening of the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition symbolizes your victory, based on the principle that the teachings of Buddhism promote the flourishing of society. I thank all those who have prayed for the success of this exhibition and who have exerted themselves so completely in the preparations for it.

I clearly remember the words of Dr. Pauling, which he shared with me as if to convey a mes-



sage far into the future. No one, he said, is more valuable than those who work for peace. The Soka Gakkai is taking a pioneering role in this struggle and should continue to advance, he said, fearing nothing.

The members of San Francisco have taken the lead for the entire SGI-USA organization, rising above all obstacles, creating through your courageous actions an ever-expanding soli-

arity of peace and happiness.

I have heard that the pioneer members of San Francisco, who contributed so much in those days, are in high spirits and are enjoying good health. I also understand that the members of the men's and women's divisions are showing powerful actual proof in their lives. Most heartening of all, however, is the remarkable growth of the young people, the members of the

youth division.


There is a well-known passage from the Gosho: "A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 142).

Each victory that you have is a victory for your entire family, a victory for your community and for the whole of American society. Thus I hope that you

will each be responsible citizens as you win over yourselves and contribute to society. I hope that each of you will win, without fail, in your lives.

I further hope that you will continue to demonstrate a model of harmonious unity for the entire world as you advance, proudly and confidently, toward the realization of kosen-rufu.

I would like to close this message of congratulations wishing all of you, precious Bodhisattvas of the Earth, lives filled with good health, profound satisfaction and victory.

May there be glory without limit to San Francisco! May there be happiness to all of my beloved friends! 

## Spread Circles of Friendship

The following is SGI President Ikeda's message upon the opening of the Los Angeles Friendship Center, Sept. 21.

**M**y dear friends of Los Angeles, whom I love and respect and with whom I share so many precious memories — my heartfelt congratulations on opening this wonderful Los Angeles Friendship Center!

This center is a palace of victory, a precious manifestation of the faith of each of you. It is also a symbol of hope, the certainty that the kosen-rufu movement in Los Angeles will continue to advance and develop by further spreading circles of friendship.

I hope that you will love and care for this center, making it an ever more beautiful home of good fortune, a castle of friendship open to your community.

As you know, the day before yesterday,


the exhibition "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" opened successfully in San Francisco. Some five years ago, Dr. Linus Pauling attended the lecture I gave at Claremont McKenna College. With numerous prominent scholars in attendance, he emphasized the importance of the actions of the bodhisattva, a person who sincerely extends assistance and relief to those who are suffering. He said that this kind of altruism is beautiful proof of our humanity, and he expressed his heartfelt expectations of the Soka Gakkai.

Fulfilling the hopes voiced by Dr. Pauling, you have lived up to your noble mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. You have exerted yourselves without cease in the practice of easing the pain and increasing the joy of others. You have spread strong and deep roots of service and trust into the soil of society. You have enabled our SGI movement to grow into a magnificent and towering tree that remains unshaken in

the most violent storms. You who have shared the struggle for kosen-rufu with me have accumulated good fortune that is indeed infinite and beyond measure.

To quote the Gosho: "If *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind) prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas in *dotai ishin* (one in body, different in mind), they can achieve nothing remarkable" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 153).

It is my sincere hope that you will continue to enjoy ideal unity as responsible citizens of your respective communities and that in bright spirits you will climb, powerfully, one step at a time, the towering peak of human revolution and kosen-rufu.

I would like to conclude by voicing my prayer that each of my dear precious friends, who protect the headquarters of kosen-rufu in America, will enjoy lives of unsurpassed happiness. 


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# Friendship Center: A Product of Harmony

By JOHN BATES  
CORRESPONDENT

When thunderous El Niño rains pounded Los Angeles this winter, halting construction at sites all over Southern California and wreaking havoc with traffic, project supervisor Ted Fujioka wasn't worried at all about the fate of the Los Angeles Friendship Center, which opened on Sept. 21. A veteran of four decades of SGI-USA enterprises, he knew exactly what to do. "We used any downtime to sit around with the various contractors and talk," he said — about how best to execute the plans, the difficulties of laying out such a radical triangular design, and solving issues that hadn't even come up yet.

"By the time the weather cleared," he says, "everyone was working in harmony." He showed no surprise, then, when the Friendship Center opened two months early: "The members' determination and daimoku made it happen."

Since day one in July 1996, when the idea for a Los Angeles neighborhood-based center was born, until its completion two years later, the LAFC has been a product of the members' wishes — but it took the compassion of SGI President Ikeda to make this "castle of kosen-rufu" a reality. The SGI president donated the funds not only to purchase the property in the first place but to build a brand new building when plans to refurbish the earthquake-damaged engineering company building on the site proved impractical.

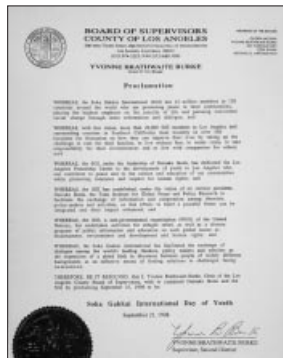
Things moved fast: a committee of architects, leaders from each Los Angeles region and volunteers drew up a mission statement for the friendship center and started researching ideas for its design, materials, lighting, decor — tossing back and forth ideas on what would be the most welcoming colors and textures.

The center is made up of two buildings — one that houses the main hall, with seating for about 400, and a triangular-shaped one that contains offices, meeting rooms and the bookstore. It ushers in a new era of people-oriented meeting places, according to Los Angeles Region Leader Ian McIlraith, thanks to grass-roots involvement "from its inception through its evolution as a structure and in the scope of its features."

One of the departures from tradition is that the main hall boasts a colorful, versatile flooring suitable for performance group rehearsals as well as events where food is served. The center's layout highlights natural gathering places, the soothing greenery of an atrium and a full-sized basketball court to accommodate energetic kids of all ages. There are seven Gohonzon enshrined in the center, making every multi-purpose room one in which members can chant.

In the hectic last few days before the opening, the members continued to show the depth of their involvement. One couple who happened to be retiring from their nursery business arrived with dozens of plants for the garden, while another member drove up from Santa Ana with a truckload of saplings.

Perhaps more important than the physical environment of the center is what has happened and will continue here: harmony, discovery, creation. ❖



(Above) The triangle building houses an atrium, offices and meeting rooms. (Left) One of several awards and proclamations presented by public officials at the opening ceremony.



(Left) SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda greets members at the ceremony. (Above and below) The Los Angeles Friendship Center's main hall, which seats about 400 people.



## SPEECH, FROM PAGE 1

I wish to express my deepest appreciation for this great honor to President Amangeldy Kerimbaev of the Kyrgyz State Philharmonic Society, a leading protagonist in the promotion of his country's performing arts. Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to be here with us today. Again, please accept my most heartfelt welcome.

Earlier, the members of Kyrgyzstan's renowned Kambarkan Fold Ensemble presented us with a sublime performance of music and song. As we listened to those serene, timeless strains, our hearts were transported so that we seemed to be gazing up at the towering silver peaks of the Tien Shan mountain range soaring into the clear blue skies. We also experienced the thrill of galloping across the vast grass steppes of the Silk Road on white steeds and sitting by the shoreline of a magical lake under a night sky filled with stars, talking with dear friends.

That poetic spirit, that shared answering response or appreciation transcending nationality or race evoked by a beautiful song or work of art, is the fundamental source of world peace.

There is a famous Kyrgyz expression: "Social position is like melting ice, but art is an enduring gem in the people's hearts." The mightiest rulers, proud of their power and authority, melt away like ice when the sunlight of the people's justice shines on them. On the other hand, artists — no matter how unknown and uncelebrated — who impart joy and hope are true champions of beauty who illuminate the hearts of humanity with indestructible light. That is why I have been promoting cultural exchange and why I always welcome visiting emissaries of the arts with the greatest esteem and veneration.

Let us take this opportunity to demonstrate once again our gratitude and respect to President Kerimbaev and all the musicians and dancers of the Kambarkan Folk Ensemble by giving them a rousing round of applause.

### Struggles for Power Destabilize the World

We are living in a period of radical change. On the international level, relationships based on power and profit — that is, ties forged only in the interests of governments or economics — are no longer sufficient to create a stable world. This makes me all the more certain that ties based on culture — broader and more enduring relationships forged



**'O Earth! You turn ceaselessly, never resting, embracing so many joys and so many sorrows. Sadness, joy, folly wisdom, forbearance, betrayal, sincerity, cruelty, and life and death — all of these you gather in your embrace as you turn'** (by Kyrgyz writer Toktobolot Abdumomunov).

through people's heart-to-heart interactions as human beings — will become the solid foundation for lasting peace, even though it may appear to be a slow and time-consuming route.

I also believe that the spiritual solidarity of youth who possess a firm and unshakable philosophy of humanity is an indispensable element in securing stability and peace for our world.

### 'Think Globally, Act Locally'

We are very fortunate to have with us today Dr. Hazel Henderson, the internationally acclaimed author and futurist who has devoted her life to pioneering grass-roots movements to effect reform. Dr. Henderson firmly believes that the world will be changed not by national governments or giant corporations but by a third power — the power of an awakened citizenry. In that spirit, Dr. Henderson has expressed great hopes for the activities of the SGI youth division.

The famous watchwords of the Club of Rome, "Think globally, act locally," which became a standard for the world peace movement, were actually conceived by Dr. Henderson amid her own struggles. I fondly remember discussing this wonderful slogan with Dr. Aurelio Peccei, the Club's founder. It has much in common with the Buddhist belief that the accomplishment of great goals starts with our earnest efforts in our immediate environment.

Dr. Henderson did not receive the usual university education, and I have heard that, as

a result, she has borne the brunt of much scorn and arrogance from mainstream economists and academics, who asked, "How can you expect a housewife to understand economics?" She has also been fiercely attacked for her pioneering ideas and her courageous words and deeds in defense of the weak and oppressed. But through everything she has demonstrated an unbeatable spirit, standing up to and fighting back against all obstacles and attacks.

She has discoursed and debated with many world-famous scholars and thinkers. She is also very close to former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa. Her advice to Mr. Gorbachev three years ago, when there were rumors that he was considering a return to Russian politics, is very well known. She told him to the effect: Don't allow yourself to be confined to one small nation; you must act as a world citizen and be active on a much broader scale!

In her acceptance speech on receiving the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century's Global Citizen Award [1996], Dr. Henderson declared, "Let us keep that spark of divinity we all carry within us shining brightly as we continue working to shape wiser, more just and loving societies."

I invite you to join me in a warm round of applause for Dr. Henderson, in appreciation and praise for her noble ideals and fine achievements.

### Redirecting Our Gaze at Life Itself

The Soka Gakkai was founded in November 1930, a time when

the world was thrown into turmoil by the Great Depression. Life was hard, we had lost our philosophical bearings, and the world situation was growing worse every day — a time not unlike what we are experiencing today.

Most of Japan's political, intellectual and religious leaders of the day were caught up in the whirlpool of chaos and confusion and could only look on stunned, powerless to effect any change. They lost their composure and self-confidence, and, if they reacted at all, it was only to make a lot of empty noise. In his treatise *The System of Value-creating Education*, founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi delivered a sharp rebuke. Never before, he said, had society's leaders so completely lost their ability to lead. Even worse, education, which should provide a sound philosophical basis, was paralyzed and withered. It had no power to help people face the crisis. This, declared Mr. Makiguchi, was the fundamental cause for the sickness of society. In other words, it wasn't the government or the economy that was deadlocked but humanity that was deadlocked. Mr. Makiguchi's analysis was brilliant.

Before all else, he insisted, we must return to the most fundamental starting point, in other words, redirect our gaze to life itself. And we must commence by instituting humanistic education that taps and develops the infinite life force and potential of human beings. The only solution to the world's crisis, he decided, was to cultivate large numbers of young men and women com-

mitted to value-creation, who would work for the people's welfare and triumph over the volatile times they lived in. That was Mr. Makiguchi's present vision.

Today, far too many of society's leaders think only of themselves and make no effort to nurture and educate their juniors. But you are different: you are the youth of the SGI. The darker the end-of-the-century gloom may become, please shine all the more brightly as beacons lighting the way ahead, for your local communities, your countries and your regions.

Abdumomunov wrote: "What legacy will you leave behind you when you die? You can of course leave behind such things as forests, houses and roads — these are all fine legacies. But the best legacy of all is leaving behind excellent successors." I am truly most fortunate to have such wonderful successors as all of you across the globe, and I wish to proudly introduce you to leaders the world over! I am very happy to be able to say that, even in faraway Kyrgyzstan, one of our young SGI members, a graduate of Soka University, is working hard in his chosen field of education.

*President Ikeda then introduced the young man to whom he was referring — Hironori Ito, who interpreted for the Kyrgyz guests on stage during the award presentation.*

### Future Struggles

The beautiful song "Sary Ozok" (The Golden Steppes) performed by our guests earlier was based on a work by the famous Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, a dear friend of mine. I will never forget a statement Mr. Aitmatov made in our dialogue: "The future is a never-ending battle against evil. We must never forget this for a single day. Educating young people means preparing them to do battle with this evil."

Please remember that all of your noble efforts to champion justice and work for the welfare of humanity — many of you, I know, juggling multiple roles and responsibilities and doing the work of several people — and all of the valuable training you are receiving in the process will become the driving force for victory in the coming century. All of your efforts ultimately bring benefit to your own lives.

"To live means to cope, to contend and keep level with all

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, NEXT PAGE

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY

# WORDS OF THE WISE



*'Words that have sprung from the depths of great souls,' writes the SGI leader, are a precious heritage — a heritage he has striven to introduce and share over the decades.*



Photo by LISA HOLLIS

Nichiren Daishonin writes, 'All of the mountains, valleys and fields where Nichiren and his disciples live and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo are the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.'

I am currently presenting various famous maxims to my esteemed fellow members in Japan and around the world, especially to the representatives of the youth division, the leaders of the 21st century. Why am I doing this? Because words that have sprung from the depths of great souls, and wisdom that has withstood the test of time are the most precious spiritual heritage of the human race. They possess insights that illuminate our lives, as well as a pervading hope that inspires us with courage.



When I was young, I avidly read the writings of the French thinker Montaigne. He was said to have pasted more than 50 maxims on the ceiling of his library. One of them was, "I am a man; and nothing human is foreign to me" — words of the Roman dramatist Terence. With these adages as his guide, Montaigne continued his unceasing lifelong quest for the truth of human existence.

I, too, have always appreciated and treasured the words and maxims of the wise. My youth was spent in the desolation following World War II, a time when traditional values were bankrupt, a time of chaos and confusion. Against that background, I made a tremendous effort to seek out the truth of life and find the correct path. The maxims of great thinkers and philosophers were the best signposts I could have asked for on my journey.



I often went to the used-book district of Kanda, where I would spend what little money I had to buy book after book, all of which I ravenously devoured. Whenever I found words in those books that inspired or moved me, I copied them out in a cheap notebook — words such as: "Those who are strong when they stand alone are the true heroes," and "The greater the resistance waves meet, the stronger they become."

I copied these maxims just around the time I first met my mentor, Josei Toda. I was deeply

impressed to find later that each of these adages agreed with the Buddhist way of life.



Such maxims of the wise, which reveal the truth of human existence, resonate strongly with the humanism expounded in Buddhism. When we look at his writings, we see that Nichiren Daishonin quotes freely not only from the Buddhist scriptures but also many other non-Buddhist writings. At times, he even quotes well-known popular tales and stories. In doing so, he reveals just how true is the assertion: "All phe-

nomena are manifestations of the Buddhist Law" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 566).

Commenting on sages and philosophers of old, such as T'ai-kung Wang of ancient China who overthrew an evil king and freed the people from tyranny, the Daishonin writes, "The wisdom of such people incorporated in its essence the wisdom of Buddhism" (MW-6, 143). Clearly, the words of hope and courage of great people of the past, people who championed the cause of the common people and fought for their happiness and security, are a manifestation of the wisdom of Buddhism.



There are times when certain teachings of Buddhism can be difficult to grasp. For example, there is the passage from the *Gosho*, "All of the mountains, valleys and fields where Nichiren and his disciples live and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo are the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 781). This teaches us that through our practice of Buddhism we can transform wherever we are now into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, but it can be rather difficult for a person who knows little about Buddhism to comprehend. If, however, we

quote the words of Cuban freedom fighter José Martí — "Wherever a person stands up courageously, the sun shines" — the meaning of the Daishonin's words becomes clear. Great words such as these are universal; they contribute to a deeper understanding of Buddhism and serve to verify its validity.



But even wise sayings that are the crystallization, the gemstones, of thousands of years of human experience are rarely referred to or contemplated today, and they are slowly being buried beneath the dust of history and forgotten. That is why I have made a conscious effort over the years to introduce the lives and thoughts of great men and women, past and present, East and West, in my speeches, and to share their words with you. I have also tried to widely introduce the insights of outstanding individuals from various countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, who are not very well known in Japan. I have done this with the pledge that we of the SGI will realize without fail the ideals, hopes and dreams of these people of sagacity and foresight.

The great philosopher Plato; the idealist Emerson; the great writers Goethe, Tolstoy, Hugo and Lu Xun; the leader of India's independence movement Gandhi; the Philippine hero Rizal — all of these are our spiritual friends and comrades, because we are all committed to walking the noble path of humanism.



And how enjoyable it is to move forward toward our goals, our hearts conversing with giants of the human spirit through their timeless words of wisdom.

Buddhism aims to unite all humanity, to guide every single person into the vast blue sky of the spirit. As the great Indian poet Tagore writes: "The best does not come alone. / It comes with the company of the all." ❧

This series is published as "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" in the *Seikyō Shimbun*.

SPEECH, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

sorts of circumstances, many of them difficult." These are the words of Dr. Henderson's mentor, the world-renowned economist Dr. E.F. Schumacher (1911-77) who proposed the idea of "Buddhist economics."

Let us promise one another that, in that same spirit, we of the SGI will continue to triumph over every obstacle and lay a bright and cheerful song of joy, an ode to peace and paean to the people's victory for the world in the new century.

**The Great Always Stand Alone**

In closing, I will share some maxims with the members of our youth division. First, there are the words by the English poet Lord Byron: "Adversity is the first path to truth."

The hero of Cuban independence José Martí said: "Put your faith in the best people and triumph over the worst."

Mahatma Gandhi observed: "The greatest men of the world have always stood alone."

Let these be our mottoes as well!

"Happiness is the fruit of the great tree of suffering," declared Victor Hugo. And with these words of José Martí — "All together, for the sake of all" — I close my speech today. Thank you very much. ❧

SHELDON FLEMMING, ATLANTA

# WONDERLAND GARDENS

AFTER HIS SISTER KELLY WAS MURDERED, SHELDON FLEMMING WAS INSPIRED TO ESTABLISH WONDERLAND GARDENS, A COMBINATION TRIBUTE TO HIS SISTER AND AN EFFORT TO UNITE THE COMMUNITY. 'THIS IS ABOUT GETTING INVOLVED. IT'S ABOUT BEING A PART OF AND EXPERIENCING THE ENVIRONMENT IN



By ANGELA HARRIS  
ATLANTA CORRESPONDENT

This is a place you'll have to see, a story you'll have to tell," says "Sherlock," an anonymous SGI member. Immediately, I contacted and visited with Sheldon Flemming, an SGI member and director and creator of Wonderland Gardens. Upon entering Wonderland and beginning my interview with Sheldon, I realized that Sherlock was on to something.

Many Buddhist terms such as *oneness of self and the environment* and *changing poison into medicine* flashed through my mind as he described the joys and struggles associated with his life and establishment of this place. It is as if the elements of life, nature and the entire universe somehow blended perfectly for a short time during my

stay at Wonderland Gardens.

"This isn't just about landscaping," says Sheldon. "This is about the environment. About understanding where one fits in this big world. It's about getting in tune with nature."

Wonderland Gardens is a nonprofit entity supported by government funding and private grants. The 22-acre field, once a dairy farm, is now in the beginning stages of development. The garden has an array of fresh veggies, flowers, plants and trees. It is a place to experience the wholesomeness of nature without chemicals and pesticides. It is beautiful and serene, located in Atlanta's South DeKalb County.

One of the reasons Sheldon created the garden was to help young people develop an appreciation for the environment. He feels that violence and other harmful behavior

exhibited in society are results of a lack of appreciation. Wonderland Gardens, he hopes, will become a part of the restoration process and provide meaningful information regarding the relationship between the self and the environment.

Sheldon moved to the Atlanta area from Columbus, Ohio, in 1977. He joined the SGI-USA in Atlanta in 1987. Born in Anchorage, Alaska, and with a background in landscaping, he has always had a natural connection to the environment. For six years he was the district horticultural manager for the City of Atlanta and prior to that operated a nursery. Not satisfied with having a secure, well-paying job, he left his position to incorporate landscaping and gardening skills into a place where the community and youth could interact with their natural environment. Wonderland Gardens was born.

"My sister Kelly Flemming was killed 11 years ago not even a mile from where Wonderland Gardens is situated," Sheldon says. "Her death is symbolic of being out of sync with your environment. Being out of sync with your environment can lead to destruction."

The police said that Kelly had been stabbed multiple times, tied up and left to die. She managed to break loose to seek help, but she died in an ambulance on the way to the hospital.

"I was a new member at the time it happened," Sheldon recalls. "At first I was devastated." He was encouraged to chant by Deborah, his girlfriend, who was not then an SGI-USA member. She is now, as well as being Sheldon's wife. Deborah joined because she witnessed how Sheldon used the practice to attain victory despite the odds.

Without her support, Sheldon

says, he found W "In practice, understanding she says Shel through was cha establish combin Kelly a commu "Cur Industry ployed week. T says She ting in i children to 7 year bles. W older PI day care tify the



A young volunteer from Michigan stakes out part of the half-mile walkway that will soon meander through the gardens (left). Ed White, 73 (in plaid shirt with shovel, above left), grew up on a large farm across the street. He shares with teenage volunteers an old black-and-white photo that includes Bob Mathis, son of the original owner of Mathis Dairies, which used to occupy the Wonderland Gardens site. Raheem and Steven (above right) harvest vegetables on behalf of Our House Daycare for Homeless Mothers and Children. Student volunteers (right) plant in the gardens. (Below) LaDoris Davis (right, in hat) teaches youth how to tell stories as part of the summer youth training program. Photos courtesy Wonderland Gardens



photos compiled by Lucy Estephanos

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Sheldon

says, he wouldn't have been able to found Wonderland Gardens.  
"In time, through my Buddhist practice, I was able to better understand the concept of destiny," she says.  
Sheldon now realizes that, through this incident, his destiny was changed. His mission was to establish Wonderland Gardens, a combination tribute to his sister Kelly and an effort to unite the community.  
"Currently, I have nine Private Industry Council (PIC) teens employed here working 30 hours a week. These kids are having a ball," says Sheldon. "The area we're sitting in is Storyland. Here we have children — pre-kindergarten age up to 7 years old — planting vegetables. What I've done is train the older PIC kids to assist the younger day care youth to grow and identify the various plants."

In addition, there are several community groups who plant and harvest the fruits and vegetables at Wonderland and put the food to good use. One such group is the Task Force For The Homeless, spearheaded by Richard Brown, the SGI-USA Atlanta Region leader. Another group is the DeKalb Head Start Program where Sheldon's wife, Deborah, works. She and the youth from the Head Start Program support the garden activities, cultivating and nurturing the field.  
"Just within the last month, we donated somewhere close to 80 pounds of cucumbers to the Atlanta Food Bank," says Sheldon. He received the Super Seventeen Citizen Award, an award that went out to 17 citizens to celebrate TBS's 20th anniversary. Sheldon won this award for his donation of vegetables to those in need over the past two years.

Still in the development stage and with 10 acres to fill, Wonderland Gardens is far from complete.  
"We didn't even look like this three months ago," Sheldon says. "Just recently I got water in here. Back in the summer of 1996, when we broke ground, we were literally trucking barrels of water in here. County commissioners driving by knew there was no water out here and saw this place growing, growing and growing." People started to take notice that Sheldon and a handful of volunteers were making a difference, that Wonderland Gardens was beginning to happen despite the odds.  
There is a bigger goal and future in sight for Wonderland Gardens. Sheldon says that expansion will include greenhouses; nature trails; Japanese, Korean and African-American landscapes; workshops to teach people garden-

ing. "Kelly's Farm," a commemorative garden dedicated to Sheldon's sister, with pick-your-own strawberries, blackberries, boysenberries, blueberries and kiwi patches, is also planned. "We want people to come here to feel and touch," says Sheldon. "This is about getting involved. It's about being a part of and experiencing the environment in a favorable way."  
In summary, Sheldon says: "There's not much difference from planting a seed in the soil than planting a seed on the brain. You have to nurture it."  
The benefit derived from Wonderland Gardens is more than just learning how to plant or garden. It is changing poisonous feelings and experiences into the medicine of joy and appreciation for our lives and the plants and beings that share our environment. W

Photo by MARTIN COHEN



LLOYD FISCHEL, PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIF.

## Thirty Years of Growth

**During his struggles with financial problems, Lloyd Fischel used to ask, 'Why is this happening to me?' But in the course of 30 years of Buddhist practice, he has come to see that his struggles have fueled his growth.**

**S**GI President Ikeda has said that one should look forward to 10, 20 or 30 years of Buddhist practice, because sometimes it takes that long to change the darker aspects of one's life into a happy and fortunate existence. Over the years, when I heard or read this, I cringed inside. I thought, "I hope I won't have to practice for 30 years before I change my horrible destiny."

Well, the years passed and, in December 1997, I began my 30th year of non-stop practice.

In the course of my practice, I've received many benefits. The greatest benefits have been the internal transformations — or human revolution — the changes that grow gradually, and perhaps imperceptibly, but become more and more visible and concrete over time.

One area of my life, though, seemed never to change. Debt has been a recurring problem for me — both owing money and being owed. It goes back to when I was 8 years old, and my father was delinquent on his monthly child support payments. My unfortunate karma was that my mother called on me to be the collector. In my adult life, in business, some companies did not pay me according to our agreements. So here I was, many years later, still trying to collect debts. I also have debts of my own, some of which date back to my days in law school, and the work I did to propagate Buddhism in the former Soviet Union.

All of this led me to last year, the hardest year of my life. I found myself with no money, not even a quarter, and only one credit card — a gas card.

It's true that we each create our karma — so, clearly, I had made both internal and external causes to have brought about these circumstances. I not only needed to repair my external situation, I needed to change my fundamental beliefs, which were at the root of my suffering over money.

Over the course of that year I chanted 1 million daimoku and found the right attorney to help me file suit against a company that owed me money. I did not know how long it would take, but I determined that this fight would be for a much higher prize than money. I wanted this battle to once and for all clean out this aspect of my karma.

However, my wife of less than two years did not see it the same way. She was angry and afraid, my business was failing,

and she did not wish to weather the storm, at least with me. While it hurt a great deal because I loved her and was truly dedicated to our marriage, I could not help but see that as my entire life was changing, so would the people in my life.

President Ikeda once said: "A saying goes, 'Adversity makes the man.' Adversity is a severe fatherlike teacher for your self-perfection. Only when you put yourself in a position from which you can never retreat even a single step can you display your hidden capabilities."

My Buddhist practice became intense. I was chanting every chance I had. Between phone calls at the office, in the car, during TV commercials, waking up in the middle of the night, I could be found chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Desperate to understand more deeply why I was going through these current hardships after practicing so diligently, I turned to Nichiren Daishonin's writings. This became a great source of inspiration.

Reading letters written some 700 years ago, I found in them new meaning. I came to think about Nichiren Daishonin and the challenges he faced. In one letter he discussed how he felt being on Sado Island where he had been sent by government decree. (At that time, such an exile was tantamount to a death sentence.) I thought how miserable Nichiren Daishonin must have felt being convicted of treason for speaking out for equality and justice. I thought about our present-day lives and people who suffer because of beliefs in basic freedoms. I thought about people throughout history who have suffered because of this.

We can read in his words how truly human the Daishonin was. He talks about emotions that are very much the same as any person might have in the course of plain living. Reading the Daishonin's writings gave me the understanding that I can put my own courage to good use, and I, too, can demand protection from the universe so that I can prove the value of my life.

After all is said, the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is difficult to carry out day after day. The Daishonin steadfastly determined to practice no matter what while facing seemingly insurmountable odds. This understanding gave my chanting more brilliance and tenacity, and I felt more robust.

During this time, I did receive some money that was owed to me. It kept me alive. As the months wore on, the money wore thin. But money was no

longer my prime concern.

I had gotten way past asking questions like, "Why is this happening to me?" or, "How I could be 40-something and have practiced this Buddhism for more than two-thirds of my life and still have so many very compelling problems?"

I had come to love the practice of self-challenge based on life itself — the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and taking action based on sharing Buddhist principles. Because of this battle within myself, I became fully aware that my life transcends the designer labels of things we can purchase.

I have become fully confident that as a practitioner of the greatest religious practice in the world, without serious troubles I would have little reason to practice — and with serious troubles I have all the necessary ingredients to create a truly happy inner life. The question of "why" became rather childish, something I have left behind for good. To me, this is an indication that I have grown in faith.

Also, I resolved not to let my lack of money stop me from living my life to the best of my ability. In May, I went to the Florida Nature and Culture Center for a seminar on the Lotus Sutra. Following the wonderful conference, I planned to fly to New York to visit my sister and brother-in-law who had just given birth to my new nephew, Aden. I had decided that I would sleep on the floor since the beds were taken by other relatives. I didn't have money for a hotel, barely enough to pay for expenses.

The day before I was to leave for New York, the law suit settled. I had fought hard and won a rather handsome settlement, and just in the nick of time! Even though I now had money to stay in a great hotel in New York, I chose to sleep on the floor. I really enjoyed the sweetness of it all.

With the settlement I have been able to make a contribution to the SGI-USA and pay off my bills. But the money is just the "icing on the cake," not the cake itself. The real benefit is that I can look back over 30 years of practice and see how much I've grown and changed internally, how I've gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of life. I can breathe, eat and live. I definitely have become a new person. I feel like I have received a second life.

I thank you for the opportunity to share this experience with you, as I chanted long and hard with the idea that one day I would be able to do so. ❏

# the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI

## 'THE FLOWER OF CULTURE'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 42-43

**After tremendous, heart-wrenching efforts, members express unbounded joy at the news that they had reached their goal of 3 million member-households. Shin'ichi Yamamoto arranges to recognize these 'heroes of the people,' and, in his prayers, looks ahead to the next goal.**

**S**hin'ichi Yamamoto was determined that if there was to be any sacrifice on the journey of kosen-rufu, it should be restricted only to him. He wished above all that the members could live out their lives in comfort and happiness, valuing their families and enjoying great good fortune. And the members, recognizing Shin'ichi's selfless dedication, stood up one after another until the entire organization was firmly united, and they went on to achieve the landmark membership goal of 3 million households.

As he chanted daimoku, Shin'ichi's heart surged with emotion and joy at having fulfilled the vow he had made to his mentor. Yet he did not allow himself to become intoxicated by that joy. He knew that kosen-rufu was an endless struggle, and that in terms of realizing happiness for all people and creating a world where peace prevails, this accomplishment was just one small victory in a long campaign.

The next goal he hoped to achieve came to mind — one that he had personally set to be reached by 1972. That year would mark the end of the sixth of seven seven-year periods ("Seven Bells") of the organiza-

tion's development since its inception in 1930. Shin'ichi's vision was to realize a membership of 6 million households by that time.

As he chanted, he made a silent declaration: "My next goal is 6 million households. Sensei! Please watch me and see." A new drive and determination welled up in his heart.

The headquarters leaders meeting, held on Nov. 27 at the Tokyo Gymnasium, was charged with excitement and joy at the achievement of the goal of 3 million member-households. When Director Kin'ichi Taoka announced the propagation results for November and that they had reached their goal, a storm of applause shook the hall. Some rose up in their seats; others wept with joy. The applause seemed unending.

They had all prayed and taken action to make this goal a reality, speaking with countless people about the Daishonin's Buddhism. Sometimes their heartfelt concern for the happiness of others and their impassioned explanations of faith fell on deaf ears. They were routinely ridiculed and abused. Sometimes people they tried to visit to discuss Buddhism would throw water or toss salt at them to drive them off [a customary

way in Japan of expressing loathing or abhorrence for an unwanted visitor].

But the members endured the insults, put their disappointments aside and pursued their bodhisattva practice with courage, patience, devotion and sincerity. The realization of a membership of 3 million households was the fruit of the arduous struggles — the sweat and the tears and also the joy — of these noble members.

When you have given your all to a struggle, you are filled with a deep sense of satisfaction and joy. That is because you have met the challenge, conquered your limitations and experienced the great drama of life and human revolution. The face of a person who has fought on without reserve glows. It is lit by the radiance of a lofty spirit dedicated to working for the welfare of friends, fellow members and all humanity.

The members' triumphant applause swept the auditorium in a tide of joy.

**A**fter remarks by Soka Gakkai Vice General Director and Youth Division Chief Eisuke Akizuki, commemorative medals marking the achievement of 3 million member-households were

presented to several members. The medals had been Shin'ichi's idea. He had arranged for their preparation some time ago, so that they would be ready for this occasion. He had wanted to give some small commemorative gift to representatives as an expression of gratitude to the many, many members who had worked so hard to spread the Daishonin's teaching and achieve this most longed-for milestone.

The work of encouraging and extending a helping hand to the suffering is hard and inconspicuous, but it is the most noble and sacred of tasks. The Soka Gakkai members undertaking this mission were contributing to society in an incomparably profound way. The Japanese nation gave awards to scholars and politicians, but it paid no attention to these tremendous achievements by ordinary people.

Even without society's praise, such wonderful efforts would of course be recognized and applauded by the Gohonzon, by Nichiren Daishonin and by all the Buddhas and heavenly deities — all the protective forces in the universe. Moreover, all those efforts would bring their own rewards, adorning with good fortune and benefit the lives and families of those who made them, for all eternity. Still, Shin'ichi, as Soka Gakkai president, wished to commend his hardworking comrades and give them the recognition they deserved as heroes of the people.

When the widowed Nichimiyama, traveling with her infant daughter, made the long journey to visit Nichiren Daishonin at his place of exile on Sado Island, the Daishonin praised her for her strong faith by presenting her with the title *Shonin*, meaning "sage." Josei Toda had also recognized the members' efforts, awarding medals to those who propagated Buddhism widely

and faced persecutions for the sake of kosen-rufu. It was with the same motivation that Shin'ichi decided to present medals to pay tribute, even if only in some modest way, to the efforts of the members who had been the driving force behind achieving the goal of 3 million member-households.

At the meeting, the establishment of a South America General Chapter, as well as chapters in Peru and Bolivia, was announced. A chapter in Brazil had been formed some time earlier, so the new general chapter was launched with three chapters. Soka Gakkai Director Hiroshi Yamagiwa was appointed the head of the general chapter, and a young businessman, Yasuhiro Saiki, was made the South America young men's division chief. Saiki worked for a Japanese trading company, and he had been assigned to various branches in Latin America for three years before returning to Japan. In December, his company was sending him back to Latin America, this time to São Paulo, Brazil.

Masayoshi China and Kyoko Shiroyama were appointed chapter chief and chapter women's division chief, respectively, for Peru, while Taro Kawaura and his wife, Miki, were appointed to the same positions for Bolivia. All of them were Japanese emigrants who would go on to become pioneers of kosen-rufu in their adopted homelands.

*To be continued*

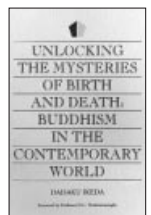
**Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962. Illustration by Ken'ichiro Uchida.**

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POR MELANIE MERIANS

Asistente Responsable de la  
División de Damas de la Región  
Costeña de Los Angeles

Me gustaría discutir el asunto del templo, desde la perspectiva del Sutra del Loto y desde la perspectiva de la autoridad religiosa.

Es a través de la religión, que la humanidad ha buscado siempre explicar lo desconocido, y los fenómenos misteriosos del universo. La gente que estudiaba y experimentaba lo divino fundó diferentes escuelas religiosas. La gente cercana a estos fundadores, los consideraban especiales por su conocimiento único y a lo largo del tiempo, estos fundadores religiosos se convirtieron en algo como dioses.

Ellos fueron adorados por sus seguidores, pero al morir quedaban separados de la gente común, del ser humano. Sus seguidores lo habían hecho un "dios divino."

Shakyamuni Buda no sólo enseñó la grandeza de la Ley a sus seguidores, sino que también les dejó la llave para que la experimentaran. Les dejó el Sutra del Loto. Con el sutra del Loto él dijo: "Yo quiero que todo ser viviente logre la misma condición de iluminación que yo he logrado. Por lo tanto, desearé todas mis enseñanzas anteriores porque ésta es la enseñanza esencial." ¡Aquí está la clave!

Este Sutra del Loto es de nosotros, para nosotros y acerca de nosotros. En otras palabras, el sutra del Loto es de uno mismo. No sólo poseemos el estado de Buda, sino que podemos manifestarlo cuando propagamos la Ley Mística.

Sin embargo, a través de los siglos después de la muerte de Shakyamuni, sus seguidores con el tiempo perdieron la llave que él les había dado. Ellos no podían creer que el Sutra del Loto era acerca de ellos mismos. La esencia de sus enseñanzas se perdió en los ritos y formalidades.

Sus creyentes veían el Sutra del Loto como algo infinitamente profundo, algo más allá del entendimiento del ser humano común. Ellos creyeron que el Sutra del Loto se refería solamente a Shakyamuni, un Buda extraordinario, único, un ser diferente y más grande que un mortal común.

Y es aquí que aparecen los sacerdotes. Si el sutra no es uno mismo, sino de un Buda, no se le puede entender. Si no se puede entender la profundidad de la sabiduría del Buda, entonces se necesita ayuda, ¿correcto? Se necesita de alguien que nos lo



Melanie Merians

explique, ¿no es así? Se necesita de un sacerdote, ¿correcto?. No. ¡Incorrecto!

La gente tiene la tendencia de buscar a alguien, a una autoridad religiosa que les diga en lo que tienen que creer. Nosotros asumimos que el sacerdote, el rabino, el templo o iglesia es donde nosotros, la gente común y corriente, va para que nos confirme y para recibir la verdad. ¡Esta actitud, nos ha sido enseñada por los sacerdotes!

Estos sacerdotes por lo general son eruditos en religión. Saben mucho. Ellos tienen conocimientos, pero no por eso son practicantes de esa religión, ellos no siempre practican lo que predicán. Entonces, no entienden la fe. No pueden entender sin practicar.

Solamente nosotros, como individuos, podemos autenticar nuestra fe a través de nuestra condición de vida y experiencias. Nosotros nos referimos a esta autenticación como "la prueba real." Por eso es que el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin considera la prueba real más importante que la prueba doctrinal o teórica.

El mensaje más importante y eterno del Sutra del Loto, es que ¡nosotros somos Budas! ¡El sutra del Loto somos nosotros! ¡Es nuestra vida! Entonces, si cada uno de nosotros es en esencia un buda, no debería existir jerarquía. No hay necesidad de una autoridad. No hay lugar para una autoridad. Cada uno es perfectamente igual, y de la misma manera, capaz de manifestar el estado de Buda. Nosotros no necesitamos de un sacerdote o de alguien más, para experimentar la condición de "Buda."

Nichiren Daishonin confirma esto en mucho fragmentos a

ENSAYO

## Estudio Sobre el Asunto del Templo

*Este Sutra del Loto es de nosotros, para nosotros y acerca de nosotros. En otras palabras, el Sutra del Loto es de uno mismo. No sólo poseemos el estado de Buda, sino que podemos manifestarlo cuando propagamos la Ley Mística.*

través de sus escritos. Al seguidor Abutsu-bo, él escribió: "Usted mismo es un buda verdadero dotado de las tres propiedades iluminadas. Debe invocar Nam-myoho-rengé-kyo con esta concentración." (MW-1, 30) Y en otra carta, "La Herencia de la Ley fundamental de La Vida," el Daishonin claramente dice: "Shakyamuni, quien logró la iluminación incontables eones atrás, el Sutra del Loto que conduce a todas las personas a la Budeidad, y nosotros, las personas comunes, no somos diferentes en modo alguno ni estamos separados unos de otros. Por lo tanto invocar Nam-myoho-rengé-kyo con este conocimiento es heredar la Ley suprema de la vida y la muerte." (MW-1, 22)

Estudiamos de una manera rápida el sutra del Loto, para entender cómo es que nosotros somos budas. El Sutra puede parecer como algo subreal, aún puede parecer como la descripción de algo de ciencia ficción, de eventos increíbles de proporciones, sobrehumanas. Pero, si recordamos bien, todo esto se refiere a nosotros mismos. Así, comenzamos a apreciar que tan vastas y profundas son nuestras vidas.

En el capítulo Hoto (onceavo del Sutra del Loto,) una inmensa torre, la Torre del Tesoro emerge de la tierra, con el Buda Taho (representando la realidad objetiva de la Ley,) sentado adentro de la torre. La Torre del Tesoro representa la grandeza y dignidad de la vida del Buda; de nuestra vida.

Shakyamuni abre la puerta de la Torre del Tesoro y la asamblea completa se levanta. ¡Wow! ¿Se dan cuenta? ¡Todos cupieron adentro! Cada uno, en cualquier condición de vida, puede experimentar el tesoro de la ilumi-

nación. No es un territorio exclusivo, solamente para ciertos individuos, nos pertenece a todos.

También es importante darnos cuenta, que la Torre del Tesoro no proviene de un lugar divino o de un ser divino. Tampoco descendió del cielo. Más bien aparece de abajo de la tierra. Nuestra condición de Buda emerge de nuestro interior, de la tierra de nuestras vidas. De la dura y menudo sucia realidad de nuestra vida diaria. Es por esto, que Nichiren Daishonin le asegura a su seguidor Abutsu-bo: "Abutsu-bo es la Torre del Tesoro y la Torre del Tesoro es Abutsu-bo; ningún otro conocimiento es importante." (MW-1, 30)

Los bodhisattvas reunidos en la asamblea están totalmente asombrados y prometen propagar esta enseñanza. Pero Shakyamuni se rehusa a transferirla a ellos. Él básicamente les dice: "Ustedes. no son lo bastante fuertes para proteger esta enseñanza en el futuro."

Entonces, del mismo lugar donde la Torre del Tesoro había emergido antes, un sinnúmero de bodhisattvas emergen de la tierra. Los Bodhisattvas de la Tierra hacen su aparición. Shakyamuni entonces explica en el famoso Capítulo Juryo, capítulo (16), que él no logró la iluminación por primera vez en esta vida, sino que él ha vivido en este mundo *saha*, repetidamente para enseñar la Ley a la gente, ¿Qué significa esto? Que nuestra naturaleza de Buda es eterna, no es solamente para esta vida. Y es revelada en el mundo real, entre la gente. No es revelada en el paraíso o en el nirvana.

Y como si esto fuera poco, Shakyamuni entonces revela que en innumerables vidas an-

teriores él ha logrado el estado de Buda practicando austeridades de Bodhisattva. En otras palabras, él no es el Buda original. El estaba aprendiendo el camino de un maestro, del Buda original. Aún más, él explica los beneficios profundos que se obtienen al propagar la Ley. Para que esta propagación se lleve a cabo, Shakyamuni transfiere la Ley específicamente al Bodhisattva Jogyo, y, en general, a los Bodhisattvas de la Tierra en el último capítulo.

Sin entrar en muchos detalles, Bodhisattva Jogyo representa la virtud del "yo verdadero." Esa virtud, es nuestra verdadera misión, la verdadera razón de nuestra existencia. La virtud del "yo verdadero," propagará esta Ley, no importa cuan severos sean los obstáculos. Es por eso, que Nichiren Daishonin no solamente es el Bodhisattva Jogyo. También, él es el Buda Verdadero de Kuon Ganjo, quien ha propagado la Ley a riesgo de su propia vida, desde los tiempos sin comienzo.

En el momento que entonces Nam-myoho-rengé kyo con la determinación sincera de propagar la Ley, en ese instante manifestamos el estado de Buda.

¿Por qué? Porque estaremos cumpliendo la misma misión como el Bodhisattva Jogyo. Nichiren Daishonin en su carta "La Verdadera Entidad de la Vida" dice: "Si usted comparte el mismo espíritu que Nichiren, usted debe ser un bodhisattva de la Tierra." (MW-1, 93) Nosotros revelamos nuestro "Verdadero Yo," nuestra iluminación inherente. En ese momento nuestras vidas y la del Daishonin llegan a ser una. ¡Nosotros somos el Buda!

Como el Sutra del Loto lo describe, y Nichiren Daishonin claramente lo explica, nosotros no necesitamos a alguien para experimentar la Ley. Ninguna autoridad, ni sacerdote. La Ley está dentro de nuestras vidas. El Daishonin entregó esta enseñanza de verdadera liberación humana a la humanidad en el Último Día de la Ley.

Él dijo: "Vean, el Sutra del Loto es la clave hacia la Budeidad. Es la Ley y está dentro de tí." Y entonces, él nos dio el daimoku. Nam-myoho-rengé-kyo, la forma de manifestar la Ley nosotros mismos y practicar el Sutra del Loto en esta época." Y para asegurarse que la gente no volvería a perder la llave de nuevo, él dejó el Gohonzon, la fusión perfecta de la persona y la Ley. Él escribió: "Jamás

## La Ley — Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — Está Dentro de Tí

ESTUDIO, DE PÁG. 12

busque este Gohonzon fuera de usted misma. El Gohonzon sólo existe en la carne mortal de nosotros, las personas comunes que abrazamos el Sutra del Loto e invocamos Nam-myoho-renge-kyo." (MW-1, 213)

Hoy día, el sacerdocio de la Nichiren Shoshu completamente niega el espíritu de este magnifico sutra y las enseñanzas del Daishonin. Ellos dicen que se necesita un sacerdote para lograr la iluminación y que nosotros no podemos ayudarnos a nosotros mismos. Dicen que ellos son los guardianes de los portales de la Budeidad, y que tienen la llave, por lo tanto, ellos son más poderosos y merecen más respeto que nosotros gente laica. Y que el sumo Prelado es de aún más valor y respeto que todos.

¡Qué patético! Denigrar la Ley y la dignidad de la vida humana de esta manera. Y lo que es más aún, llegar tan lejos como para usar el Gohonzon como un arma contra los creyentes. El sacerdocio está tan corrupto y desorientado, que ha llegado a pensar que puede excomulgar a la gente. ¿Cómo pueden excomulgar a alguien de la Ley, cuando la Ley se encuentra dentro de ellos? ¡Qué tontos! Ellos creen también que pueden poseer exclusivamente el Dai-Gohonzon. El Dai-Gohonzon fue creado para toda la humanidad. Está dentro de nuestras vidas. ¡Nadie puede mantenerlo prisionero! Esto no es más que una locura.

Hoy estamos viviendo una revolución de una magnitud sin precedentes. Nosotros, gente común y corriente, estamos desarrollando un entendimiento sólido con respecto al asunto de la autoridad. Todos nosotros somos protagonistas de la más grande y significativa revolución de este siglo. Hemos desarrollado la confianza en nosotros mismos, para hacerle frente a cualquier autoridad, tí-

tulo o posición que niegue la naturaleza de Buda inherente en la gente. No seremos intimidados por nadie. Es por eso, que nosotros podemos celebrar realmente el año 1998 como. "El año de la Victoria del Pueblo hacia el Nuevo Siglo."

A medida que la SGI triunfe, la gente en la sociedad también llegará a entender lo que hace a una religión auténtica. Nosotros influenciaremos a toda la sociedad. Es nuestra fe la que hace a la ley cobrar vida. Con tal convicción apasionada en la fe, nosotros nunca seremos engañados por gente en posiciones

o con títulos especiales. Todos los ingredientes necesarios están en nuestras vidas, no los obtenemos de una persona en especial.

Claramente Nikken y el sacerdocio de la Nichiren Shoshu están tratando de destruir las semillas de la iluminación. Ellos han tratado, sin éxito, de destruir a la Soka Gakkai. Están demoliendo los edificios del templo principal, los cuales fueron construidos con las donaciones sinceras de los miembros Gakkai, dedicados al kosen-rufu. Aún el magnifico Sho-Hondo está siendo demolido. No hay duda que Nikken

y sus sacerdotes han creado el escenario de su propia derrota.

Nosotros practicamos correctamente, sin embargo hay muchos miembros que tienen un fuerte "karma de iglesia." Tal vez estos miembros están siendo influenciados por Nikken. Si el templo quiere practicar su propia forma de Budismo, ese es su problema, pero si, ellos quieren destruir el kosen-rufu, robarle miembros a la Soka Gakkai, y tratar de esconder la llave hacia la Budeidad debajo de sus sotas, ese es mi problema. Oremos para poder propagar la Ley a pesar de todos los obstáculos y utilicemos nuestras vidas para hacerlo. Todos juntos manifestemos el Buda—nuestro "yo verdadero"—y logremos nuestro estado supremo de iluminación en esta vida. ❧

**Bodhisattva  
Jogyo  
representa la  
virtud del 'yo  
verdadero,' esa  
virtud, es  
nuestra  
verdadera  
misión, la  
verdadera  
razón de  
nuestra  
existencia. La  
virtud del 'yo  
verdadero,'  
propagará la  
Ley, no  
importa cuan  
severos sean  
los obstáculos.**



### GRUPOS HISPANOS DE ESTUDIO DE LA SGI-USA

## Saludos de los Miembros de San Antonio

Por DOMINGO MUNOZ  
San Antonio, Texas

A continuación el primer artículo de la serie "Grupos Hispanos de Estudio en la SGI-USA."

A mediados de 1990, se formó el grupo de español en San Antonio, Texas.

Empezamos con cuatro miembros, más los invitados reuniendonos en el Centro Comunitario, una vez al mes. Comenzamos estudiando material traducido por los miembros del Inglés al español y los artículos en español publicados en el World Tribune.

Al principio tuvimos problemas seleccionando un día donde todos los miembros pudieran asistir a la reunión. Tratamos diferentes días de la semana, pero siempre había una razón u otra, por la cual algunos no podían asistir. Finalmente, decidimos reunirnos el tercer Sábado del mes a las 0500 de la tarde. Algunos miembros viven muy retirados y manejan hasta hora y media para llegar a la reunión, sin embargo, nunca faltan.

Hemos crecido a un grupo de veinticuatro

miembros, más los invitados. Somos de diferentes nacionalidades procedentes de México, Panamá, Argentina, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico y Texas. Al ser de diferentes países hispanos, tuvimos que superar el problema de las diferencias del uso del idioma español. Pero hemos disfrutado aprendiendo uno del otro. Varios de los miembros fueron introducidos por el grupo de español, y después formaron parte del distrito de la SGI cerca de sus casas.

Hacemos la reunión de planamiento en las casas de los miembros, usando una casa diferente cada mes, usualmente, cada miembro trae un plato típico de su país y después de la reunión nos sentamos a compartir juntos y continuamos amenas conversaciones acerca del Budismo.

En estos ocho años, además de haber crecido como grupo, cada miembro ha crecido individualmente, mejorando su condición de vida cotidiana.

Seguiremos juntos trabajando para el Kosenrufu en San Antonio, con la determinación de compartir este Budismo con todas nuestras amistades y colaborar con el bienestar de nuestra comunidad. ❧

## Conviértanse en el Sol de la Esperanza del Siglo XXI

CORTESÍA DE LA SGI NEWSLETTER

El siguiente mensaje fue enviado por el presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda, a los niños de las Escuelas Primarias Soka de Tokio y de Kansai que ingresaban como alumnos del primer grado. La ceremonia correspondiente al inicio del año lectivo se llevó a cabo el 8 de abril de 1998.)

A todos los flamantes alumnos que están por primera vez. ¡Felicitaciones en su primer día de clases! Y, también ¡Felicitaciones a sus padres!

Estoy seguro de que ustedes saben muchísimas cosas sobre el Sol. Cuando el Sol se levanta, comienza la mañana. Y cuando llega la mañana, ya no podemos

ver la luna y las estrellas, porque los rayos del Sol brillan con gran fuerza.

Además, cuando el Astro Rey resplandece, todo alrededor despierta a su tibieza. Y es tan hermoso su calor, que las flores y los árboles, los insectos y otros animales, y hasta nosotros, los seres humanos, nos sentimos felices y llenos de tranquilidad. ¿Por qué sucede eso? Porque la cálida luz del sol es también, dulce y serena.

Todos ustedes son príncipes y princesas restallantes como el Sol, que alumbrarán el siglo XXI. Espero que, durante los próximos seis años, mientras estén estudiando en la Escuela Primaria Soka, lean muchos libros, aprendan un montón de cosas nuevas y conquisten un

sinfin de amigos. Deseo, también, que lleguen a ser tan fuertes y gentiles como el Sol.

Cuando llueve o está nublado, nos da la impresión de que el Sol desaparece. Pero no es así; muy por encima de las nubes, el sigue reluciendo con todo su esplendor. De la misma manera, yo siempre estoy cuidándolos con muchísimo afecto y les envío, todo el tiempo, rayos de esperanza y de coraje. Por favor, recuérdennlo siempre.

Espero, de todo corazón, contemplar sus rostros vivaces y luminosos tan pronto como sea posible.

Publicado en la edición del 9 de abril de 1998 del Seikyo Shimbun, periódico de la Soka Gakkai.

# A Symbolic Death

## EDITORIAL

**New photos of the Grand Main Temple's demolition (please see the back page) have evoked many different responses.**

By **LISA JONES**  
STAFF WRITER

My eyes widened. My heart beat paused. I wanted to say something — but what? The photos of the Grand Main Temple's demolition stunned me. Pillars toppled, roof ripped, stripped down to its skeleton, bleak, mangled. I stared as if someone had just torn the wings off a butterfly.

SGI-USA members are expressing a wide range of emotions about the demolition. Some say: "It's only a building. Get over it." Some express outrage at Nikken, whom they liken to a bully on a beach who stomps on the sand castles of children — except that Nikken has a \$35 million arsenal of demolition explosives and

heavy equipment at his disposal. Others express outrage at the SGI for not doing more to protect the building — rage that is sadly misplaced, I believe.

One member told me that she feels despair over the loss of the Grand Main Temple, as if a loved one has been senselessly killed. Yet another member said, "Good riddance," glad that SGI members will no longer have any reason to feel sentimentally tied to the Head Temple Taiseki-ji, home to Nichiren Shoshu and its erroneous teachings.

Many members have also said that the demolition has opened their eyes to Nikken's true intent. For the first time since the temple issue came to light, they feel righteous anger. They now have a clear understanding of Nikken: that he embodies the destructive forces of fundamental darkness, which people must overcome to attain enlightenment. It has become clear to many people that the demolition is a calculated move designed to demoralize "the enemy," the forces of the Buddha.

To me, the demolition is a symbolic death — and this death, I feel, is an integral component in

the eternal cycle of rebirth and new growth.

In Greek mythology, Hades is the god of the dark underworld, the symbolic god of death. One story tells how he kidnapped Persephone and dragged her into the darkness to be his wife. Persephone was the joyful daughter of Demeter, the goddess of the earth and agrarian abundance, associated with growth and life. Demeter was so consumed with pain and grief over the theft of her daughter that the earth became barren and cold.

Demeter fought to get her daughter back, and Hades ultimately allowed Persephone to spend half of each year with her mother and half in the underworld with him. When Persephone resides in the realm of darkness, the earth is in winter. But when Persephone returns to her mother, spring arrives and flowers bloom.

This story is symbolic of the cycle of birth, growth, death and re-birth that we observe in all natural phenomena, such as the change of seasons. Whether we call it Hades or fundamental darkness, there is a force in life that functions to destroy, to pull downward, to abduct youthful joy and

creativity and drag it into a cold winter of hibernation.

As Nikken pulls down the pillars of the Grand Main Temple and tries to grind the dreams of 8 million believers — as well as the Daishonin's intent — under his heels, I feel the chill of fall and the inevitability of winter.

Like Demeter, I grieve. And like Demeter I fight back. I fight in my own heart and psyche, in the activities of daily life, for the return of Persephone — for a flowering of joy and creativity in our society, our world.

Fighting, I think, is the point. Fighting death, as Dylan Thomas wrote: "Do not go gentle into that good night, / Old age should burn and rave at close of day; / Rage, rage against the dying of the light." And fighting for life, as seedlings fight their way through soil toward sunlight, or as a mother struggles to give birth.

The demolition of the Grand Main Temple is a death, I feel, but also the beginning of a new century of life, one that will be born of (and borne by) our determined struggles toward enlightenment — which is the ultimate triumph of light over darkness. **W**

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## PERSPECTIVE

By **ANDY HANLEN**  
LONG BEACH, CALIF.

As I approach the 25th anniversary of my introduction to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I find myself reflecting on



my life since I received the Gohonzon. I am struck by, on one hand, the immensity of what my life has been and, on the other, the

simplicity. I could write volumes detailing the experiences I've had, and maybe someday I will, but at this moment I find myself pondering the highlights and thinking about these questions: What's happened? What does it mean? Why does it matter?

The short version of what's happened in my life is: I've *lived*. I've lived in a way that I can't imagine would be possible without this practice, this Gohonzon. I've lived through tremendous joy and suicidal depression. I've faced and defeated death — both the apparent certainty of my own, sev-

eral times, and the reality of the death of someone I love. I've experienced extremes of pleasure and pain, gain and loss, and through it all I've come to experience the previously undiscovered truth of a middle ground where all things are possible; where nothing is outside of my grasp if I really want to reach for it.

I've also come to realize — in my saner moments — the serenity that comes from finding, again and again, the value of wisdom. By this I mean the Buddhist concept that transcends knowledge or experience, letting my life conquer my mind — a good thing, in my case. I have lived extremely and I have lived fully, and, at 47, I anticipate more of the same, both good and bad, and I welcome the prospect.

There's a passage written by Nichiren Daishonin that's haunted and enticed me since the early days of my practice: "How swiftly the days pass! It makes us realize how short are the years we have left. Friends enjoy the cherry blossoms together on spring mornings and then they are gone, carried away like the blossoms by the winds of impermanence, leaving nothing but their names. Although the blossoms have scattered, the cherry trees will bloom

again with the coming of spring, but when will those people be reborn? The companions with whom we composed poems praising the moon on autumn evenings have vanished with the moon behind the shifting clouds. Only their mute images remain in our hearts. The moon has set behind the western mountains, yet we shall compose poetry under it again next autumn. But where are our companions who have passed away?" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 255).

I understand some of it, and I could expound at great length on the meanings I find in this piece, but in my heart it still intrigues me, baffles me, beckons me on. This passage displays a little part of the vastness that is offered by this great practice, and I think that my meandering acquaintance with it serves to remind me of the profundity of what living really is. So I have lived.

What does it mean? It means that, because of this practice, I have managed to turn my life from one on a path toward certain destruction to one of certain value. It means that this practice can alter destiny, change karma. It means that a person determined to be miserable can learn to be happy

and can learn the value of teaching others how to be happy. It means that the real meaning of happiness, the value of a life lived for a great cause, can replace the transient and shallow concepts we have learned to seek. And it means that rewards — true, meaningful rewards involving partners and friends and love and children and shared pain and joy — are possible for anyone who practices Nichiren Daishonin's teachings. Anyone.

Why does it matter? It matters because I can share it. It *only* matters if I share it. I can stand in front of any person or any group and confidently say: "This Buddhism has changed my life. It has *saved* my life. It has made my life worthwhile. It can do the same for you." And I can show them how.

As I reflect on the past 25 years, I realize that it is both my responsibility and my privilege to teach even one more person what I have learned and what I know to be true. I have no doubt, although I can't explain it in words, that I will enjoy the cherry blossoms again and again with the companions I love, and I also know that it will be a vast and wonderful gathering. It matters that I know that, and it matters because I give it away. **W**

# It Matters Because I Share It

# WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

## Building Peace Within

Tonight, I was ever so grateful to read SGI President Ikeda's words for Sept. 21 in the *Daily Guidance*, volume 4: "Even gigantic buildings will collapse some day. Something that has been built upon *myoho*, however, will never collapse. Our movement of kosen-rufu for world peace and mankind's happiness will enable us to save ourselves along with our ancestors and descendants. This is the most valuable and praiseworthy undertaking."

How comforting were his words in the face of the photos of the Grand Main Temple being torn down! I know with my entire life that President Ikeda's words are true.

I am in my 26th year of practice. The Main Temple was being constructed soon after I joined. Due to my dire circumstances, I was unable to attend the Main Temple ceremonies or to ever see the Dai-Gohonzon. Many friends who did participate in these auspicious events no longer practice; in fact, they stopped many years ago.

I suffered greatly because I was so poor and encumbered with so much responsibility, caring for my toddler when I was barely out of my teens. By sticking with NSA and now the SGI-USA, I've built a fortress of faith and good fortune in my life that is far beyond my wildest dreams. While others search ceaselessly outside of themselves to find life's meaning, I live each day with purpose and a deep sense of mission to do my part to make this world, my world, a fantastic place to be.

To witness the construction and the destruction of the Main Temple in my lifetime makes me reflect on the timelessness of President Ikeda's wisdom and guidance. And my active participation in this grand scale movement for world peace is

truly my most valuable undertaking. The universe praises me for my actions by gifting me with a joyful countenance, a vigorous life force and a passion to share compassion, wisdom, hope, courage and confidence with everyone I meet. Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo enables me to build peace within and to actively contribute to creating world peace in my environment....

— KAREN WILLIAMS, Cleveland

## Thumbs Up

I was so encouraged after reading "A Phenomenon in the Heartlands" (Sept. 11 *World Tribune*). Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., holds a special place in my heart and my mother's as well. Fort Leonard Wood was the first Army base that she and her husband were stationed at 32 years ago. As for myself, I took my Army basic training there six years ago.

Upon arrival, we had to put our personal belongings in storage (the Army provides practically everything!). However, I received permission from my drill sergeant to keep out my prayer book and beads. I did morning gongyo on my bunk each day, while the other privates were still asleep, and evening gongyo wherever I could. On Sundays, we could either go to church or stay back and do various things such as cleaning, etc. Once again, I approached my drill sergeant and asked that I could stay and chant instead of going to church. She said it was OK. I would then go to an empty room, which became my private community center, and chant abundantly. The other privates would often come in and

out and hear me chanting. When done, I would always share the practice with them.

It gives me such great joy to know there is now a place for the soldiers to gather on the base and practice this Buddhism together. Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., is very fortunate to have a sergeant like Brent Oberholzer stationed there who really cares about kosen-rufu. Thumbs up to Sergeant Oberholzer!

— JANETTE WALCOT, South Amboy, N.J.

## Paternalistic?

While I do not wish to contradict or criticize either Greg Martin or the anonymous vice president Mr. Martin quotes in his article "Three Goals Outlined at Teleconference" (Sept. 25 *World Tribune*), I do wish to take exception to a point made in the article about propagation. Mr. Martin says that this vice president told him how "young people and new members work together with experienced men's and women's division members when sharing this Buddhism with friends" and quotes the vice president as saying: "Propagation requires conviction in faith. Senior members have the confidence based on years of experience, while young people and new members can often bring guests. Doing propagation activities together with young people will help them to gain confidence."

I do agree with the above in that there are always roles to be fulfilled in working together to help people start practicing, but the inference made is that the actual introduction and bringing of guests to meetings is the job of new members and young people. I believe this is an old,

paternalistic attitude that will never help us get anywhere. Among other unproductive effects, it causes many people to excuse themselves from the courageous and crucial act of challenging themselves to propagate this Buddhism, which unfortunately leaves so many people with no chance to hear about this Buddhism.... We are not Japan with 8 million members already. We are a huge country where only a very tiny fraction of people have been exposed to the SGI and the Mystic Law. If we don't tell someone we come across who is seeking something more for his or her life, then who will?

Naturally, some people are better at getting people to actually attend a meeting than others, but the spirit to take responsibility for it and to make efforts in that direction...is not something that should be delegated to others out of hand. I remember hearing once that the organization in the United States is like the youth division of the world, such is the hope of America. In that light, we are all youth division, and the world awaits us!

— MARI GORMAN, New York

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

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

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## Share Your Experience With the 'World Tribune'

Experiences are among the most popular articles in the *World Tribune*. Whether told in the first or third person or in dialogue format, the story of how you've benefitted from practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism can deeply influence the lives of others. We want to celebrate everyone's stories. So, please, share your experience in faith with us!

### Helpful hints:

- Experiences are usually no longer than five pages typed double-spaced (approximately 1200 words).
- An experience is an in-depth look at the individual's struggle or process of human revolution, which leads to a great change in his or her life.
- Experiences usually contain a relevant quote from the Daishonin's writings or SGI President Ikeda's guidance.
- Experiences share feelings and thoughts — bad and good, positive and negative.
- Experiences encourage readers to reflect on their own lives and faith and leave them refreshed, helping to renew their practice.
- Here are some questions that you can ask yourself to discover the narrative line of your story: What was the initial problem or difficulty? What strategies did you use to fix the problem? Did things get worse? How did you struggle? When did you become aware of the power of your Buddhist practice with regard to your problem? What was your crucial moment, your "do or die" situation? What breakthrough or realization did you have?

Please send your story to: World Tribune, Attn: Experiences Editor, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401; or e-mail wt@sgi-usa.org. Please include your name, address and telephone number! We welcome all submissions but because of volume we can't print them all.



**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-enge-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-enge-kyo, which is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Gohonzon is the mandala expressing this essence.

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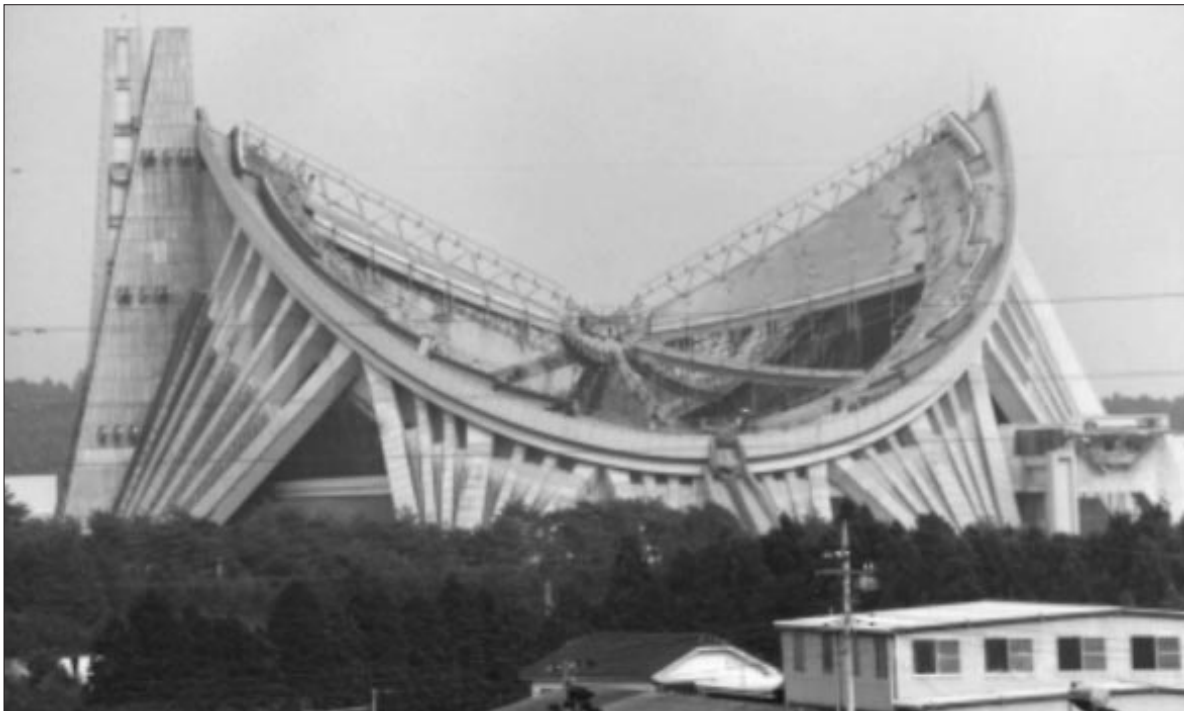
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# Demolition Continues



Above, a column falls in the one-time Pavilion of Perfect Harmony at the entrance of the Grand Main Temple. Five columns of polished marble from Greece with inset pre-cast concrete panels used to tower above burner-finished granite paving that was inlaid with polished marble mosaic patterns. Below, the Mystic Sanctuary, patterned on a crane about to take flight, now stands stripped and empty. At one time, it was composed of a dynamic and richly curved roof. Photos courtesy of 'Kaikaku Jiho.'



Despite international opposition from Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, the demolition of the Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo) in Japan continues. The Rev. Gen'ei Kudo, a representative of the Association for the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, recently commented: "The insidious nature of Nikken's actions is becoming clearer to both priests and their lay members.... I sincerely wish the priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu will break their silence and rise with us for the reformation of the school as early as possible."

Nichiren Shoshu estimates the demolition cost at \$35 million. Some experts believe that profits from the resale of the structure's fine marble may offset the cost. The structure was built in 1972 at a cost of \$100 million donated by 8 million believers, most of whom are currently members of the SGI.

**COMING NEXT WEEK**

**SGI president's Sept. 22 speech**