



NEWS
Abolition 2000 signatures are presented to the U.N. deputy secretary-general.

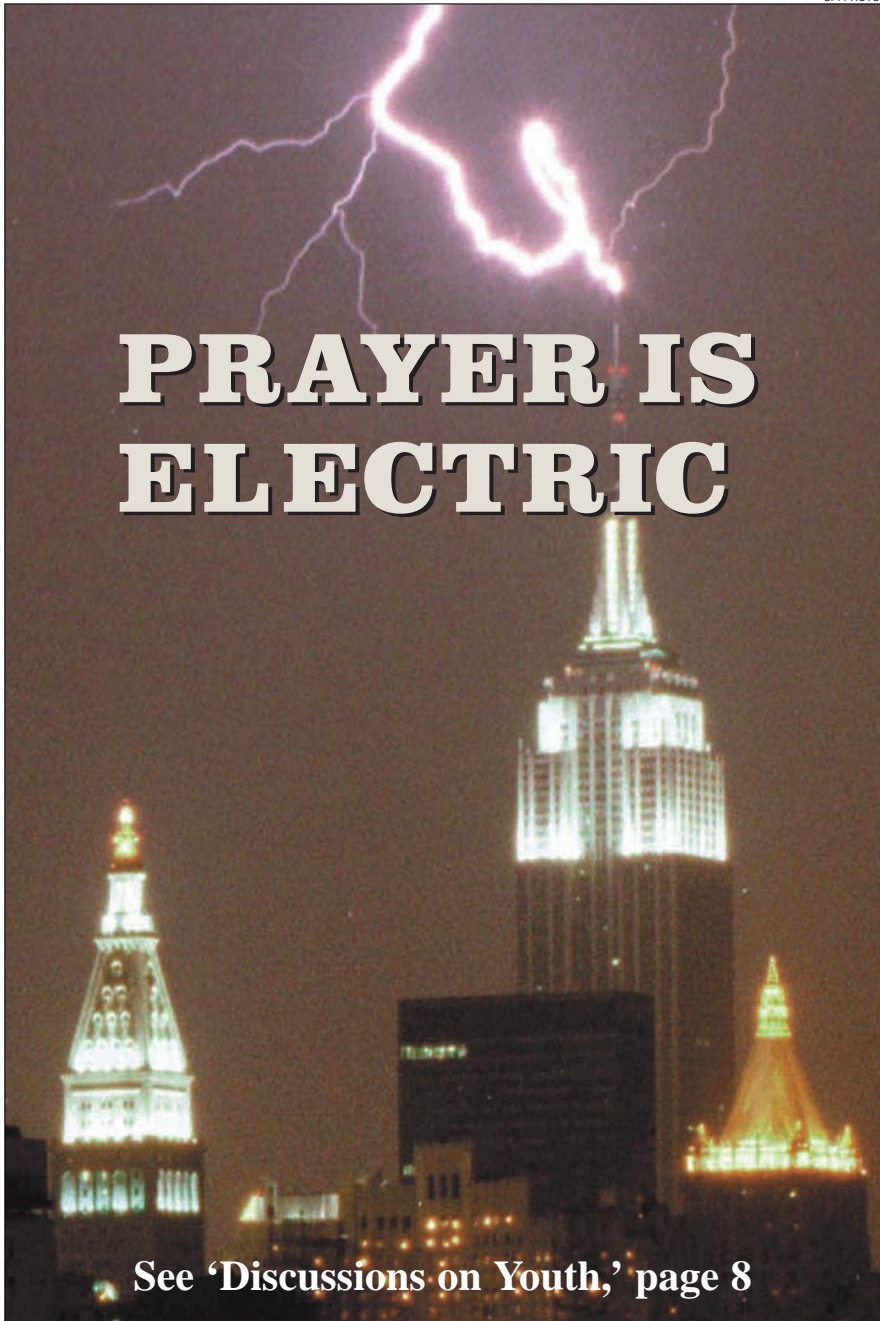
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VIEWPOINT
Andy Bruck tried an Earth Charter consultation and got hooked.

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UPI PHOTOS



PRAYER IS ELECTRIC

See 'Discussions on Youth,' page 8

Our prayers are answered when we're in rhythm with the universe. 'Just as there are physical laws like those governing electricity — laws that human beings in their ingenuity have learned to harness and put to practical use,' President Ikeda says, 'Buddhism has delved into and uncovered the law of life and the universe.' Our prayers tap into this law.

BUDDHISTS IN THE COMMUNITY

Walking for Life

During a three-day walk to benefit breast cancer research and prevention, Andy Hanlen puts his own pain aside and soaks in the courage around him.

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

When I overheard a couple of friends at work talking about a three-day walk from Santa Barbara to Malibu to raise funds for fighting breast cancer, I thought it sounded like a neat idea. What an understatement.

I had been, at that time, engaged in pushing myself out of complacency and toward a more value-creating life. At 47, after more than 24 years of Buddhist practice, I had become pretty comfortable: great wife and family, great job, lax practice. I had made a resolution the previous year to get more involved and reawaken the dormant energy and spirit of my youth.

When I heard about this event, I did not equate it with Buddhist activities, but it sounded like a good thing to do. I was a little

STUDY

Chanting is crucial, but chanting without action manifests no power, Mark Kaplan writes.

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NEWS

The SGI president and former prime minister of India discuss Gandhi's legacy.

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SPANISH

Study material and news in Spanish.

pullout section

Swing Hard and Fast

By MARK KAPLAN

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. ("Reply to Kyo'o," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 120)

Chant and take action," we say in the SGI. Well, I have no problem with the chanting part of this equation for victory. But one of my most insidious devils is the feeling that I haven't chanted enough to take action.



In My Life

NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS IN ACTION

Generally, I start chanting a lot, and things start happening. Then, inevitably, because my life is speeding up, my chanting drops. Simultaneously, because I'm on the verge of a breakthrough

(and don't know it), a little voice in my mind says, "Gee, I think we need to chant more to get through this." Sometimes, this is the voice of wisdom that I've cultivated over 13 years of practice and coached to speak out whenever I'm in danger of slipping in my practice.

At times when I'm overwhelmed with the feeling of being utterly under-prepared for everything before me, this voice seems to make a lot of sense. Other times, this voice is actually an obstacle. At these times, it says: "It's obvious that, once again, you haven't chanted enough to face the challenges in your life. Instead of taking action, you should crawl back to the Gohonzon and chant more." It's almost as if the "need to chant more" becomes an excuse for not taking action.

So I remind myself: "It is precisely because I am practicing hard that I'm encountering obstacles and challenges. This is not the time for sharpening the sword. The courageous disciple has to swing hard and fast with whatever he is holding at the crucial moment. It is not the time to chant, it's time to take action."

This, I think, is the wisdom expressed in the sayings "A pot of rice on a stove with no flame will never come to a boil," and "The sword of the Lotus Sutra is useless in the hands of a coward."

I have to push through and take action when obstacles come, especially if I'm feeling overwhelmed. Chanting is crucial, but chanting without action manifests no power. ■

BUDDHIST BASICS

A Solid Sense of Identity

By LISA JONES

STAFF WRITER

Long ago, there was a young genius who could master any art or skill once he saw how it was done.

He resolved to master all the arts of the world.

So he traveled, learning everything.

In one country he met a bow maker who could instantly turn an animal's horn into a beautiful bow. Amazed, the young genius became the bow maker's disciple and mastered the art. So he set out again. He came to a big river and saw a boatman skillfully guiding a boat. The genius became the boatman's disciple, and soon his skill surpassed his master's.

The genius continued to travel and learn. After a while, he found no art or skill that he had not already mastered. He concluded that he had nothing left to

learn, yet he felt unsatisfied.

Shakyamuni Buddha had been observing all this. He transformed himself into a Buddhist monk and appeared in front of the genius.

"Who are you?" the genius asked.



"I'm a man of self-control."

"What does that mean?"

The monk said: "A bow maker controls the horn. A boatman controls the boat.... And a wise man controls himself. Just as a huge rock is never moved by the wind, the steadfast mind of a wise man is swayed

neither by slander nor by admiration."

The genius was delighted to become the Buddha's disciple and learn self-mastery.

The Japanese author Eiji Yoshikawa once wrote: "Rather than worrying about your future, thinking, 'Perhaps I should become this, or perhaps I should become that,' first be still and build a self that is as solid and unmoving as Mount Fuji."

Likewise, Buddhism teaches that to find satisfaction in life, we each must establish our own solid sense of identity, unswayed by what others may say or

do. We can develop ourselves in this way by practicing the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

Three in a series

— Illustrations by Ed Lee

Great Proof



By JEFF FARR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact. ("Three Tripitaka Masters Pray for Rain," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 111)

In a 1275 letter to the believer Nishiyama Nyudo, Nichiren Daishonin criticizes the True Word sect for lacking actual proof. Why does he bring this up to Nishiyama? Although Nishiyama had become a lay priest under the Daishonin, he previously had been a True Word believer.

The Daishonin was primarily opposed to True Word for ranking its esoteric teachings above the Lotus Sutra and revering the Buddha Dainichi; the True

Word practice was made up entirely of esoteric rituals.

In explaining that True Word is actual proof-less, the Daishonin introduces the Buddhist concept of the three proofs: documentary, theoretical and actual. To have documentary proof means that your religious practice matches what Shakyamuni Buddha taught in his sutras. To have theoretical proof means that your practice makes sense, that people can understand it. To have actual proof means that you can show how your practice works, i.e., some concrete examples of the benefit it brings. The Daishonin believed that the practice he upheld had all three.

And actual proof is more important than the other two, he says in this letter.

Although it might seem strange at first, the Daishonin, based on his study of the Lotus Sutra, places much importance on persecution as a form of actual proof. He says that "if you propagate [this Buddhism], devils will arise without fail. Were it not for these, there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching" (MW-1, 145). And that "only by making [enemies] appear can I be a votary" (MW-4, 20-21).

SGI President Ikeda likewise points out that, as an organization putting into practice the Daishonin's teachings, the SGI has summoned forth the persecutions of the three powerful enemies, which today include Nikken and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. This is actual proof, President Ikeda asserts.

The whole temple issue, then, is a great example of actual proof.

Of course, showing actual proof is not just about attracting enemies. How we have grown as individuals, how we have helped people, how we have changed people's lives, is also our actual proof. We should never forget, in fact, that what the temple issue is really about is saving people from the misery that following powerful enemies leads to. There are many people now spiritually at risk due to Nichiren Shoshu's influence — people who don't know the real difference between the SGI and the temple.

Our efforts to speak of the greatness of our organization are, indeed, efforts to protect these people and efforts to show great actual proof.

Twenty-five in a series



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Signatures for Nuclear Arms Abolition Presented to the United Nations

A petition with 13 million signatures in support of nuclear arms abolition was presented Oct. 26 to U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette by SGI representatives. The SGI signature-gathering effort was part of the Abolition 2000 International Petition campaign sponsored by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. The petition calls for a de-alerting of all nuclear weapons, a signed treaty by the year 2000 for the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons from Earth and a reallocation of resources from military purposes to human needs. The SGI effort was led by Soka Gakkai members in Japan, where most of the signatures were gathered, and members in New Zealand, Italy, England and Australia also participated. David Krieger, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation president, said, "Each of these signatures is a voice of hope — hope that we can forever end the most terrible threat that humanity has ever faced..."



SGI representatives present 13 million Abolition 2000 signatures to U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette, Oct. 26.



Participatory percussion — part of the art of the meeting.



Photos by DIXON HAMBY

Ballard District members discuss 'Art As a Weapon for Peace.'

NOV. 18 COMMEMORATIVE DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Ballard District, Bellevue, Wash.

It was pouring down rain, and I had been crawling in traffic for an hour and a half — on a trip that normally takes a half hour — and wondering why. I could have been at home sitting in front of the fire with a full stomach. But Ballard District's Nov. 18 commemorative meeting on Nov. 19 was worth the trouble. The theme was right up my alley: "Art As a Weapon for Peace." The meeting started with a display of masks representing the 10 worlds or states of life. Oth-

ers shared their students' artwork, their paintings, an experience from the recent Culture Department conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, and a participatory percussion performance. New Pacific Northwest Region Leader Tom Eddy, who just returned from Japan, shared his experience from the Chubu World Peace Youth Culture Festival and of watching the meteor shower from a 747. I found myself wishing everyone in Seattle

could be here. This was the perfect remedy for the gray, damp winter, and I am sure the 40+ guests and members would agree. Then came the food, lots of it. My grumbling stomach was very appreciative.

Everyone lingered after the meeting ended, and finally, with full stomachs and spirits, we took off into the night ready to take on any darkness in the night — or in our lives.

— DIXON HAMBY



Masks of the 10 worlds — the 10 states of life described in Buddhism.

By DAISAKU IKEDA
SGI PRESIDENT

SGI PRESIDENT
IKEDA'S ESSAY



THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Faced with a government bureaucracy that refused to do anything to remedy a flooding problem, the people of Yamanashi, Japan, took matters into their own hands. The people are the true sovereigns, and it is their power that changes the course of his-

This year, heavy rains have caused terrible flood damage in various parts of Japan. I would like to express my deepest sympathies to all who suffered the brunt of these natural disasters.

The power that allows us to overcome whatever difficulties we may encounter is faith. I continue to pray fervently each day that those living in the affected areas will come through these arduous trials as winners.



There is a beautiful, green park in Yamanashi City called Manriki Park. I have visited it several times on my travels to Yamanashi. The area around the middle reaches of Fuefukigawa River, where the park is located, has been subject to flooding for centuries. The park was given its name "Manriki" (Everyone's Effort) because the people of the area joined forces to build a dike to control the flooding. The name expresses their hope that the levee would be as strong and indomitable as the combined effort and will of the people who built it to protect themselves.

The great feudal warlord from Yamanashi, Takeda Shingen (1521-73), once composed a poem with the lines, "The people are our castle / The people are our stone wall / The people are our moat." These words, too, as with the park's name, sing of the pride of people working together, joining forces, for a common goal.

The name Manriki Park always brings a happy smile to my lips, because to me it is the perfect symbol of our Yamanashi members, making remarkable progress as they work together in harmony and unity.



I have many fond boyhood memories of the Tamagawa River, the source of which is in northeastern Yamanashi Prefecture, at Kasatoriyama Mountain in the Chichibu Range. Up to the first decades of the century, the Tamagawa was a wild, untamed river that flooded repeatedly. The lower reaches of the Tamagawa serve as the border between Tokyo and Kanagawa Prefecture. The dikes on the Tokyo side of the river were largely completed in the late-19th century, but most parts of the Kanagawa side lacked such protective barriers, and whenever it rained heavily there was much flood damage on the Kanagawa side.



Photo by LUCY ESTEPHANOS

"The Soka Gakkai is an organization of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The citizens of Kanagawa repeatedly submitted requests and petitions to the local government for the construction of a system of dikes, but their pleas were ignored. The government's first priority in those days was military spending, and it placed severe restrictions on any expenditures for flood control.

In addition, the Tokyo Prefectural Government opposed construction because, if embankments were also built on the Kanagawa side, there was a possibility that floodwaters would wash over the levees on the Tokyo side. As a result, it refused to permit new dikes to be built. From the time Tokyo was the imperial capital, the national government officials that have been centered in that city have shown a terrible and deep-rooted tendency to place Tokyo's needs over those of the rest of the nation.



In 1914, the Tamagawa River flooded again, and the Kanagawa region was severely flooded. The long-suffering people of Kanagawa could take no more, and they joined forces and marched on the Kanagawa Prefectural Government Office. They were dressed in farmers' working clothes and straw sandals and, as a sign of their unity, they all wore woven bamboo hats as they headed for the pre-

fecture's capital, Yokohama. Different accounts number the demonstrators variously at several hundred, fifteen hundred, or two thousand. Some of the demonstrators were women.

Crossing the muddy streams and rivulets caused by the flooding, and scuffling with the police officers sent to watch them, they made their way to the prefectural offices. But they were stopped by the police, and only a representative was permitted to see the governor.

The group's spokesperson earnestly presented their case, but the governor didn't even attempt to respond sincerely.

The enraged citizens then formed an "Association for the Construction of Dikes Along the Tamagawa." They organized. Their unity and determination increased, and their movement gathered momentum.



The next year, as the rainy season approached, they planned a meeting to raise money to build dikes with private funds, but the police quashed their plans. Why were they forced to be victims, year after year? Why were they refused permission to build their dikes? They did not give up. They fought the unreasonable authorities with a secret weapon: wisdom.

If they could not get permission to build flood-protection

barriers, they decided, they would apply for permission to raise the roadway that ran along the river. In the name of road improvement, they would get their embankments built. This brilliant wisdom, born of their desperate struggle, stirred the new prefectural governor to action, and work on the dikes began.

The Tokyo Prefectural Government, of course, opposed the project, and Kanagawa was ordered to cease construction. The project proceeded with difficulty. But the new governor and his citizens were united in purpose, and they refused to be stopped. There were many reverses and detours along the way, but finally in October 1916

a system of dikes was completed. It was a true victory for the determination and perseverance of the people.



A sage of old once said: "The ruler is a boat, and the people are the water. The water can float or sink the boat." The people are the true sovereigns, and it is their power that changes the course of history.

The Soka Gakkai is an organization of the people, by the people, and for the people. That is why the authorities fear its growth and devise all sorts of plots and strategies to stop its course, attacking it with a surging flow of foul persecution. But no matter what force they may employ, the great embankment of the people, built through our alliance of goodwill, will not be broken. Why? Because it is an embankment of the victory of the people, the greatest force that the 20th century has produced.

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

Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo Seeks Director of Admissions and Financial Aid

In anticipation of opening the doors to their first 100 freshman students in fall 2001, the first core faculty and staff are already hard at work at SUA, Aliso Viejo in Orange County, Calif. Twelve faculty and staff members have been hired. A search has recently been announced for the director of admissions and financial aid, who will be responsible for domestic and international student recruitment, overseeing of admissions processes, and administration of the financial aid program. Candidates for the director of admissions and financial aid should have a master's degree (preferably in educational administration) and a minimum of five years experience in admissions management in a university setting. Anyone desiring further information should contact Kathy King, human resources manager, at (949) 472-3062 or at hr@soka.edu.



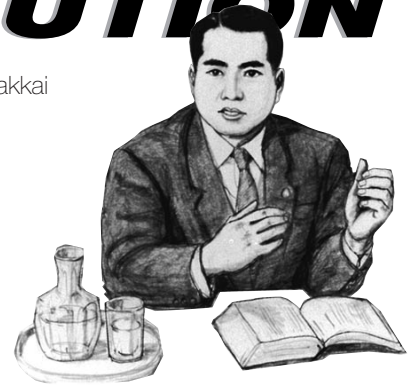
the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

a novelized history of the soka gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 13-14

A Hawaii member's request for Nichiren Shoshu priests to visit America leads to the first overseas Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies (and Nikken's infamous trip to Seattle). Shin'ichi and party depart Hawaii for his second visit to Los Angeles.



A Q-and-A session with President Shin'ichi Yamamoto then followed.

At the discussion meeting he attended on his first visit to Hawaii, some of the members had been so overwhelmed with life's sorrows and pains that they could not even state their questions without breaking down in tears. But today's scene was vastly different. The room was filled with the cheerful, resolute smiles of people looking with hope toward the future.

The questions centered for the most part on how to promote kosen-rufu and arose from a sense of responsibility and mission to accomplish the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law. Among the issues raised was a request for visits by priests to conduct *gojukai* (Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies). This was needed to accommodate the increasing number of new members.

The meaning of *gojukai* is accepting the precepts, but Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that embracing the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment, that embracing the Gohonzon means upholding the precepts. Thus, the only precept or rule of action to be upheld by believers of the Daishonin's Buddhism for attaining enlightenment is to embrace the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws.

The true meaning of accepting the precepts is for believers to make a solemn vow to embrace the Gohonzon and exert themselves in faith throughout their lives. In this respect, the conferral ceremony

serves simply as a formal setting for making such a vow.

First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi requested that the priesthood conduct conferral ceremonies for new members, hoping that this would be the opportunity for them to make a fresh start in correct practice and strengthen their determination in faith. From that time on, it became customary for new members to receive *gojukai* upon taking faith.

To the Hawaii member's request for priests to visit, Shin'ichi replied: "I understand your concern. I will make a request to High Priest Nittatsu."

After returning to Japan, he immediately submitted a request to Nittatsu to have priests sent overseas to conduct Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies.

And so it was that, two months later, two priests were sent to the United States from March 16-30 to conduct conferral ceremonies for members in a number of key cities across the country. One was a priest by the name of Shinno Abe, then the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department leader, who would later become the 67th high priest, Nikken.

The first place they visited to conduct *gojukai* was Hawaii. And the same hall at the Kaewai Elementary School where the Hawaii meeting had been held was used. On that occasion, Abe somehow managed to leave the Gohonzon he used for the ceremony behind in — of all places — a restroom there. Luckily, Hiroto Hirata and S. G. Like discovered the Gohonzon when they conducted a final check of the premises. The two successfully tracked down Abe and returned the Gohonzon to him, thus avoiding a major problem.

Through this careless incident, Abe showed a glimpse of his true colors — though a priest in name, he utterly lacked faith and was morally corrupt.

And this was not the only untoward event to occur during the

trip. A Soka Gakkai leader in Seattle during Abe's visit to conduct *gojukai* there would later testify as to the priest's disgraceful escapades there.

On Jan. 9, the day after the meeting that marked a fresh start for the kosen-rufu movement in Hawaii, Shin'ichi and his party visited the island of Kauai, known for its spectacular Waimea Canyon.

Most Japanese associate Hawaii only with Honolulu and the island of Oahu. But Hawaii in fact consists of a number of islands, including Kauai, Hawaii and Maui. Among these are found a wide variety of natural environments and ways of life.

In considering the development of the kosen-rufu movement in Hawaii, the real conditions on each of these islands had to be understood. Had Shin'ichi's schedule been more flexible, he would have seen some of the other islands, but it was hard to make time to do so — he had to be sure to set aside enough time for giving guidance to individual members.

A steady stream of people came to receive guidance from him at the hotel where he was staying. On the evening of the 9th and again the 10th, the day of his departure, he continued encouraging one person after another, not wishing to waste a moment of the limited time.

It is through such efforts to illuminate the darkness of people's sufferings with hope and to plant the seed of fresh determination in their hearts that people are nurtured and encouraged to grow and develop as human beings. This is what gives rise to fresh growth in the realm of kosen-rufu.

On the other hand, an organization where dialogue is missing will sooner or later succumb to bureaucratic abuses and lapse into a cold style of management lacking in human warmth.

The more the Soka Gakkai increased in size, the greater emphasis Shin'ichi placed on dialogue, on making wholehearted, dedicated efforts to talk directly with as many people as possible toward ensuring that the lifeblood of humanism would continue to flow through the organization.

Shin'ichi and his party departed Hawaii at 2:00 p.m., Jan. 10, and a number of members came to Honolulu Airport to see them off.

They touched down at their next destination, Los Angeles, after a flight of approximately five hours. Because of the time difference, it was already after 9:00 p.m. when they arrived. The moon was visible when they emerged from the plane, but apparently it had been raining until a short time before. The tarmac was wet, and there were puddles here and there.

In the airport, 50 or 60 members were waiting to greet them. They included Los Angeles Chapter Leader Akio Ishibashi and Women's Division Leader Kiyoko Kuwano, along with chapter staff Kazuko Ellick. Everyone was full of energy.

The first person Shin'ichi addressed was a young man, Yuji Nakahara. "You must be very busy with your studies," he said. "Thank you for taking the time to come to see me — both this time and last time."

At the time of Shin'ichi's last visit, Nakahara had been appointed the leader of the Los Angeles young men's division. He was studying political science at UCLA.

To be continued

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963. Illustrations by Ken'ichiro Uchida.

EXPERIENCE, FROM PAGE 1

worried, though, because I suffered from a crushed disc in my back. But I liked the cause. So I signed up.

The event was sponsored by Avon and put together by the same people who organize the AIDS rides, and they are very professional. They sent me a lot of information and literature and assigned me to a "walker coach." I didn't read much of the paperwork and never called the coach, but I did start walking on the weekends. At first it was a push to do four or five miles, but I gradually worked up to 10 or so. Then there was a 15-mile pre-walk day in Santa Monica that I attended.

It was the hottest day of the year, and I found out why I should have read the literature and contacted the coach. I made it through the day, but only just. I was in pain for a week! What a wake-up call.

After that, I got in touch with some of the walkers in my area and began to train in earnest. About four weeks before the event, after a 24-mile walk, my back was in

such agony that I was ready to quit. My left leg would go numb, and my left arm started to do so as well. This alternated with shooting pains and a steady, sharp ache in my lower back all the time.

And then something great happened: I remembered. I remembered that when I was a young man making great causes for the spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I learned that the only thing standing between me and victory was...me. With my sincere prayer to the Gohonzon and my determination, I could do anything. When had I forgotten this? "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step..." or something like that. And this was only 60 or 70 miles!

So I chanted and walked with members of my training group.

or two people, I talked to them. I found out about people's lives and they found out about mine. And when I walked alone I would quietly chant while I walked, sometimes six or more hours a day.

I kept the stretching exercises up, and I kept walking. The back pain was not really going away, but my spirit and my resolve were strengthening. And I liked what was happening to me. (I also lost almost 20 pounds!)

My wife and little girl drove me up to Santa Barbara on Oct. 22 for registration and orientation. The most impressive part was the hour-long video where Avon stressed safety, the cause we were fighting for and, most important, humanity. They

emphasized the need for kindness and asked every participant to put aside complaint and whining and to be kind. It was a great message.

We left at dawn on Friday morning and walked about 18 miles. I walked for a while with a woman who was 70 years old and had been diagnosed with cancer less than a year before and was still in chemotherapy. I talked to a woman who had had a double mastectomy in May, and she was walking with us. I put my pain aside and soaked in the courage around me, and I thought a lot about my mother, who died of cancer seven years ago.

For me it ended in pain, physically, but with a tremendous feeling that this was an important place to be. At camp that night, I saw the chiropractor, and then I signed up to sing for the next evening's talent show. I had not performed in public for more than 25 years, but I thought, why not?

The next day was "short," only about 14 miles, but it

PLEASE SEE EXPERIENCE, 7



Andy, right, with friends on the walk.

And I found that, during hours of walking with one

SGI PRESIDENT AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA DISCUSS GANDHI



SGI President Ikeda met with India's former prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Oct. 28. Mr. Gujral, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, observed that without Gandhi, India would be a completely different place today. Gandhi changed the way that Indian people think, he said, crediting his mentor's advocacy of nonviolence to Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings. Mr. Gujral remembered that initially people viewed Gandhi's nonviolent movement with derision, believing that it could never achieve the end to British rule, and President Ikeda concurred that all great movements face criticism at the outset. On the issue of nuclear arms, Mr. Gujral declared that their total abolition is the only way to ensure the peace and security of humankind. He proposed convening a world conference toward ridding the world of this threat. The SGI leader shared that his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, was an advocate of abolition, and that Toda first issued an appeal for the creation of a nuclear-free world in 1957.

EXPERIENCE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE
 was difficult — waking up was easy, but *getting up* was excruciating.

Later, at camp that afternoon, I couldn't believe my back pain.

The interesting thing, though, was that I continued to have the most amazing life-to-life conversations with complete strangers. They were all interested in me, and I was fascinated by all of them. I found myself really listening and really appreciating each person's struggles. And I found myself really trying to help, even though mostly that just meant listening. It's not an ability for which I am famous.

Right before the talent show, I was off rehearsing by myself, and a lady I had not noticed complimented me. I was a little embar-

rassed, but then I chatted with her a while. She was from Ohio and had lost her mother to cancer 20 years ago. She wrote her mother's name on a slip of

'I thought a lot about my mother, who died of cancer seven years ago. For three days, I was the best person I could be. And I kind of like that guy.'



paper, and I put it in my shirt pocket.

Then I went off to do evening gongyo and chant, and I found that my prayer was that I could somehow encourage these wonderful people or lighten their hearts or touch them, a little bit. I ded-

icated the song I performed, "Let It Be," to that lady's mother, whose name was next to my

Andy Hanlen sings 'Let It Be' at the talent show.

heart, to my mom and to all the walkers. They were certainly a kind crowd and

seemed to enjoy the tune.

After my performance, a young woman named Karen came up and told me a story about her mother, who had died when she was 13. The last letter that Karen had sent to her mother contained the lyrics of a song that she found to be particularly full of hope, and her mother died shortly after that. It was "Let It Be." Karen told me that she felt that her journey was complete when she heard me sing it. She cried, I cried, and I told her about my prayer. She thanked me and went away, but I was filled with appreciation for her words.

The next day was incredible. I forced myself to ignore the pain and walked. It was 25 miles that day, and the third day of hammering my back and sleeping on the ground. I just talked to people and walked, and the most amazing thing was that so many of them thanked me for my music and said that it really touched them.

I finished the walk and was met by my wife and my little girl, and I came home

and survived. The projections for the walk were to raise \$2.5 million, but the actual total was over \$5 million! I was especially encouraged to find out that most of the money was going to early detection and prevention for "under-served" women, meaning poor and minority women — definitely a life-saving effort.

Looking back, I realize that I did something for those three days that I do not usually do. For three days, I was the best person I could be. And I kind of like that guy.

Personally, I benefited greatly. But more important, there are tens or hundreds of people out there with whom I interacted who might remember the nice guy with the great stories or the good songs — who was a Buddhist.

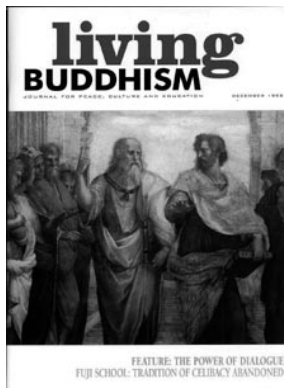
My back still hurts, but I'm now inspired to get the right kind of help to fix it. And I've lost 25 pounds!

But what's so much more important is the lesson I've learned — again — about youthful spirit, about not giving up, about what it means to be a bodhisattva and a representative of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

I'll walk again next year. ☸

**Linus Pauling
 VIRTUAL tour**

You may have missed visiting the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition in San Francisco, but now you can *virtually* visit it. A virtual tour has been completed and added to the official exhibition Web site, www.paulingexhibit.org. While the virtual tour uses text and images from the exhibition, it's designed for an optimal Web experience and doesn't simply duplicate the actual exhibition space. It also explains the story behind the creation of the exhibition, co-sponsored by the SGI.



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LOOK FOR IT!!

The December issue of 'Living Buddhism' is out now!

DIALOGUE - WHAT IS IT?

Can we talk?! Of course we can. But is it dialogue? Socrates and Plato made a career of out of dialogue, and it was the way that Shakyamuni propagated his teachings. SGI President Ikeda has said, "My practice of faith means to create mutual understanding between human beings...the product of dialogue, and again dialogue."

HISTORY OF THE FUJI SCHOOL

How it came about that the priesthood abandoned the centuries-old-tradition of celibacy. The priesthood regarded the government as having legitimate control over their traditions, further diluting the orthodoxy of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings.

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE

What if you were told that right now, as you are, you could be the star of your own movie? And what if your role was the lead, the hero in the greatest adventure story ever told?

DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH

Prayer Is Electric!

What makes our prayers work? SGI President Ikeda explores this question in this installment of 'Discussions on Youth.'

SGI President Ikeda: Let's continue our discussion. I'll try to answer any and all questions that you, the youth, have.

Hideobu Kimura: Thank you. Today's theme is how prayers are answered. First of all, can we pray for anything that we want?

Ikeda: You can pray for anything that you believe may contribute to your happiness or to that of others. For instance, you can pray to improve yourself or to become a certain kind of person. Yes, you can basically pray for anything that you wish.

But I wouldn't advise praying for negative things. Praying for something that will harm your progress toward happiness or that of others will only bring about a negative effect in your life. That's because doing so runs counter to the fundamental rhythm of life.

The key to having our prayers answered is to be in this rhythm of the universe.

Yoshiko Ueda: Previously in "Discussions on Youth," we discussed the meaning of doing gongyo and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. After reading those installments, many high school division members started to challenge gongyo and daimoku. We asked some of them what changes they have experienced since they began chanting.

One student said: "In my second semester, I was having problems with my friends. I chanted to the Gohonzon to change myself for the better, and I gradually could express my feelings more openly and honestly. I could see the good points of those friends whom I hadn't been getting along with. I'm so happy with the way things turned out through chanting."

Another student said: "When I chant, it's like I'm a completely different person. I feel as if I can take on any challenge and do anything that I set my mind to. I really like the changes that I see in myself."

"I was being bullied," said another student, "and I knew that I couldn't take it much longer. So

I chanted hard to change something in my life. Not long after, I made a new friend whom I get on real well with and can talk to about anything."

The Gohonzon allows us to realize all our prayers.

Kimura: There were other responses, too. Some students expressed doubt that praying to the Gohonzon could really be effective, or that it was really possible for them to become

stronger and more confident. Still others said that, though they prayed with all their might — and made sincere efforts — their prayers weren't answered.

Are all our prayers really fulfilled when we pray to the Gohonzon?

Ikeda: Yes, of course. The Gohonzon enables us to realize all our prayers. Every prayer definitely is answered.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Though one might point at the

earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise up from the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-enge-kyo] would go unanswered" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 46).

Our prayers are answered with an even greater certainty than the sun rising in the east every morning. This accords with the law of the universe.

The crucial thing, therefore, is whether we are really practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Whether we are really putting the teachings of the Daishonin's Buddhism into practice.

President Toda used to say: "Obviously, when you strike a bell, you're going to get a vastly different sound depend-

ing on whether you use a toothpick, a chopstick or a bell stick. The bell's the same, but if you hit it powerfully, it rings loud. If you hit it weakly, it rings soft.

"The same is true of the Gohonzon," he said. "The benefit that we receive depends entirely on the power of our faith and practice."

Kimura: That example is very clear.

Belief is a kind of force that makes our prayers work.

Ikeda: As the expressions *the power of faith* and *the power of practice* indicate, belief is a kind of force or strength. The greater your conviction that your prayers will be answered — the stronger your faith — the more powerfully the Gohonzon, the Mystic Law, responds to your prayers.

The power of practice encompasses the strength of your chanting and the energy with which you work for kosen-rufu — for the happiness of all people and the prosperity of society. The stronger the power of your practice for yourself and others, the more you can tap the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law of the Gohonzon.

Although we say that prayers are answered, in the Daishonin's Buddhism the fulfillment of our prayers is not magical or occult. It's not about some mysterious, enlightened being or god in a distant realm taking pity on us to grant our wishes.

Just as there are physical laws like those governing electricity — laws that human beings in their ingenuity have learned to harness and put to practical use — Buddhism has delved into and uncovered the law of life and the universe. Just as electric light was invented based on the laws of electricity, the Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon based on the supreme Law of Buddhism.

Mr. Toda used to describe the Gohonzon this way: "This certainly doesn't do it full justice, but the Gohonzon can be likened to a happiness-manufacturing machine." The Gohonzon is the ultimate manifestation of human wisdom and Buddha wisdom. That's why the power of the Buddha and the Law are only as strong as the power of your faith and practice.



Charlie Chaplin gets in gear in his classic film 'Modern Times.'

“

Prayer constitutes a fusion of the ultimate Law of the universe and our minds.

You can think of this as the gears of a machine meshing. When a small gear locks its cogs with those of a large gear, it can display a tremendous force — that it otherwise wouldn't have. In the same way, when we synchronize the microcosm of our lives with the macrocosm of universal life, we can tap unlimited power to overcome any problem.

”

ELECTRIC, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

If the power of your faith and practice equal a force of a hundred, then they will bring forth the power of the Buddha and the Law in equal strength. And if it is a force of 10,000, then it will elicit that corresponding force.

Kimura: So just as we can enjoy the illumination of an electric light without fully understanding the laws of electricity, by turning on the switch of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we tap the power of the Mystic Law and fulfill our prayers — without having to master the vast body of Buddhist doctrine, often described as a treasury of 80,000 teachings.

Ikeda: Of course, it is beneficial to study Buddhist doctrine. The more we study it, the more it reinforces our understanding and deepens our appreciation of the excellence and profundity of Buddhism — which in turn serves to strengthen our faith and conviction. The fundamental purpose of Buddhist study is to fortify the power of our faith and practice.

Religion came from prayer — not the other way around.

Ueda: We tend to think of prayer as some special, out-of-the-ordinary thing. But in fact, it is a normal, everyday thing, isn't it? It's the fruit of human wisdom, actually.

Ikeda: As far as we know, only human beings pray. And we have done so from ancient times. We have prayed to the sun, to fire, to the mountains. Our species has long pressed its hands together in prayer to Nature, asking it for safety and happiness.

Prayer is an expression of our reverence for the universe, our awe toward forces greater than ourselves. Prayer transcends the logical, the rational, the scientific. It comes from an intuitive recognition of the link, the relation, the correspondence between the individual and the universe.

Pressing one's hands together in prayer is one of the most noble human acts.

Prayer is instinctual to human beings. When we're in trouble, for instance, we instinctively wish to be helped or protected.

Kimura: Yes, I'm sure that

we've all experienced that when we were in dire straits. It's not something that we can explain logically; it's just part of being human.

Ikeda: I think that this instinct naturally evolved to take the form of prayer. People have no doubt experienced this the world over, in every culture since time immemorial.

They felt this way even though they did not possess any theories or detailed, logical explanations to support their feelings. They probably weren't convinced that their prayers would always be answered, either.

But it is believed that religion gradually emerged from this prayer.

Ueda: So prayer didn't develop from religion — religion developed from prayer!

Ikeda: All people, even those who say that they have no religion, have deeply cherished wishes and aspirations. We all pray for something in the depths of our hearts.

Prayer in the Daishonin's Buddhism is a means, based on the Law of the universe, for closing the gap between those wishes and reality.

Kimura: There are so many religions and so many different objects of worship....

Ikeda: In Japanese, an object of religious worship is called *honzon*, literally meaning an object of fundamental respect. There are all kinds of objects of devotion. In some religions, animals such as horses or snakes serve that function. However, the Daishonin says, "All of these schools are misled concerning the true object of worship" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 131).

Ueda: Could you explain the significance of the object of fundamental respect in the Daishonin's Buddhism?

Ikeda: The *hon* of *honzon* connotes the true basis of life and the universe. And *zon* connotes veneration and reverence for that.

If you embrace something that is not the true basis of the universe as an object of fundamental respect, everything will be distorted, off track. For instance, there are people who regard money, the mass media, science and technology or high academic status as the objects of supreme respect.

Kimura: Yes. And I know that there are some people who center

their lives around their parents — or their girlfriend or boyfriend.

The proper way to pray? Just be yourself.

Ikeda: In the Daishonin's Buddhism, the fundamental Law of the universe is venerated as the object of fundamental respect. This Law is also the essence of our lives.

This might be a little difficult to understand, but when we pray to the object of fundamental respect, the Gohonzon, the Buddhist principle of the fusion of reality and wisdom is at work. The objective reality of the Gohonzon and the wisdom of our minds are fused at the deepest level.

Prayer, in other words, constitutes a fusion of the ultimate Law of the universe and our minds.

You can think of this as the gears of a machine meshing. When a small gear locks its cogs with those of a large gear, it can display a tremendous force — that it otherwise wouldn't have. In the same way, when we synchronize the microcosm of our lives with the macrocosm of universal life, we can tap unlimited power to overcome any problem.

All Buddhist gods, Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the 10 directions — all the protective forces of the universe — will be activated, so that we can realize our prayers.

Ueda: Prayer allows those gears to mesh, then?

Ikeda: That's right. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the sound of the great rhythm of the universe. It is the power source of all universal activity. It is also the heart and essence of the universe.

The Mystic Law is the source of all change. That's why when we chant the Mystic Law, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we activate the universal forces to support us. The rhythm of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo has been called the rhythm of the universe's movement.

The power of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to activate the universe's protective functions appeared in a movie a while ago, I believe.

Kimura: Yes, it was *Inner Space*, a story about traveling inside the microcosm of the human body. At one point, the protagonist chants Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to break through a crisis.

Ueda: One student writes saying that she doesn't know how

to pray and asks about the proper way.

Ikeda: Basically, just be yourself. That's the most important thing.

Revere the Gohonzon as the fundamental basis of your life, reach out to it and take your problems to it — do this naturally, as a child reaches for its mother. When you're suffering or when you're sad, there's no need to put on a good face or pretend that everything's all right. Just chant exactly as you are, unreservedly giving expression to the feelings in your heart.

The Daishonin writes, "What we call faith is nothing extraordinary" (MW-5, 303). And he urges, "As parents will not abandon their children, or as a child refuses to leave his mother, so we should put our trust in the Lotus Sutra" (MW-5, 303). In other words, all that we need do is trust the Gohonzon wholeheartedly, praying sincerely that our desires will be realized. Such prayer definitely will empower us.

There is nothing extraordinary about prayer — prayer is simply wishing for something with all our heart.

And our heart matters most. It is important to chant with deep faith, reverence and love for the Gohonzon in our heart.

When it comes to chanting, both quantity and quality count.

Kimura: One student asks whether he has to chant for a certain number of hours before his prayer will be answered. Or can he chant intensely for a short time? In other words, which is more important, quantity or quality?

Ikeda: The value — or, if you like, quality — of a \$100 bill is more than a \$10 bill. Naturally, most people would prefer a \$100 bill, right? Similarly, in faith, sincere, strong prayers are important.

Of course, having lots of \$100 bills is even better! Likewise, in prayer, both quantity and quality count.

We practice Buddhism to become happy. The main thing is that each of us feels deep satisfaction after chanting. There are no hard-and-fast rules about having to chant a certain number of hours.

Setting chanting targets can be helpful, but when you're tired or sleepy and are just mumbling along in a half-conscious daze, it's better to stop and go to bed. After

you've rested, you can chant with concentration and energy again. This is much more valuable. We should be alert and earnest when we pray, not nodding off.

As I said, most important is that our chanting be satisfying and refreshing to us, so that we can exclaim when we've finished, "Ah, that felt good!" By reinforcing that feeling day after day, our lives naturally move in the most positive direction.

Ueda: I have heard countless experiences from our members of the power of chanting.

Ikeda: Yes, and the SGI is strong precisely because our members have such personal experiences.

To be continued

Part one of a discussion on how our prayers are answered among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai high school division leaders Hidenobu Kimura (young men's leader) and Yoshiko Ueda (young women's leader). Part two will appear in next week's issue.

Seattle Incident Trial Continues

The Seattle Incident trial resumed Nov. 16 with Soka Gakkai attorneys calling Soka Gakkai Vice President Isao Nozaki as a witness. This Tokyo District Court trial involves Nikken's libel suit against the Soka Gakkai over coverage in Gakkai publications of the so-called Seattle Incident, his 1963 altercation with prostitutes and subsequent run-in with police in Seattle. Nikken says that it never happened, but the late Hiroe Clow, the SGI-USA member who in effect rescued him from arrest, testified in 1995 that it did. The two police officers on the scene have given accounts corroborating her testimony. Vice President Nozaki explained Nov. 16 why the Soka Gakkai youth division newspaper, the *Soka Shimpo*, decided to cover the Seattle Incident story in the first place — to show what Nikken was really like. Mr. Nozaki will be questioned by Nikken's attorneys on Dec. 21.

— Jeff Farr

OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR EACH LIVING BEING

PERSPECTIVE

By **ANDY BRUCK**
JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

What is it like to participate in an Earth Charter consultation? Andy Bruck found it an exciting process that made him reexamine his values.

What would drive a child to kill another?" an SGI member recently asked following a murder in Jacksonville. Later, the member said that without Buddhism, his life would be limited, closed off from the values he embraces.

Obviously, a child murderer lacks essential values that might keep him or her out of trouble. SGI President Ikeda says, "By conversing on a profound level, people can awaken to a more valuable way of life and find inspiration to seek even higher value."

Carrying my friend's question further, could people's abuse of Earth also be based on ignorance of key values? The Earth Charter aspires to identify values that every world citizen can embrace. Since the EC is a democratic, worldwide creation in progress, any person or group may participate in or sponsor a consultation through most of 1999 and give feedback to an international drafting committee. (See www.earthcharter.org for more.) I was so impressed by participating in this activity that I have since attended other EC events and want to draw in my friends, neighbors, family members and work colleagues.

In his 1998 peace proposal, President Ikeda says: "The building of a world community, a global civilization of justice, compassion and hope must begin by...cultivating...a shared ethos of cooperation and interdependence.... In this regard, I want to propose the concept of shared or mutual value-creation as a behavioral norm for the new era..." If we can mold a truly common value system as President Ikeda suggests, perhaps we can find our way through the

muddy swamp of today's problems.

I found it refreshing how these consultations enable participants to reflect on both the Charter's values as well as their own. Psychology teaches that our perception is selective. A rare plant I might not notice could immediately attract a botanist's attention. Because we each notice different things, we can expand our own perspective through dialogue like this. Since joining the EC process, I have been modifying the governing values I have developed, aspiring to be a more responsible citizen and consumer, to be more attuned to global economic inequities. It's also amazing how much the SGI Charter correlates with the EC, also championing the values of the sanctity of life, human rights, global citizenship, religious freedom, tolerance, inter-religious cooperation, cultural diversity, symbiosis with the environment, and education.

In a youth division discussion, we discovered that the wording is difficult for youth to understand. If the EC is to be studied the world over, that

problem will need addressing, so I have been developing an EC brochure for young people. At various consultations, it has been encouraging to encounter members of numerous religious faiths, environmentalists, civil rights experts, a spiritual leader of an Indian tribe, professors, housewives, and a woman who moved from the United States to the Amazon forest years ago. I want to see you there, too!

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

Support Groups Hold First National Conference

Nov. 19-22, the youth division support groups held their first-ever conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. One hundred and seventy-five members from the three

groups — Byakuren, Gajokai and Soka Group — came together to create a vision for the future. To better understand one another, the history of each group was presented in de-

tail. Presentations were made on the spirit of behind-the-scenes support, how everyone can work together better, the temple issue and the mentor and disciple relationship. At all

hours of the day and night, spirited and determined discussions could be heard all over the campus. Surprise performances from flautist Nestor Torres and singer/songwriter

(and Gajokai member) Duncan Sheik were highlights of a celebration Saturday night that set the FNCC record for length (official) and for fun (unofficial)! (See Jonathan Wil-



Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

Singer/songwriter Duncan Sheik encourages behind-the-scenes youth volunteers at their FNCC conference, Nov. 21.

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Reproductive Rights

As an unabashed Buddhist abortion counselor, I want to comment on Kim Hawkins' remarks (Oct. 23 *World Tribune*) in regard to the experience of Bethany Wild (Sept. 11 *World Tribune*). I have always felt that there was a dearth of discussion in the SGI regarding women's reproductive rights, as they are an integral part of the human rights that the SGI has always championed.

I, too, found Bethany's experience to be a touching and inspiring story of the power of our Buddhist practice. But I find it outrageous that such an experience be used to encourage what appears to be a "pro-life" crisis pregnancy center. As a counselor and patient educator in clinics that perform abortions, I know all too well that most crisis pregnancy centers have an anti-abortion agenda and carry out that agenda by conducting campaigns of misinformation. There have been many women making what they felt was the most wise, compassionate decision possible, who have been terrorized by the inflammatory, and downright incorrect rhetoric of these types of centers.

The most important aspect of our democratic society is that we are able to make important life decisions based on our own conscience — choices involving our beliefs about life, death, religion; spirituality cannot, and should not be dictated by the personal beliefs of other people. Those actively involved in misinforming women about their reproductive choices not only endanger the physical health of women but deny the wisdom of women to make responsible choices about their reproductive health, in essence denying their inherent Buddhahood. There is a widespread movement in our country that would not only want to deny women their reproductive rights but also deny the right of each of us to practice Buddhism. Religious liberty and reproductive rights are freedoms whose existence are mutually dependent. I believe it is of the utmost importance that we speak out against...the "crisis pregnancy" centers throughout the nation.... We have begun to make strides in addressing racism and homophobia, both within our organization and

within our society. The sexism inherent in the anti-abortion agenda is just as important a human rights issue as racism and homophobia. We will never be free of these human rights abuses until we address them all equally and eradicate their root cause.

—JENNIFER L. BENSON,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Regarding Rituals

I am a member of 30+ years who has been also leading at some level for nearly as many years.... I have had difficulty with all religions because of doctrines, clergies and practices that are departures from the founders' own words. This difficulty is multiplied when having to explain such practices to people.

I believe that we should cover topics such as the bell in ways that the future members will be able to readily discern necessity from custom and common practice. I hope that future topics will include more about bell-ringing and silent prayers, etc.

I would like to raise a couple of issues that were touched upon in Lisa Jones' article "Bell, Book, Candle and Saxophone" in the Nov. 13 *Tribune*.

You said, "The reason we ring a bell is...." I have heard explanations that related to sound and beauty, but the one reason I remember is the function of signaling. I mean that we ring the bell to signal those we are leading that, for instance, it's time to chant daimoku three times.... Can you recognize that we in the Gakkai use a particular kind of bell simply because we agreed to be based upon a common sound, and since the Gakkai is the gathering of those propagating the Gohonzon, what we do must be at least an acceptable way? Can you allow that a common practice is preferred to encouraging others to find their own way? Obviously, that's the way I want this kind of thing to go. There are places that will look and sound really weird if we encourage too much diversion from the common practice of the Gakkai. I think.

I like the idea that you can shake up people's perspective of the norm. But do you know

that we have to explain after you're finished with your shaking? Take, for instance, your information about the book on the floor. It's possible that the concept of a floor being a place of danger and disrespect is more universal than you teach.... Your judgment of "putting your book on the floor is not a big issue" might be true to the extent that it is not a big issue to you, I think. Or, Lisa, I can agree with you that it is not a big issue for those who are respectful of important things.

So, again, I support your bringing up topics like this, but I would like you to consider endorsing the common practice of the Gakkai as it is now. If these things are changing, the *Tribune* is where the members will look to find them. Please realize that your articles will be taken as SGI-endorsed when they are printed in editorial style. I want you to know that when you write something that some people think, "The *World Tribune* said...." So could you make such articles more accurate and a little more complete and containing more support for common Gakkai practice (making clear that the practice could change) so you leave less for us to correct after you've stirred things up?

Your article on forbearance (Nov. 13 "Editorial") was appreciated by me. It is the most difficult of concepts for me to master, too. Thank you.

—RALPH E. HICKEN,
Omaha, Neb.

I have been looking forward to and reading NSA/SGI publications for almost 15 years and have come to appreciate the hard work and quality of your staff. The following article, though, seems a break from this tradition.

While I agree with Staff Writer Lisa Jones that Nichiren Daishonin prescribed few formalities in association with Buddhist practice and that the most important thing is the sincerity of our offerings, I was surprised and disappointed to read her advice and sarcastic tone in the article "Bell, Book, Candle and Saxophone."

She writes, "The reason we ring the bell is to offer beautiful sounds to the Buddha," as if

the Buddha is something outside ourselves.

It is my understanding that the Daishonin taught that the Buddha nature is innate in every living human, and we practice Buddhism to nurture it and bring it forth in our lives. There is a danger, especially for newer members, who might read this and believe that chanting is asking for help from "The Buddha" just as many Christians believe that through Jesus they can get closer to God. I, for one, am not chanting for outside help.

The statement "Many Americans have no qualms about putting books wherever it's convenient" I also take exception to. The fact that some people do not understand the subtle flow of life's energy is not a reason to adjust our standards to the lowest common denominator. I believe that it is not proper to put children on top of their heads (our crown chakra) point the bottom of my feet at another human or the Gohonzon, place certain objects on the floor, hang anything on the same wall higher than the Gohonzon, wear a hat or chew gum in the Gohonzon room, and cross one's legs while chanting.

We are chanting for human revolution and world peace. Attaining these goals will involve doing something different (change) which is often uncomfortable. Crossing our arms or legs is a sign of resistance and comfort, clearly counter-productive to our chanting. I can see around me that not many in our society understand these issues, but that doesn't mean it is not so, and to use "Americans" for our guide in these matters is not the advice I am looking for in the *World Tribune*.

I would rather read an article in the manner in which SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda set up their altar than how Lisa thinks it should be done.

—PETER DANNENFELSER II,
Sacramento, Calif.

Working with younger youth division members, I consciously look at the practices in our organization to realize whether they are rooted in culture or the Daishonin's Buddhism. I want them to know that these cultural practices are not necessarily essential to our

Buddhist practice. As future leaders and members of our organization, I want to instill in them the sense of responsibility in continuously creating and recreating an organization for the American people as representatives of the entire world, based on the foundation of the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Thank you for having the courage and wisdom to write eloquently of issues that can sometimes stir up controversy only because of the fear of change.

—LISA HONN,
Kansas City, Mo.

Misquote?

In the Nov. 13 issue, in "In My Life," Ulisse Gallo wrote: "I remembered what Nelson Mandela said in his 1994 inaugural address: 'It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?'"

This supposed quote from Mandela has been circulating around the SGI-USA for a year or so. However, if you read Mandela's two inaugural speeches, one given on May 9, 1994, and a second one given on May 10, 1994 — both of which are easily accessible on the Internet — Mandela said absolutely nothing like the above quote. His intent and wording are entirely different and more directly address the people to whom he is speaking.

I've been inquiring about this quote, and it has come to my attention that it was probably written by New Age guru Marianne Williamson.

—LIZ GOLDNER,
Huntington Beach, Calif.

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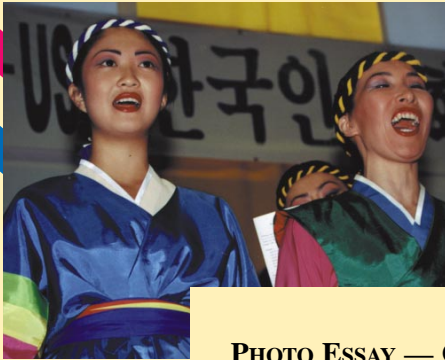


PHOTO ESSAY — GREGORY NAKASUJI, CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

Heart-to-Heart Culture

On Nov. 22, the 1st Korean Culture Festival was held at the Los Angeles Friendship Center. The atmosphere certainly was not subdued, as traditional Korean dances were performed in bright, colorful costumes. An energetic skit by youth and music by a jazz band rounded out the morning. There was true "Heart-to-Heart Dialogue" — the theme of the meeting — as many among the 450 attendees enjoyed tasty refreshments afterward. Messages from SGI President Ikeda, SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitu and SGI of Korea General Director Park Jae Il were read. Mr. Zaitu shared President Ikeda's encouragement that "the people's movement of the SGI is a great, dynamic cultural movement. Let us strive together for our fulfillment, for the welfare of our communities and to strengthen the power and influence of the people. To lead the world in the direction of peace and prosperity through the pursuit of justice and truth — this is the goal of Buddhism."

— JAMES LEE



Disertación del Presidente Ikeda: de la serie Aprendamos del Goshō. La eterna enseñanza de Nichiren Daishonin.

Perfeccionar la entidad eterna de nuestra vida

¿Qué es el Budismo, en última instancia? El canon budista abarca un inmenso número de escrituras, conocidas como las ochenta y cuatro mil enseñanzas. Luego, existen innumerables comentarios. Tratar de comprender semejante volumen de enseñanzas sin ayuda es como viajar por una selva impenetrable sin mapa.

Sin embargo, Nichiren Daishonin señala claramente: "Las ochenta y cuatro mil enseñanzas son como el diario de nuestra propia vida".² En otras palabras, los sutras budistas son una crónica, un registro, un diario de nuestro ser. "Se refieren a ustedes", está diciendo. "No hay una sola cosa en los sutras que no pertenezca a su vida".

La vida trasciende el nacimiento y la muerte

Concebir la vida y la muerte como realidades separadas es dejarse atrapar por la ilusión del nacimiento y la muerte. Es una forma de pensar distorsionada y errónea. Cuando examinamos la naturaleza de la vida con un estado de perfecta iluminación [es decir, con la verdadera iluminación del que ha despertado del sueño de ilusiones, vemos que no hay un inicio que señale el nacimiento y que, por lo tanto, tampoco hay un final que marque la muerte. ¿La vida concebida de este modo no trasciende el nacimiento y la muerte? La vida no puede ser consumida por el fuego al término del kalpa ni ser arrasada por las aguas de una inundación. No la cortan las espadas ni la atraviesan las flechas. Aunque cabe en una semilla de mostaza, la semilla no se expande ni la vida se contrae. Aunque colma la vastedad del espacio, el espacio no es ancho en exceso ni la vida, demasiado pequeña.

—Goshō Zenshu, pág. 563—

La muerte es un asunto de máxima importancia para todas las personas, sin excepción. Nadie puede decir, sinceramente, que la muerte no le preocupa. Pero, al mismo tiempo, hay pocas cuestiones a las que se depare una consideración tan superficial. Se dice que hay dos cosas que el hombre no puede

Material De Estudio

— Diciembre —

Goshō: 'La Enseñanza Suprema Expuesta Por Todos Los Budas Del Pasado, Presente Y Futuro'¹

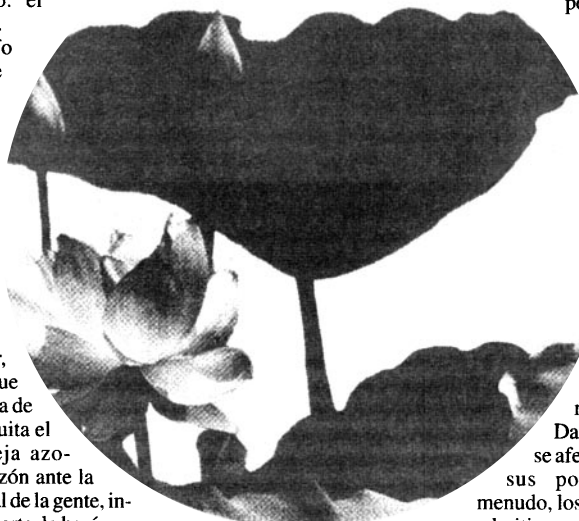
mirar de lleno: el Sol y la muerte.

El filósofo francés Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) lamentó que la gente rehuyese pensar en su propia mortalidad: "Esta negligencia, en un asunto que pone en juego su eternidad, su ser, su todo, más que lástima, me llena de irritación; me quita el habla y me deja azorado".³ Su desazón ante la actitud irracional de la gente, indiferente a la muerte, lo hacía emplear un lenguaje tan enfático.

¿Qué es la muerte? ¿Qué sucede con nosotros una vez que morimos? No abordar estas cuestiones es como pasar toda la época de estudiante sin jamás considerar siquiera qué haremos de nuestra vida una vez graduados.

Sin enfrentar el tema de la muerte, no podemos establecer un firme rumbo en la vida; atender la cuestión de la muerte brinda estabilidad y hondura a nuestro vivir.

Las diversas figuras religiosas, filósofos y científicos han expuesto muchas visiones sobre la vida y la muerte, a lo largo de los tiempos. Sin entrar en un análisis detallado, es justo decir que el conocimiento humano no ha avanzado lo suficiente para poder afirmar o negar concluyentemente la posibilidad de la vida después de la muerte. La ciencia, por ejemplo, toma como objeto de investigación aquellos fenómenos que se pueden discernir mediante los cinco órganos sensoriales; lo que sucede después de la muerte excede su ámbito. En otras palabras, su postura inicial la descalifica para hablar



sobre el tema de un modo u otro.

Ninguna visión sobre la naturaleza de la existencia puede brindar pruebas directas de lo que sucede después de la muerte. Por lo tanto, yo creo que más que tratar de comparar los méritos relativos de cada enfoque, es mucho más productivo preguntarnos de qué modo una determinada visión de la vida y la muerte influye en la existencia actual y concreta de la gente, ver si la vuelve más fuerte o más débil, más feliz o más desdichada.

El Budismo enseña que la vida es eterna. Por eso, nos alienta a emplear esta existencia para perfeccionar y mejorar la entidad eterna de nuestra vida. La felicidad eterna, explica el Budismo, yace precisamente en esta clase de labor. Si uno tiene en cuenta que la vida perdura eternamente, a lo largo del pasado, presente y futuro, lograr nuestra revolución humana se convierte en el propósito más importante de nuestra existencia. Cuando perfeccionamos y revolucionamos nuestro ser, entonces la vida pasa a ser un motivo de dicha, y también la muerte se vive con alegría;

pero, además, uno experimenta la felicidad en las vidas futuras. ¿Hay algo más eterno que esto?

En una carta escrita a su seguidor Shijo Kingo, Nichiren Daishonin dice: "Por mucho que usted aprecie su finca, cuando muera, inevitablemente quedará en manos ajenas".⁴ El Daishonin le dice que no se aferre codiciosamente a sus posesiones. Muy a menudo, los hombres no quieren admitir su propia mortalidad. Y, a raíz de ello, terminan cultivando apegos a cosas que no poseen valor esencial.

En su obra *Ensayos*, el filósofo francés renacentista Montaigne (1533–1592) revela el siguiente episodio referido aun rey de la antigua Grecia, que se proponía conquistar Italia:

Cuando el rey Pirro resolvió invadir a Italia, su sabio consejero Cineas quiso hacerle sentir la vanidad de su ambición y le dijo: "¿A qué fin ejecutas esa empresa, señor?" "Al de hacerme dueño de Italia." "Y luego?" "Luego—repuso el otro—Iré a la Galia y a España." "¿Y después?" "Subyugaré Africa, y cuando al cabo tenga el mundo bajo mi dominio descansaré y viviré contento y sosegado." "Por Dios, señor—replicó Cineas—, que no sé por qué no empiezas poniéndote en ese estado desde ahora. Si: no sé cómo no te dedicas desde hoy a lo que dices que aspiras, ahorrando tantas dificultades y trabajos como estableces entre tú y ellos."⁵

Esta anécdota se relata, originalmente, en las vidas paralelas, de Plutarco. Siglos

después, fue citada por Pascal y otros pensadores.

Lo cierto es que a la gente no le agrada contemplar su propia vida y enfrentar su mortalidad: tanto les disgusta, que van detrás de cualquier cosa que los absorba y los distraiga de ese enfrentamiento. Evitan el aspecto esencial, que es el perfeccionamiento de la propia vida, y finalmente llegan a la muerte sin haberse preparado para ese momento. Esta anécdota nos enseña la insensatez de esa forma de vivir.

Tolstoy escribió: *La muerte es más cierta que el mañana; es más segura que la noche que sigue al día, que el invierno que sigue al verano. ¿Por qué, entonces, nos preparamos para la muerte y para el invierno, más no para la muerte? Debemos prepararnos para el morir; pero hay una sola manera de hacerlo, y consiste en vivir bien.*⁶

"Vivir bien" significa desarrollar, cultivar y elevar la propia vida. Sócrates decía que esto era "ocuparse del alma". También conllevan el mismo sentido su célebre frase: "La filosofía es prepararse para la muerte".

En el pasaje de Goshō citado, ni destruida por las armas. Se fusiona con el universo, en manos ajenas, pero al mismo tiempo puede adoptar la forma de una minúscula semilla de mostaza. Verdaderamente, existe en el estado perfectamente libre de nosustancialidad (en japonés, *ku*).

El Budismo enseña de qué forma podemos controlar con firmeza la función y el poder de este aspecto libre e irrestricto de la vida, que es la fuerza de la Ley Mística, la enseñanza de los tres mil estados contenidos en cada instante de la vida (*ichinen sanzen*). Y aquí se encuentra el significado primordial de la fe.

Dentro de nosotros, existe una fuerza vital indestructible igual al poder del universo. Cuando uno toma contacto con esta fuerza vital, no hay sufrimiento ni aflicción que no se pueda revertir.

Todos los seres manifiestan las prodigiosas funciones de la vida

Las personas, confundidas por su propia mente, no comprenden la verdadera naturaleza de su vida ni toman conciencia de ella. El Buda comprende y manifiesta las prodigiosas funciones de la vida, que él califica de "trascendentales". "Trascen-

Por favor vea GOSHŌ, pág. B

GOSHO, de la pág. A

dental” significa que gobierna todas las leyes de la vida y que no se encuentra ostruido por nada. Esta libre fuerza trascendental existe en la vida de todos los seres animados. Por ende, los zorros, los tejones y criaturas semejantes pueden manifestar sus respectivos poderes trascendentales. Esta es la expresión de] su propia iluminación relativa. Y es de esta única entidad de la vida de donde surgen las diferencias entre las distintas tierras.

— *Gosho Zenshu*, pág. 563 —

El verdadero poder trascendental no tiene nada que ver con ciertas aptitudes sobrenaturales, sino que es la capacidad de ayudar a los demás a ser felices. Nichiren Daishonin dice: “Fuera de la manifestación del estado de Buda, no hay ningún ‘secreto’ y ningún ‘poder trascendental’.”⁷

Manifestar este verdadero poder trascendental significa perfeccionar y cultivar exhaustivamente la esencia eterna de nuestro ser y elevamos hacia el estado de la Budeidad. Cuando uno actúa así, puede concretar una felicidad eterna y establecer un estado de vida donde es posible ayudar a que los demás también sean felices.

Puede ser que uno, con poderes sobrenaturales, logre volar por el cielo. Pero poder volar no nos va a hacer felices. Y, si vamos al caso, cualquiera puede volar subiéndose a un avión.

El Daishonin dice que de esa única entidad de vida surgen las diferencias entre las tierras. Esto quiere decir que hasta la tierra y el ambiente físico varían de acuerdo con el estado de vida de las personas que habitan en ellos. El poder de transformar incluso el medio circundante existe dentro del corazón humano.

Si una persona realiza una gran revolución humana, puede modificar el destino de la humanidad y del planeta. El Budismo y el Sutra del Loto alientan a las personas a tomar conciencia de este inmenso poder, y les permiten extraerlo para aplicarlo positivamente. Dan al pueblo el medio para cultivarse plenamente y abrir los ojos al poder ilimitado que existe en su vida.

A través de un estricto entrenamiento, un atleta puede extraer el máximo de su capacidad y fortaleza física. Del mismo modo, de nuestra práctica depende la medida en que mani-

festemos nuestro poder latente y la verdadera esencia de nuestra vida. La disciplina requerida es la práctica budista, es la fe. Desde el punto de vista de la eternidad de la vida, a lo largo del pasado, presente y futuro, establecer una sólida fe resulta ser un objetivo de suprema importancia. En verdad, el principal propósito de uno en esta vida debería ser consolidar una fe inamovible.

El Daishonin dice: “Explicar el prodigio de la vida es el principal objetivo de todos los sutras. El que ha tomado conciencia de las funciones de la vida se denomina ‘El Que Así Llega’” (*Gosho Zenshu*, pág. 564). El Budismo revela el “prodigio de la vida” desde una diversidad de ángulos. Manifestar el estado de Buda es adquirir una plena comprensión de esa maravilla que es la vida.

El Buda capta el “prodigio de la vida” en forma cabal

Explicar el prodigio de la vida es el principal objetivo de todos los sutras [que Shakyamuni predicó durante su existencia], que se denominan ‘las ochentas y cuatro mil enseñanzas’. Todas estas doctrinas existen en nuestra vida; en consecuencia, las ochenta y cuatro mil enseñanzas son como el diario de nuestra propia vida. Nosotros llevamos y abrazamos las ochenta y cuatro mil enseñanzas en nuestra vida. Suponer que el Buda, la Ley y la tierra pura del Pico del Aguila existen fuera de nuestra vida y buscarlas afuera de nosotros constituye una ilusión.

— *Gosho Zenshu*, págs. 563–64 —

Se dice que hay ochenta y cuatro mil sutras. Y es así porque se cree que el ser humano tiene ochenta y cuatro mil deseos mundanos, y que los sutras esclarecen la forma de superar dichas ansias. Los sutras son un registro de la propia vida del Buda. Pero, el mismo tiempo, “el ejemplo de una persona representa la verdad imparcial inherente a todos los seres humanos”, Son un diario de la vida de cada persona, y que podamos creerlo, que podamos recordarlo, es algo que depende íntegramente de nosotros mismos.

El Budismo es una enseñanza expuesta para cada uno de nosotros. Cuando uno capta y comprende el “prodigio de la vida”, obtiene una libertad total y absoluta. No hay sufrimiento que no se pueda superar; no

hay oración que uno no pueda hacer realidad. Entonces, uno adquiere buena fortuna y entra en la travesía de la vida eterna, donde el vivir y el morir son una alegría por igual. La felicidad no existe fuera de nosotros mismos. Se encuentra adentro, en el estado de vida que construimos. La civilización moderna constantemente nos insta a mirar hacia afuera. Se dice que la nuestra es una cultura que se ha olvidado de la muerte. El morir ha pasado a ser un anatema; la gente trata de evitar pensar en la muerte, sin tener contacto con ella. ¿Pero ignorar la muerte enriquece la vida?

La ciencia puede postergar el fallecimiento, pero nunca eliminarlo. La muerte es una condi-

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ción de la vida humana; nadie puede eludirla. Por lo tanto, la civilización que olvida la muerte también olvida al ser humano. Y la civilización que se olvida del ser humano nunca podrá hacer feliz al pueblo.

Tolstoy dice: “Hombre esclarecido es aquel que sabe por qué vive y qué debe hacer. No tratéis de ser instruidos o cultos; en cambio, tratad de esclarecerlos”.⁸

En tal sentido, ¿no es “esclarecida” la vida de los miembros de la SGI, que se esfuerzan por cultivarse interionalmente y servir a los demás basados en la conciencia de que la vida es eterna?

Dentro de la SGI, hay incontables epopeyas conmovedoras sobre la vida y la muerte. Una persona, después de manifestar su agradecimiento hacia la

SGI, dijo, justo antes de morir: “Enseguida vuelvo”. Otra señora, con una dulce sonrisa, cerró los ojos y dijo: “Renaceré de inmediato y regresaré al jardín del kosen-rufu”. Otro murió escuchando sus canciones favoritas de la Soka Gakkai, como “canción de los camaradas” o “cantar de la revolución humana”. Después de relatar enérgicamente su sueño: emprender grandes actividades en su próxima existencia. ¿No son personas “esclarecidas”, que han tomado conciencia de la eternidad de la vida y han enfrentado la muerte con total compostura?

La civilización centrada en “cultivar la vida” respeta la dignidad humana y la excelencia del hombre, y atesora a las personas sabias.

En nuestra sociedad moderna, donde se asigna tanto valor a la riqueza material y a la eficacia, las personas suelen ser juzgadas por su “utilidad”. A raíz de esto, los ancianos y enfermos sufren una injusta marginación. Digo que la civilización que no enfrenta la muerte de lleno es la misma que abandona a sus integrantes en la vejez y la enfermedad. En sociedades donde la población anciana es cada vez más numerosa, el futuro adquiere un cariz sombrío.

Pero no es esto lo que ocurre en una civilización que atesora la madurez humana y la profundidad de la sabiduría. Si hay valor en los tiernos brotes vernal y en la luz estival, también hay valor en los maduros árboles del otoño y en los grandiosos crepúsculos del invierno.

Esto es mucho más claro en las personas que practican el Budismo. Para nosotros, la vejez es una época de plenitud insuperable, donde uno da los toques finales al “diario de oro” de su vida y logra la Budeidad en esa misma existencia. Son días de misión, en que uno puede narrar a los demás el “prodigio de la vida” y el “poder del espíritu”, tal como los ha experimentado, tal como los ha demostrado en forma real y concreta en su propia forma de vivir. Esta existencia que estamos viviendo es irremplazable, es valiosísima. Cuando el gran escritor ruso Fedor Dostoievsky (1821–1881) era joven, fue arrestado por sus actividades revolucionarias. A raíz del proceso, lo condenaron a muerte. Él y sus compañeros fueron llevados al sitio de ejecución, donde los ataron a sendas estacas. Los soldados apuntaron sus armas. El solo pensar que en un par de segundos ya no estaría más en el mundo desencadenó

una reacción poderosa en Dostoievsky. Un personaje de una de sus novelas piensa, en la misma situación que el autor:

“¿Y si no muriese? ¿Y si me hiciesen gracia de la vida? ¿Qué eternidad! Todo esto sería mío...! Oh, entonces cada minuto sería para mí una existencia nueva, no perdería ni uno, contaría todos los instantes de mi vida, para no malgastar ninguno...!”⁹

La ejecución se canceló en el último minuto, pero el episodio dejó en Dostoievsky una impronta de por vida. Su experiencia fue extrema, es verdad, pero si pensamos en ella objetivamente, todos vamos a morir sin falta, al margen de que nuestra vida sea más corta o más larga. Desde ese punto de vista, todos somos “prisioneros condenados a muerte”.

Dicho sea de paso, entiendo que, en los últimos tiempos, se están instrumentando proyectos para educar a la gente en cuestiones referidas a la muerte. En una de las iniciativas, por ejemplo, se le hace imaginar a la gente que le quedan tres meses de vida y se la alienta a pensar de qué manera emplearía ese tiempo. Esta clase de ejercicios instan a las personas a pensar seriamente en lo que necesitan concretar en la vida. Tolstoy observó:

Si un hombre sabe que va a morir en treinta minutos, en esa media hora hará nada trivial ni insensato, ni, por supuesto, nada malo. Pero el medio siglo que os separa de la muerte ¿es tan distinto de esa media hora?¹⁰

Debemos trabajar enérgicamente. Debemos desarrollarnos. Como afirma el Daishonin: “Haga surgir una fe profunda y pulsa su espejo día y noche, con ahínco y esmero”.¹¹ Allí se encuentra el objetivo primordial de la vida y la conclusión de “La enseñanza suprema expuesta por todos los budas del pasado, presente y futuro”. Diariamente, llevamos a cabo esta práctica, que es la esencia del Budismo. Es lo mismo que dominar las ochenta y cuatro mil enseñanzas.

Vivamos con conciencia del prodigio sublime que es la vida, vivamos conscientes de que cada día es un tesoro sin precio.

(Así concluye la disertación del presidente Ikeda sobre el Gosho “La enseñanza suprema expuesta por todos los budas del pasado, presente y futuro”).

ANTECEDENTES

LA FE ES EL PROPOSITO FUNDAMENTAL DE NUESTRAS VIDAS

Nichiren Daishonin escribió "La Enseñanza suprema expuesta por todos los Budas del pasado, presente y futuro" mientras residía en el Monte Minobu en octubre de 1279 a la edad de 58 años. Debido a que el documento original ya no existe, es desconocido el recipiente y los antecedentes precisos de este gosho. Una teoría declara que el recipiente fue Toki Jonin, uno de los primeros creyentes laicos del Daishonin y destacado erudito. Jonin recibió muchas cartas del Daishonin y las catalogó, sin embargo este escrito no aparece en su archivo.

1279 fue un año tumultuoso para la nación japonesa, así como para el Daishonin y sus discípulos. Necesidades primordiales como alimentos, vestimentas y albergue eran tan inadecuadas en el Monte Minobu que su salud comenzó a deteriorar. En julio de este año, un dirigente del gobierno shogunato en Kamakura, Hojo Tokimune, ordenó la decapitación de un Mongol que había sido enviado por Kublai Khan con un mensaje demandándole al japonés la rendición a Mongolia. Otras delegaciones habían sido en vidas anteriores, y una invasión inminente amenazó a la nación en 1274. Las fuerzas militares Mongólicas sobrepasaban enormemente al de la pequeña isla del Japón y sus habitantes temían una segunda invasión.

En septiembre, alarmados por el éxito de la rápida propagación de las enseñanzas del Daishonin, Gyoichi, comisionado encargado de los sacerdotes de Ryusen-ji, una escuela Tendai en la área de Atsuhara de la provincia Suruga, conspiró para arrestar con cargos falsos a veinte campesinos creyentes del Budismo del Daishonin. Ellos fueron trasladados a Kamakura y enjuiciados por Hei no saemon, comisionado encargado del las Fuerzas Militares y el Departamento de la Policía, una poderosa figura política que por muchos años conspiró para oprimir al Daishonin y a sus seguidores. Los

campesinos resueltamente rehusaron abandonar su fe, y como resultado tres de ellos fueron ejecutados, y el resto expulsados. El 12 de octubre en medio de esta persecución acaecida a sus seguidores, el Daishonin inscribe el Dai-Gohonzon para el bienestar de toda la humanidad, así cumpliendo el propósito de su advenimiento. Fue en este mismo mes que el Daishonin escribió esta carta. Y no cabe duda que el incidente de los campesinos de Atsuhara tendría que haber estado vivido en su mente. Como podemos ver con la inscripción del Dai Gohonzon. El corazón del Daishonin tiene que haber estado ardiendo con una profunda pasión por la felicidad y paz de la humanidad.

En esta carta, el Daishonin afirma que el Sutra del Loto es "La enseñanza suprema expuesta por todos los Budas del pasado, presente y futuro", designación que también es el título de este Gosho. Él compara el Sutra del Loto con las enseñanzas pre-Sutra del Loto desde el punto de vista de varias perspectivas. A través de un minucioso examen, el Daishonin elucida que el Sutra del Loto revela la Iluminación del Buda, mientras que las enseñanzas pre-Sutra del Loto son provisionales en el sentido de que ellas fueron expuestas de acuerdo a las condiciones y la capacidad de la gente, y concluye que el Sutra del Loto contiene la verdad esencial del Budismo y que la aplicación practica del sutra capacita a las personas comunes en el Último Día de la Ley lograr la iluminación.

En su disertación de este gosho, el Presidente de la SGI Daisaku Ikeda escribe:

Debemos trabajar energicamente. Debemos desarrollarnos. Como afirma el Daishonin: "Haga surgir una fe profunda y pula su espejo día y noche, con ahínco y esmero".¹³ Allí se encuentra el objetivo primordial de la vida y la conclusión de "La enseñanza suprema expuesta por todos los budas del pasado, presente y futuro".



Aquí el enfatiza el punto esencial de esta carta, en la cual el Daishonin declara: "Suponer que el Buda, la Ley y la tierra pura del Pico del Águila existen fuera de nuestra vida y buscarlas afuera de nosotros constituye una ilusión."

En otras palabras el mensaje de este gosho es desarrollar nuestra fe, o sea, fortalecer nuestra convicción de que poseemos "el Buda," "la Ley" y "la tierra pura del Pico de Águila." Aquí, Buda puede ser descrito en términos generales como la suprema esencia de la humanidad; la Ley-La Ley de Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, la cual late en todas las actividades del universo; y la tierra pura del Pico de Águila una metáfora a menudo citada por el Daishonin por el estado de iluminación, o la felicidad indestructible de la Budeidad. Tener tal creencia y convicción es lo que significa tener fe en el Gohonzon.

En referencia a esto, el Presidente Ikeda escribe: "Desde el punto de vista de la eternidad de la vida, a lo largo del pasado, presente y futuro, establecer una sólida fe resulta ser un objetivo de suprema importancia. En verdad, el principal propósito de uno en esta vida debería ser consolidar una fe inamovible."

Desarrollar y fortalecer nuestra fe, entonces, es nuestro objetivo fundamental como Budistas, pero, ¿acaso no es la fe el medio hacía un fin, y no el fin en sí? Es sin duda el medio para lograr una felicidad genuina y duradera que es

sinónimo a lo que llamamos la Budeidad, o iluminación.

La palabra fe por supuesto quiere decir creencia, pero hay muchas formas y grados de creencias, no todas de ellas son buenas o positivas. Sin embargo, en el Budismo del Daishonin, buscamos el significado más profundo de la fe. En nuestra práctica, la fe puede ser interpretada como nuestro estado de vida, un estado de vida en el cual nada puede influenciar nuestra convicción de que "el Buda," "la Ley" y "la tierra pura" existe en nuestras vidas sin importar nuestras circunstancias. Tal confianza y convicción, junto a nuestra oración y práctica, tiene el poder de extraer estas cualidades de nuestro interior. Nos permite apreciar y respetar ese potencial innato en los demás. Al ser capaz de palpar nuestras más intrínsecas y elevadas cualidades, como vitalidad y sabiduría, no podemos evitar ser felices. Esto es lo que quiere decir ser un Buda. Desde este punto de vista, la fe es el sinónimo de la felicidad. En este sentido, Nichikan, el 26avo sumo prelado de Taiseikiji, quien es conocido por sus esfuerzos para corregir los errores de sus predecesores y restaurador de las enseñanzas del Daishonin, dice: "El corazón que firmemente cree en el Sutra del Loto se le llama en sí mismo el estado de Buda.

Por lo tanto, mientras más fortalecemos y desarrollamos nuestra fe, más estableceremos una felicidad duradera dentro de nuestras vidas. Al darnos cuenta de que no tenemos que buscar la felicidad fuera de nosotros, y que un manantial de felicidad y fortuna existe den-

tro de nosotros, es tener fe, ser feliz. Este es el punto primordial que el Daishonin enfatiza en "La Enseñanza suprema expuesta por Todos los Budas del Pasado, Presente y Futuro."

— Traducción de los antecedentes del *Living Buddhism*, noviembre 1998.

Por Cesarina Caro —

NOTAS:

¹ "Sanzen Shobutsu Sokanmon Kyoso Hairyu" (*Gosho Zenshu*, págs. 558-75.) escrito por el Daishonin en octubre de 1279, a los cincuenta y ocho años.

² *Gosho Zenshu*, pág. 563.

³ Pascal, Blaise: *Pensées* (Pensamientos), trad. al inglés por A.J. Krailsheimer, Penguin Books, Nueva York, 1966, págs. 156-57.

⁴ *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, pág. 238.

⁵ Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de: *Ensayos Completos*, trad. del francés, Juan G. de Luaces, editorial Iberia S.A., Barcelona, 1968, vol.1, pág. 218.

⁶ Tolstoy, León: *The Pathway of Life* (El sendero de la vida), trad. al inglés por Archibal J. Wolfe, International Book Publishing Company, Nueva York, 1919, parte 2, pág. 179.

⁷ *Ib.*, pág. 564.

⁸ Tolstoy, León: *The Pathway of Life* (El sendero de la vida), parte 1, pág. 296.

⁹ Dostoievsky, Fedor: *El príncipe idiota*, trad. por Rosa María Phillips, Editorial Porrúa, S.A., México 1986, séptima edición, pág. 41.

¹⁰ Tolstoy, León: *The pathway of life* (El sendero de la vida), parte 2, pág. 32.

¹¹ *Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pág. 5.

DISTRITO DEL CONDADO EN PUERTO RICO PRESENTA

Exposición De Arte

Por Andy Sanchez
San Juan, PR.

El 12 de julio el distrito del Condado del área de Puerto Rico, como parte del Gongyo de la Paz Mundial, presentó una exposición de arte. La participación, que originalmente se contempló limitar a los varios artistas miembros del distrito, se amplió para incluir artistas de todos los distritos que componen el área de Puerto Rico. El tema de la exposición fue Celebrando la Vida. Participaron un total de 13 artistas y 23 obras. Significativo fue también que ese día se conmemoró el Día de la Relación Maestro/Discípulo.

Josué Santos (Cheko) es pintor profesional y, básicamente, estuvo a cargo del montaje. Expresó que él tenía un deseo real de que se hiciera la muestra con los recursos que fuera, ya que una propuesta similar anterior al nivel de área, por diversas razones, no prosperó. Fue un éxito, afirma Cheko. Él se inspiró en la presencia Ikeda, en cuanto a crear historia, en hacer cosas que no se han hecho. Se sorprendió ante la reacción rápida y armoniosa de todos los involucrados. Su determinación es hacer mejores exposiciones en el futuro y convertir esto en una tradición. Como participante reveló que se sintió contento y que exhibió una obra que no había expuesto nunca y que él considera como uno de sus mejores trabajos.

Dania Jendi es arquitecta y su alegría al participar surgió de ver que el grupo lograra hacer el montaje y de constatar el crecimiento del grupo.

José Luis Vargas es pintor profesional y maestro de arte. Su esposa Emma Holister también es pintora profesional (y al momento de redactar este artículo se encuentra en su natal Inglaterra.) Como miembros del distrito de Caguas, gentilmente apoyaron la actividad al exhibir varias obras. José Luis nos dice que, con la exposición, se percató de la abundancia de talento que hay en la comunidad budista. Propuso desarrollar una División de Arte, Cultura y Educación. También afirmó que la muestra fue sólo un comienzo.

Marta Mejía Castañer, por su juventud en la práctica aún no ha



recibido Gohonzon. Participó dentro del comienzo de una hace tiempo soñada carrera artística. Para ella la experiencia fue sumamente positiva, también un buen comienzo. Sugirió la participación de los niños en una futura actividad.

Ana Victoria Vidal (Toya) es pintora e ilustradora profesional. También es profesora de arte en la Universidad del Sagrado Corazón. Expresó que el grupo aprendió a organizar una actividad de envergadura. Hubo la oportunidad de que los participantes se dieran a conocer por algo por lo cual se destacan. Además declaró que la exposición fue propicia, pues el artista necesita mostrar su arte.

Es médico de profesión. Nefthalí Brito nos explica que su participación en la exposición más que una experiencia, fue fortuna pues era la primera vez que exhibía públicamente su obra. Fue el segundo participante que sugirió la participación de los niños en una futura ocasión.

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Héctor Gerena es Programador Senior en el principal Banco de Puerto Rico. Fue el único que exhibió fotografías. Su participación significó mucho para él como artista pues igual que Nefthalí, tuvo la oportunidad de exponer por primera vez. Además se sintió honrado de participar conjuntamente con artis-

tas profesionales.

Astrid López es artesana profesional. Su participación con pinturas y obras de artesanía le recaló la importancia de, como ser humano, hacer kosen-rufu. El hacer un esfuerzo por contribuir con algo le ayudó a valorar las cosas que hace, explicó.

Delvis Ortiz es de los medios de comunicación y anfitriona de un programa de entrevistas televisivo local.

Significó mucho para ella participar porque fue un vehículo para la inspiración y para desplegar diferentes puntos de vista. Además se sintió dichosa de que su hija adolescente participara en la exposición con ella.

Orlando Lebrón fue otro miembro de otro distrito Orlando Lebrón fue otro miembro de otro distrito (Guaynabo) que también tuvo la gentileza de participar. El sueño de Orlando también es dedicarse de lleno al arte. Afirmó que con la exposición se dio un tremendo primer paso para estrechar los vínculos culturales entre la SGI y la sociedad en general. Las próximas actividades, piensa él, se deben difundir más.

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LATINOS DEL AREA DE LOS ANGELES CELEBRA LA DIVERSIDAD

Reporte por
Martha Mauny,
Los Angeles

Más de 500 miembros de diferentes culturas, en su mayoría latinos del área de Los Angeles, celebraron su diversidad cultural en la Sexta Reunión General Latinoamericana llevada a cabo en el Centro Cultural de la amistad el día 8 de noviembre. El tema del evento fue: "convirtiéndonos en personas de gran corazón; a través de la amistad."

El evento concurrió entre poemas, obra teatral, coro, y representaciones musicales que agradaron a la concurrencia, los mismos que subieron al estrado para confundirse en el baile, así como una experiencia basada en como vencer las dificultades a través de Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Los poemas basados en la unidad y diversidad se vieron ampliamente ilustrados en el poema "Unidos en nuestras Diferencias," escrito por Tommy Lee, interpretado por él y maravina Jaimés y la representación teatral del "Sol de Jiju Sobre una Nueva Tierra." Poema escrito por el Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda, maravillosamente interpretado por los miembros latinos. El coro interpretó la extraordinaria entrega de Beethoven "Oda a la

alegría."

La segunda parte del festival Latino, tuvo lugar en el campo de basketball, donde se sirvieron refrescos y bocadillos. El grupo de baile Rhythm Nation y Pearl Chorus nos deleitaron con sus interpretaciones; al igual que el grupo Coreano con su maravillosa interpretación de tambores se unieron a la celebración de los miembros latinos.

Miembros del comité conjuntamente con la Cruz Roja Americana colectaron donaciones para las víctimas del Huracán Mitch.

SGI-USA OFRECE LOTES EN EL CEMENTERIO

Como ustedes sabrán a través de los reportes en el *World Tribune*, en mayo de este año la SGI-USA abrió su primer lote de nichos en la propiedad del cementerio Rose Hill Memorial Park cerca de Los Angeles. Este cementerio, denominado "Oasis de la Eternidad," marca la realización del largamente acariciado deseo por muchos de nuestros miembros.

También se construirá en este lugar, un "Monumento a los Pioneros Americanos del Kosen-rufu" (nombre propuesto).

En respuesta a la múltiples llamadas de los miembros latinos pidiendo información, nos gustaría compartir con ustedes lo siguiente:

Los servicios que el cementerio presta vienen en paquetes e incluyen:

- * Lote (aprox. 3' x 8')
- * Placa recordatoria para una o dos personas.
- * Bóveda de Concreto Especial.
- * Instalación de la placa recordatoria, cuidado y mantenimiento de lote y placas recordatorias.

El costo por paquete será de \$3.500.00 dólares.

Si desea obtener más detalles y contrato del mismo en Inglés favor de escribir o llamar a Tony Sugano a:

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