



EXPERIENCE

For Cheuk Lau, getting his pharmacy degree — with no previous science background — became the challenge of a lifetime.

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YOUTH

Study for January in 'Seize the Day.'

pullout section

CORBIS-BETTMANN

Saplings Into Mighty Trees

This 'Discussions on Youth' article continues on page 8

Hiddenobu Kimura: One member writes wondering whether skipping a day of gongyo and daimoku will invalidate all his practice up to that time.

SGI President Ikeda: Skipping gongyo occasionally is certainly not going to erase all your previous efforts. There's no need to worry about that. If you're running late for school and don't have time, there's no

SGI President Ikeda discusses the various factors that go into making a prayer come true and says that those who keep praying 'day after day, year after year, will without fail develop — just like saplings into mighty trees — becoming people of outstanding strength and character.'

need to be anxious about missing gongyo.

For example, if your mothers are practicing and are chanting for you, their prayers

will protect you. More important, as long as you have sincere faith in the Gohonzon, the fortune you have accumulated will stay with you.

You need not feel guilty when you miss gongyo. Of course, I'm not saying that it's all right to neglect gongyo. If you fall into the mind set that

you don't have to do it, your heart will gradually grow estranged from prayer.

Nevertheless, because faith exists in daily life, there's no need to take things to the extreme of making yourself late for school because of gongyo.

Yoshiko Ueda: Our attitude toward faith and the Gohonzon is most important, isn't it?

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STUDY

Ulisse Gallo recaps eight years of the temple issue.

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ESSAYS

Two new essays by SGI President Ikeda.

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EDITORIAL

What is a capable person, a capable leader, anyhow?

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According to Plan

By CRAIG GREEN

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

It is impossible to fathom one's karma. ("Letter from Sado," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 37)

A couple of weeks ago, I found a 10-year schedule in which I had mapped out several goals I wanted to accomplish from 1993 to 2002.

I also discovered that, out of the 28 items I am supposed to have accomplished up to now, I've accomplished only four so far.

According to this schedule, by the end of 1998, I am married, out of debt, making over \$100,000 a year, an established playwright living in a three-bedroom brownstone in Manhattan, awaiting the birth of my family's first child. It is now

five years into this schedule: None of this has come to pass.

When I read this, I was disappointed. It was another golden opportunity to beat myself up about not achieving everything overnight. There were things that I had planned to

do, and I simply didn't get them done. Things did not go according to plan.

The above passage comes from a letter written to Toki Jonin in 1272. Nichiren Daishonin had been exiled to Sado Island. He comments on how his current exile was a result of previous slanders from his current lifetime and lifetimes before. But he also makes it clear that the power to change one's karma, one's destiny, is completely within one's control. And that control comes from faith in the Lotus Sutra (the Gohonzon), and our willingness to teach others the same.

What we want to accomplish in our lives, and the way things are laid out in front of us, are usually very different. But regardless of what we have done in the past, or what we see in the present, we have the ability to create the lives we want.

Though it is impossible to fathom one's karma, it is not impossible to envision our future. Nor is it impossible to help others do the same. WT



In My Life

NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S WRITINGS IN ACTION

EIGHT YEARS OF THE TEMPLE ISSUE

A Universal Religion

By ULISSE GALLO

SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION STUDY COMMITTEE

On Dec. 27, 1990, Nikken Abe, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, convened a meeting of the Nichiren Shoshu council at Taiseki-Ji temple in Japan to change the by-laws of the organization. The action resulted in the immediate dismissal of SGI President Ikeda and other Soka Gakkai leaders as Nichiren Shoshu lay representatives. It also added the provision that "disciplinary measures may be taken against lay believers who criticize, defame or slander the chief administrator [the high priest] through speech, in writing, or by other means."

The events leading up to this decision were part of a larger scheme. On Dec. 13, the Nichiren Shoshu General Administrator, the Rev. Nichijun Fujimoto, after a regular communication conference between Nichiren Shoshu and the Soka Gakkai, presented a tape of President Ikeda's speech at the 35th Headquarters Leaders Meeting (Nov. 16, 1990). The Rev. Fujimoto requested that the Soka Gakkai respond in writing to questions prepared by the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office regarding statements by President Ikeda on that tape. It was later proven that this tape was an inaccurate, and in fact doctored recording.

Nevertheless, the Soka Gakkai leaders requested a dialogue to discuss the priest-

hood's concerns and they agreed to talk. Four days later, however, the Soka Gakkai received the questions via certified mail with instructions to respond within the week. Yet when the Soka Gakkai then sent nine questions to the priesthood regarding issues of concern, the Rev. Fujimoto responded that it was shameful to "interrogate" the head temple. Specifically, the Soka Gakkai wanted to examine statements made by individual priests accusing the Soka Gakkai of delaying the construction of 200 temples.

The dismissal of President Ikeda, as well as the temple's refusal to hold dialogue on the issues, led to confusion within the SGI-USA (then NSA) especially since Nikken had praised President Ikeda in the January 1991 issue of *Daibyakurenge* and in SGI publications worldwide for his contributions to kosen-rufu: "The many offerings to the head temple and the donation of local temples begun by the Soka Gakkai around the time of President Toda, have been greatly built on by President Ikeda, whose contributions have earned numerous words of praise from my predecessor, Nittatsu Shonin, the 66th high priest."

Nikken mistakenly believed that practitioners would defer to him as high priest in any conflict with the SGI. When that didn't happen, he began to "reconstruct" the teachings of the Daishonin by claiming: the infallibility of the high

priest; how the Nichikan Gohonzon issued by the SGI were false because they had not been sanctioned by the high priest, and; how members had to go on pilgrimage to the head temple in order to strengthen their faith.

When that didn't work, he began tearing down buildings — first the Grand Reception Hall and now the Grand Main Temple. These actions of destruction do NOT reveal the heart of someone whose mentor is Nichiren Daishonin. It is also in stark contrast to the efforts of the SGI to build bridges of friendship within local communities and to build places to hold discussions, whether community centers like the Los Angeles Friendship Center or research centers like the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century.

Whatever Nikken's motives were, we should appreciate that in excommunicating the SGI on Nov. 28, 1991, he liberated us from the growing authoritarianism of the priesthood and provided the first step in the globalization of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

The Main Temple's design was of a crane preparing for flight. With the Main Temple destroyed, the Buddhism of the sun, practiced as the Daishonin intended by the SGI, can now spread its wings and take flight. We can look back on Nov. 28, 1991, the moment that the Daishonin's Buddhism became a truly universal religion. WT

BUDDHIST BASICS

The Equality of All Beings

By LISA JONES

STAFF WRITER

In *Buddhism, The First Millennium*, SGI President Ikeda tells the story of when Shariputra and several other disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha went to visit a lay believer named Vimalakirti, who had been ill.

Toward the end of their visit, a goddess suddenly appears and scatters flowers on everyone. Shariputra, known as "foremost in wisdom," is alarmed to see that the flowers are sticking to him. He tries to pull them off.

The goddess laughs, "Why do you try to pull the flowers off?"

"Because such flowers are not appropriate on the person of a monk!" he says.

The goddess points out that the flowers have no preconceived ideas about what is appropriate or not. The flowers, she says, are sticking to him because he still has preconceptions and remnants of discriminatory thinking, which are based on delusion. Further, she implies that Shariputra still fears the eternal cycle of death and re-birth. And because of this fear, his senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch are sources of delusion.

She's right, of course, which irritates Shariputra. So he taunts her, "Goddess,



why don't you change out of your female form?" (You have to remember — his was a society in which women were considered impure. In his mind, no one would ever *choose* to be a woman.)

Without skipping a beat, the goddess takes Shariputra's form and turns him into a woman.

Shariputra is horrified.

The goddess then quotes Shakyamuni: "In the equality of all beings, there is neither man nor woman."

In relation to the Mystic Law, everyone is equal. Buddhism teaches that we can free ourselves from the type of thinking that puts people into hard and fast categories such as male/female, black/white or gay/straight. These categories are fluid and transient — they may last for a lifetime but are not eternal. In the Buddhist view, one form or category is neither better nor worse than any other.

Four in a series

— Illustration by Ed Lee

Nov. 18 Commemorative Discussion Meetings

AIRPORT DISTRICT

Westchester, California

Warm! Energetic! Jamming! This aptly describes Airport District's year-end general meeting, held Nov. 20. More than 70 attendees, including 19 guests, echoed the above sentiments. Faith, food and friendship were generously shared in an evening that began with gongyo led by SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin (also the vice district leader). Certificates were presented to those who passed the recent Elementary Exam, and special recognition was given to those who have offered their homes for district discussion meetings over the past year. Throughout the planning stages of the meeting, 74 members contributed their energy, ideas and daimoku. The selected theme, "Creating Value in Society," was clearly reflected in strengthened ties among district members and their guests, who included coworkers, fiancés and family members.

— JACKIE OVERTON



During the meeting, participants study an article from the 'World Tribune' regarding the creation of value.



Soka Schools ALUMNI GATHER IN TOKYO

SGI President Ikeda attended the Soka Schools Alumni Gathering, Nov. 3, at Soka University in Tokyo. The SGI president reminded the Soka graduates that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president and architect of Soka education, was incarcerated for denouncing Japanese militarism. Makiguchi died in prison on Nov. 18, 1944. The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, also imprisoned, was enraged when he learned that only a handful of Mr. Makiguchi's disciples had the courage to attend their mentor's funeral. Toda condemned them as counterfeit disciples, President Ikeda said, and resolved to dedicate his life to justice. Also at the alumni meeting, President Choue Chungwon of South Korea's Kyung Hee University was bestowed an honorary doctorate. Dr. Choue's father, Dr. Choue Young Seek, Kyung Hee's founder, received in October the Global Citizen Award from the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century.

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By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAYS



NEVER LOSE HEART

SGI President Ikeda spent a year as an editor of a children's magazine, when he was 21. Golden memories of the writers and illustrators he worked with then — and their determination to encourage children to never lose heart — have stayed with him all his life.

Meeting people broadens our minds. It's almost 50 years since I worked as an editor at Mr. Toda's publishing company. That job gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with many writers and illustrators.

I entered Mr. Toda's company at the age of 21 in January 1949 and was given responsibility for the children's magazine *Boy's Adventure*. In May the same year, I became editor-in-chief.

I was determined to make Mr. Toda's company and this magazine the best in all Japan. I often spoke with writers and illustrators about it being a magazine that would give hope and inspiration to children.

One time I heard that the artist Shokichiro Yamaguchi, known for his elegant, refined depiction of Japanese warriors, had burned himself severely in a household accident. I went to visit him, and he was overjoyed that a young editor had come to see him.

He talked freely about his art. "At first," he said, "I didn't even know if a samurai wore his swords on the right or the left, and my editor scolded me. I wanted my paintings to be alive, to make my figures seem as if they were really in motion — to capture that moment when one sword strikes another with a

sharp clang. And I studied night and day to achieve that."

I sensed in his words a fierce, challenging spirit.

Later, Mr. Yamaguchi contributed the illustrations to the novel *Nichiren Daishonin* by Kunizo Minato, which was serialized in *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.



By the time I was made editor-in-chief, Mr. Toda's publishing company was already facing hard times, but I was determined to surmount those difficulties by coming up with new ideas for the best children's magazine possible, a magazine both entertaining and educational. From the October 1949 issue, I renamed the magazine *Boy's Japan* and completely revamped the contents.

I made a strong effort to publish good fiction. At that time, Sohachi Yamaoka was a popular

children's writer. Although I realized what a busy man he was, I eagerly entreated him to write a novel for our magazine.

"Children are the messengers of the future," I said. "We want to give them courage and nurture their sense of justice, their sense of right and wrong."

The bearded Mr. Yamaoka smiled and nodded in agreement. "I'll do it," he said. "You've won me over with your enthusiasm."

He added: "A novel has to be entertaining, first of all. I'll do everything in my power to write just the kind of novel you want — a novel that will have readers wringing their hands in anxiety, sobbing when the hero is in trouble, and laughing out loud at the funny parts, all the while being inspired and ennobled."

And with these words, he began to write *Three Young Swordsmen*. In later years, Mr. Yamaoka also wrote *Takasugi*

Shinsaku, about one of the central figures in the movement to overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate; it was serialized in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, for 28 months.

Back in those days, another writer said to me, "You really are sincere" and wrote out an ancient Chinese saying for me: "Sincerity is the key to great achievements."



Boy's Japan was well received, and sales increased, but by this time Mr. Toda's business was in desperate straits.

Although it broke his heart, he closed his publishing company at the end of October 1949. The December issue was the last.

The children's writer Yoi-chiro Minami contributed to the final issue an installment of a novel as well as a poem entitled

"To the Young, Who Carry the Future." The poem went:

Whatever happens, let's never lose heart

If we lose heart, we're double losers

Everyone experiences setbacks or defeats sometime

It can't be helped
But we mustn't lose heart when that happens
We mustn't be fainthearted and become double losers

After that, I worked alongside Mr. Toda to lay the groundwork for a new victory.

I had been an editor for only a year, when my career was suddenly ended. But my earnest encounters with so many fine writers and artists remain golden memories that I will cherish forever.

I wonder what my young readers of those days are doing today, the young children who read with me the words "Whatever happens, let's never lose heart."

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

By **DAISAKU IKEDA**
SGI PRESIDENT

STARTING AN AGE OF HUMAN TRIUMPH

SGI President Ikeda commemorates Nov. 18, the day the Soka Gakkai was founded.

A paean to the human spirit, sung by the people, echoed high into the clear blue sky.

We have triumphed! We have achieved a firm and lasting victory!

As in a gripping drama, we have fought and striven with a passionate fighting spirit, for the sake of the great principles of truth and justice, for the smiles of our noble fellow members and comrades. We have weathered churning seas and raging storms. And we have defied and exposed each and every nefarious plot against us, one after another, so that we could see this brilliant day, this glorious dawn of the sixty-eighth anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Congratulations! Thank you!

Our resolute efforts to spread the Mystic Law across the globe, to 128 nations and regions, will go down in history for all time. The benefit that accrues to this achievement is boundless and immeasurable. And how unstintingly the Daishonin would surely praise us!

.....
We can touch another person's life — and save that life.
.....

The great Mahatma Gandhi once told his young grandson the following story: One day on a beach before dawn, a man was picking up starfish that had been washed ashore and tossing them back into the sea. He knew that when the sun rose it would dry the starfish out and kill them.

A youth walked up to the man and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to save these starfish," the man replied.

The beach was covered with starfish too many to count. The youth said in an exasperated tone, "There is no way you can save all of these starfish. It's hopeless. Surely you must know that."

But the man, picking up another starfish and tossing it back into the sea, replied in a quiet voice, "That may be true, but still, to this starfish it makes a great difference."



Courtesy of GREGORY NAKASUJI

Arun Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, travels widely, spreading his grandfather's message of nonviolence.

PLEASE SEE TRIUMPH, 9

the new **HUMAN** **REVOLUTION**

a novelized history of the soka gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 15-16

In Los Angeles, President Shin'ichi Yamamoto visits a proposed site for the first community center in the United States and interviews leadership candidates. He's surprised by how many men are candidates — many of whom had been very opposed to their wives' Buddhist practice just two years earlier, on Shin'ichi's first visit there.

Yuji Nakahara had attended a meeting with Shin'ichi Yamamoto about six months before Shin'ichi became Soka Gakkai president. After that meeting, Shin'ichi had a dialogue with a number of youth, who told him their worries and sought guidance.

He responded earnestly to each questioner, putting all his energy into encouraging them. Then he said: "Let's do gongyo together and chant for your hopes and dreams to come true. I'm going to pray earnestly for your success." At the time, Nakahara very much wished to go to the United States and study at UCLA. But there were many obstacles preventing him from doing so. He was not optimistic about the chances for realizing his ambition.

As they chanted daimoku, Nakahara gazed at Shin'ichi, who was seated in front of him praying for the members. The sight deeply moved him. To him, it was apparent that Shin'ichi was praying for the happiness of his fellow members with the intensity and earnestness that their troubles and hopes were his own.

"How fortunate we are to have such a leader," he thought. "I have to try harder."

Curiously, all the obstacles to his plans were resolved in rapid succession and about four months after meeting Shin'ichi, he got the go-ahead to study abroad. Shin'ichi heartily rejoiced with Nakahara when the young man came to visit him

and tell him the good news. "That's wonderful!" Shin'ichi exclaimed. "I'll be visiting the United States eventually, too. So I'll see you over there. Be sure to come meet me at the airport, all right?"

Shin'ichi knew well how difficult it was for members in other countries to maintain their faith practicing in virtual solitude. Therefore, he wanted to give Nakahara a concrete goal to set his sights on.

Shortly thereafter, Shin'ichi was inaugurated as third Soka Gakkai president. And Nakahara set out from Japan in late July 1960. Prior to his departure, he again paid a visit to President Yamamoto at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. As a going-away present, Shin'ichi gave him a book in which he had written in calligraphy the words "Strict Protection."

He encouraged Nakahara to try hard to get along well with people in the United States and to keep working on his own growth without losing his bearings because of his new environment.

Shin'ichi was tremendously gratified to see that Nakahara had not only kept his promise in coming to meet him at the airport again but was developing as a central figure in the U.S. youth division.

After arriving at his hotel, Shin'ichi lost no time in starting discussions on the reorganization of Los Angeles Chapter. To keep pace with the increasing membership, some organizational adjustments would have to be made and quite a few new districts formed.

Shin'ichi and his colleagues worked late into the night, carefully and seriously discussing the new leadership structure, aware that their personnel decisions would determine the future development of the Soka

Gakkai's movement in the United States. They discussed the suitability of each potential candidate from every angle, considering not only individuals' faith and personality but their situations at work and home.

The next day, Jan. 11, Shin'ichi was scheduled to interview the leadership candidates at the home of Kiyoko Kuwano, the Los Angeles Chapter women's division leader. On the way there, he stopped to inspect a building that had been proposed as the site for a Los Angeles community center. Located in East Los Angeles, it was a one-story structure of about 5,900 square feet that had formerly been a post office. After inspecting the rooms and considering the building's location and surroundings, it was decided to rent the facility and use it as a Soka Gakkai community center.

Shin'ichi said to Nagayasu Masaki, who was accompanying them: "This building should be adequate for the time being. As for a name, let's call it the Los Angeles Community Center. Eventually we may use the facility for visiting priests to conduct Gohonzon-conferrla ceremonies. I think I want to set up a *Seikyo Shimbun* branch here, too."

He then turned to Nakahara: "If we have a community center, we'll need someone to look after the facility. Yuji, how would you feel about living here? I think that we could provide some kind of stipend to you as the caretaker."

Shin'ichi was concerned about how Nakahara was getting by, aware that as a foreign student his means were limited. Living at the center would help him conserve the scant resources that were available to him.

"I would very much welcome the opportunity," Nakahara replied in a spirited voice.

When Shin'ichi arrived at the Kuwano home a short time later, there were already about 30 people gathered. He was struck that more than half of the prospective district leaders to be interviewed were men. Some two years earlier when the Los Angeles Chapter was formed and six districts established, every one of the new districts had been headed by a Japanese woman.

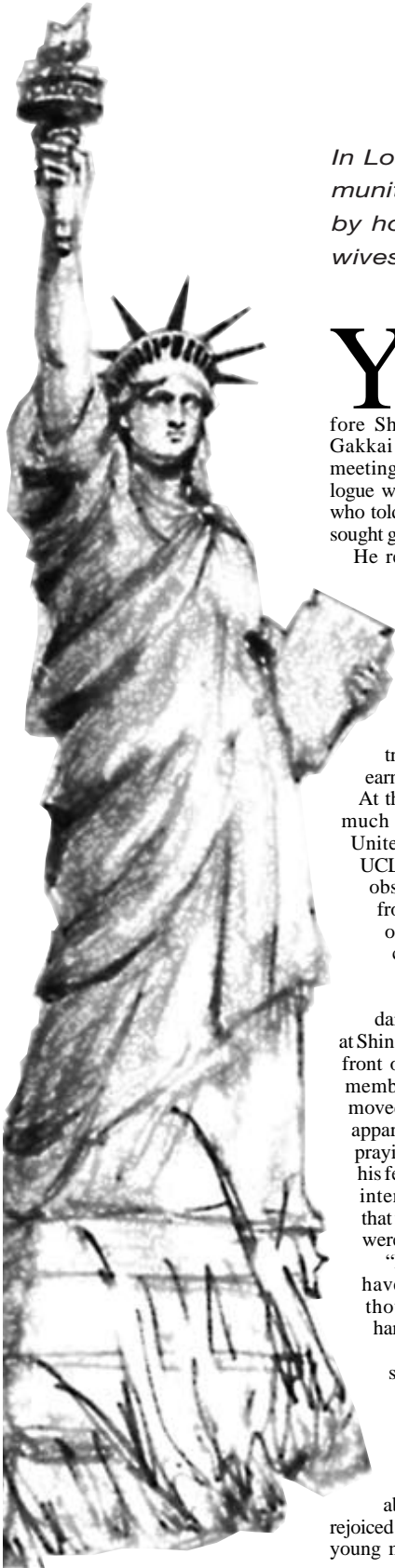
Almost none of the men had been practicing at that time. On the contrary, they had by and large looked negatively upon the Soka Gakkai.

Tetsuya Haga, who was proposed to become the leader of Saint Louis District, was a case in point. After the inaugural meeting of Los Angeles Chapter, Shin'ichi had been composing some words of encouragement responding to a request from Haga's wife, Sayuri — then someone had shouted impatiently from the meeting place entrance: "What's taking so long? Let's go already!"

Shin'ichi looked in the direction of the voice, and there stood Tetsuya Haga. Sayuri Haga looked apologetically at Shin'ichi. He wrote in calligraphy, "I pray that you will construct a home of true happiness and peace" and addressed it to Sayuri and her husband.

To be continued

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



DISCUSSIONS ON YOUTH, FROM PAGE 1

Ikeda: Even if you are busy and don't always have time for gongyo, it's important that you don't give up the practice of gongyo altogether. If you do, the flame of your faith will go out. Please don't cast aside your gongyo.

Prayer fulfills us spiritually and heightens our spiritual conviction, so it is a definite plus for all of us.

Kimura: When we are pressed for time, which should we give priority to, gongyo or daimoku?

Ikeda: Those who don't have time for gongyo or find it difficult to do gongyo should chant daimoku. To use the allegory of a meal, daimoku can be likened to the main course and gongyo to the side dishes.

Of course, having both is best. But daimoku comes first. Please chant — even it's just one daimoku. Nichiren Daishonin states that even a single daimoku contains infinite benefit.

And if you can do at least a short gongyo [A and C gongyo] along with some daimoku, then you will feel even greater satisfaction.

Of course, it goes without saying that doing a full morning and evening gongyo is ideal.

Chanting helps you to give your 100 percent.

Ueda: Some members wonder if they shouldn't devote any extra time they might have to studying instead of chanting.

Ikeda: Those who are busy studying and feel that they don't have time to do gongyo should give priority to their studies and then chant daimoku when they have some spare time.

You're in charge of your daimoku. So you're free to make your own decisions about how and when you make time to chant.

Studying is one of the duties of a high school student. A student who studies hard and is active in extracurricular school activities may not have much spare time. That's why making time to chant despite a busy schedule is a mark of real dedication.

When you chant, you create the cause for your success. Daimoku is for your benefit. It strengthens your life force and sharpens your mind. It enables you to tap the vital inner strength to give full play to your talents and abilities.

If you have the ability to score 100 percent on an exam, chanting will give you the life force to actually put 100 percent into it, rather than the 70 or 80 percent that might usually be your best effort.

Ueda: I guess it's hoping too much to get 100 percent on an exam if you only put 50 percent into taking it!

Ikeda: Yes, it's misguided to think that simply chanting without making any serious attempt to study will improve your grades. The realization of your prayers begins with making concrete efforts toward their fulfillment.

If you really believe that things will turn out the way that you have prayed — as long as you just continue all your efforts — then your mind is filled with the hope, optimism and confidence that all prayers will definitely be answered. At the same time, by chanting daimoku, you will see, as clearly as the morning sun illuminates the earth, what you must do to succeed in your studies and your life. Your daimoku will give you the energy to keep trying to achieve your goals.

Faith and prayer are the engines that fuel our efforts — we have to make our own efforts. Please never forget that.

Kimura: That's clear. Just chanting with an unopened encyclopedia at our side isn't going to make us any smarter, no matter how earnest our prayers!

With appreciation, our prayers are answered quicker.

Ikeda: You can't expect to get paid a salary unless you work. Similarly, our prayers are answered only to the extent that we exert ourselves to realize the Buddha's wish for the happiness of all humanity. The Gohonzon has no obligation to answer our prayers. It hasn't asked us to chant to it.

We request the privilege of praying to the Gohonzon. If we have such a sense of gratitude and appreciation, our prayers will be answered more quickly.

Ueda: A member asks a related question: "Why are some prayers unfulfilled? Do those unrealized prayers also contribute to our personal growth?"

Ikeda: There are times when our prayers seem to take ages to be fulfilled, or when they remained unrealized despite our most impassioned daimoku. But the important thing to remember is to keep chanting until they *are* answered.

Our continued chanting gives us the chance to take a good hard look at ourselves, leading to positive changes in our daily lives. It's like work — you get a job and go to work, but you don't get paid the first day. Or it's like gardening — you plant a sapling, and water it every day, but it still takes a long time for it to grow into a tall tree.

Kimura: There's an old Japanese saying about time and patience: "Peaches and chestnuts take three years to bear fruit, and persimmons take eight."

Inconspicuous benefits matter most.

Ikeda: The benefit that we receive as a result of chanting to the Gohonzon

is comprised of both conspicuous and inconspicuous benefit. Conspicuous benefit refers to such instances where we are clearly protected in times of trouble and find a speedy solution to a problem we're facing. Inconspicuous benefits, meanwhile, are like the sapling growing into the mighty tree. We accumulate good fortune little by little and this manifests itself gradually over time.

In life, it is the inconspicuous benefits that matter most. Conspicuous benefits may help in a pinch, but what really counts is coming out on top in the long run.

Ueda: So it can take ages for inconspicuous benefit to manifest in a visible, concrete form, can't it?

Ikeda: Yes. But with regular watering each day, a sapling steadily grows into a solid, sturdy tree. With diligent application every day, you can progress gradually in your studies. All good things are the result of continuous, incremental efforts.

Kimura: Buddhism is the law of life, so all its teachings accord with reason and universal principles, don't they?

Ikeda: Yes. Just because we've prayed for something doesn't mean that we'll automatically get it. But even if our prayers are not immediately answered, if we keep chanting every day, we are creating the causes for a momentous positive future change. Without exception, you will look back and say to yourself that things worked out for the best.

Kimura: That's why it is so important to keep chanting every day, isn't it?

Ikeda: Many factors are at work when it comes to our prayers being realized. But by chanting sincerely with those prayers at heart, we can correct our life's orbit and move in a more positive direction.

Our prayers have a far-reaching impact on our lives. Though you may chant to do well in your studies, the effect of your prayers will extend much further, rippling across the whole spectrum of your life.

Photos by KATHI OSMONSON



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When all is said and done, to want to sit in front of the Gohonzon and chant is very important. It is an expression of one's determination to improve oneself. That spirit is important. That spirit is proof of our humanity, an expression of our noble spirit to accomplish something with our lives.

Gongyo and daimoku should- n't be too fast — or too slow.

Kimura: What is the right speed for gongyo and daimoku?

Ikeda: Our chanting should not be too fast nor too slow. It should also not be too loud nor too soft. And it should have a good, vigorous rhythm.

The speed of gongyo also depends on such things as a person's age or the time and place. Don't worry too much about what's the right speed. Just do gongyo in the way that seems most natural and comfortable to you. One of my seniors once said that we should do gongyo with the rhythm of a galloping horse.

Look at the part of the Gohonzon that you feel most comfortable looking at.

Ueda: One member says: "When I was little, I was told that we should look at the character myo on the Gohonzon when we chant. Why is that?"

Ikeda: Looking at the Gohonzon is like looking at the universe — like having a vast, commanding view of its entirety. The Gohonzon is a representation of the driving force and essence of the universe. Therefore, whatever part we look at, we're looking at the entire universe. It doesn't really matter where we fix our gaze.

Still, it is easier to chant if we focus on the center. I have also been told in the past by my seniors that *myo* represents the human head, and that I should look at it when I chant.

In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin says with regard to the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo, "Our head is myo, our neck is ho, our chest is ren, our belly is ge, and our legs are kyo" (Gosho Zenshu, p. 716).

Just look at the part of the Gohonzon that you feel most comfortable focusing on. The Daishonin merely states that we should sit up straight; he doesn't tell us where we should fix our gaze when we chant. In his great compassion, the Daishonin permitted us the freedom to chant in the way best suited to us.

The Daishonin, with his immense understanding and insight, took into account each individual's autonomy, personality and circumstances, encouraging each to approach faith with flexibility and freedom. It was the self-serving priests of later generations who, intent on shoring up authority, forced rituals and practices not described in the Daishonin's writings or the sutra on believers.

We are not chanting to a piece of paper.

Kimura: What about people who say that they don't want to pray to a piece of printed paper, arguing that it couldn't possibly have the power to solve their problems?

Ikeda: Our Gohonzon may be printed on paper, but it retains its inherent power. A \$10 bill is printed, as are graduation certificates and the letters of appointment for cabinet ministers. All important documents are printed, and they all have their respective powers.

The paper is physical matter, but the words written on it are the Daishonin's spirit and essence. The original Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, the Daishonin, inscribed his life in ink on the Gohonzon.

"I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi (black Chinese ink), so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart" (MW-1, 120).

The principle of the oneness of body and mind teaches that the physical and spiritual are one. Life is found in their unity; the Gohonzon embodies the life of the Buddha. When we chant to the Gohonzon, we are not chanting to a piece of paper.

Textbooks are also printed paper, but by reading the words on that paper we acquire knowledge, make new discoveries and encounter new ideas.

Or let's take another example: Suppose that you come across a sign with the two words *Tokyo Station*. Those two words contain all the many different functions of the station, including that its the starting point of the bullet train and the gateway to the city of Tokyo. Of course, Tokyo Station would exist without the sign, without the words, and its many functions would also still exist. But the sign and the words help people get to Tokyo Station easily.

Kimura: The characters on the Gohonzon are a means by which we can communicate with the universe, aren't they?

Ikeda: Another example: A cellular phone is of no use without base stations that transmit the radio waves from one point to another. In the same way, the Gohonzon is a base station from which we can communicate with the universe.

Chant with the resolve that you will make your prayer a reality.

Ikeda: As I mentioned earlier, it is important that our prayers be specific and concrete. Being vague and unfocused when you chant is like shooting an arrow without looking at the target.

When you chant, it should be with a strong, passionate resolve to make your prayer a reality. To have the attitude "If I chant, everything will be all right" is just wishful thinking. Earnest prayer — prayer infused with one's whole heart and being — cannot fail to be communicated to the Gohonzon.

Another thing to remember is that, as the focus of your prayers expands to include not just your wishes but the happiness of your friends, your family, your classmates, your society and humanity as a whole, you will expand your horizons and your breadth as a human being.

When I became Soka Gakkai president at 32, my first two prayers were for Japan to have a good harvest, so that there would be no hunger, and for there to be no major earthquakes. On another occasion, I prayed that I alone would bear the brunt of any major persecution we suffered for kosen-rufu. My prayers were answered when I was arrested by the authorities on trumped-up charges in the 1957 Osaka Incident.

Kimura: Your prayers are of such a noble dimension!

Your prayers reflect your state of life.

Ikeda: There's no need for anyone to imitate me. Prayer is not such a simple thing as that.

That said, it's important to remember that your prayers always reflect your state of life. In that respect, prayer is a solemn means to raise your life-condition. And to get exactly the results that you're praying for, it is crucial to make determined, single-minded efforts toward that goal. That is the true path of manifesting faith in daily life.

Those of you who proceed along this path day after day, year after year, will without fail develop — just like saplings into mighty trees — becoming people of outstanding strength and character.

The conclusion 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 one appeared in last week's issue.



OSMONSON

By CHEUK LAU
PHILADELPHIA

When I was 16, I moved to the United States from Hong Kong, where I was born. As soon as I finished high school in 1972, I was drafted into the U.S. Army. Then, in 1973, while stationed in Korea, I married. But from the beginning, our marriage was full of problems.

Oki, my wife, was chronically ill, suffering from epilepsy and severe depression. I never knew from one moment to the next what would happen with my wife's behavior. The only thing that I could count on was that there would be a fight. Indeed, fighting became a daily routine.

Back in the States, we sought help from numerous physicians and faithfully attended church services, but our problems continued — and became worse.

In 1979, I was reassigned once again to Korea. Because of my duty requirement, I could not provide my wife with the attention that she needed. On several occasions, she attempted to end her life. One time, she jumped out of a second-floor window and fractured her back.

Listening to the advice of a Korean fortuneteller, we came to believe that our problems were caused by evil spirits living in our home. So we decided to move to a new apartment. The first night in that apartment, I heard noises coming from next door that sounded like a group of people chanting. I told my wife to quickly close the windows, because it was bad luck to listen in on a funeral. Asians, I knew, usually do some kind of chanting at funerals.

But when my wife met the neighbor the next day, she learned that the chanting was actually a Buddhist meeting. She was introduced to the practice.

At the time, I was disappointed about my life and was not ready to accept any new religion. I threatened my wife that I would divorce her if she continued to practice. Nevertheless, my wife continued to chant secretly while I was at work. After several months, I began to feel a warmth and love that I had never experienced before at home. And my wife's physical and mental condition seemed to improve miraculously. Then, I learned from my wife that she had been practicing all along. At that moment, I no longer objected to her practice; I saw it actually working.

After seven years of mar-



Cheuk Lau's wife and children supported his dream to become a pharmacist.

EXPERIENCE

Attaining the Happiness He Wants

When he retired from the military, Cheuk Lau decided to start a new career as a pharmacist. Getting his pharmacy degree — with no previous science background — became the challenge of a lifetime. He and his family had to rely completely on their faith in the Gohonzon.

riage, my wife became pregnant with our first daughter, Lillian. My wife's condition, meanwhile, continued to improve. But though I was touched by the power of the Gohonzon, I still would not practice myself.

In 1980, after returning to Fort Dix, N.J., my wife received the Gohonzon. At first, I drove my wife to meetings and simply waited outside. But at the suggestion of a member, I started to participate from the back of the room. It took a few more months, but eventually I could no longer deny the power of the Gohonzon, and I started to practice.

By this time, I was doing Gongyo every day and often holding meetings in my house. We had two more children, Vivian and Kenneth. Eventually, we moved to Germany, practicing there for three years. I returned to the United States with my family, retiring from the military in 1992 after 20 years of service and buying a home in Glassboro, N.J.

Following my retirement, I started working as a security guard at a pharmaceutical com-

pany. I was also applying for jobs at the post office and in the state prison system. But my real goal was to become a pharmacist, primarily because of my parents' and my wife's health conditions, and because it was a career path chosen by three of my brothers and sisters. I felt becoming a pharmacist would place me in a position to help people and to relieve people's suffering from illness. At the same time, it would improve my financial prospects.

Even though I was offered jobs at both the post office and the New Jersey State Correctional Facility, I would not accept their offers. I kept thinking I had to pursue my dream in life and personally show actual proof for kosen-rufu.

SGI President Ikeda once quoted the passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writings "Since the Law is supreme, the Person is worthy of respect" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 264) and said, "In light of this passage, I want our fellow members to become people of outstanding caliber both in the SGI and in society at large, giving full play to their unique char-

acteristics and qualities."

With this in mind, I determined to become the best person that my potential would allow and not let any obstacles stop me from attaining that goal. So I informed my family of my decision to become a pharmacist. From that moment on, I determined to win, no matter what.

After submitting several applications to colleges, though, I learned that I was far from qualified to enter pharmacy school. I had only an associate degree in liberal arts without any science background. Needless to say, I was discouraged and felt my dream to start pharmacy school in September 1993 was impossible. My wife, however, encouraged me not to give up.

My experience in practice had given me the power and endurance to move forward. The only school that would even talk to me was a pharmacy school in New York, though the admissions people thought I was crazy to apply. In order to meet the minimum requirements for acceptance, I would have to consolidate four long semesters worth of ad-

vanced science and math courses into one year.

I began working full-time at a pharmaceutical company on the third shift and took the maximum amount of courses allowed during the day. I also chanted to find time to attend Buddhist activities. My schedule was as follows: I worked, went to school, slept in the car or at the library and attended meetings and studied Buddhism in my spare time.

The school I really wanted to attend, however, was the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, one of the best in the nation. But people there told me that my qualifications weren't sufficient to gain admission, and that I would need something of a miracle to get accepted. Nevertheless, I took my desire to the Gohonzon and renewed my determination. In May 1993, I received a letter from the school informing me that my chance of being accepted was slim. But they didn't say no. I repeatedly reminded myself not to give up.

That night, when I went to work and told my boss about my situation, he offered to introduce me to a local pharmacy owner who, after a brief interview, asked me to work in his pharmacy several hours a week. I agreed. Supporting me, as always, my wife kept on chanting. After two weeks on my new job, I was introduced to the dean of Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, who was coincidentally picking up his medications at the pharmacy. After that meeting, the pharmacist helped me compose a letter to send to the school, asking for an exception to its admission policy for transfer students.

As September enrollment grew closer, I became more anxious. My wife and I kept chanting. The New York university finally notified me that I had been accepted, but that I had to register immediately. And just as I was leaving for New York, my phone rang. It was the admissions officer from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, who offered me a position in the third-year class of the pharmacy program. He asked if I were still interested. I yelled: "Yes, yes! I'll be right there with my deposit."

I was so overjoyed that I embraced my wife and children, and I was dancing all over the house. I knew that this was the direct result of my Buddhist

PLEASE SEE EXPERIENCE, NEXT PAGE

EXPERIENCE, FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

practice and my wife's steady chanting.

Of course, this wasn't the end of my troubles. During the first month of school, I failed two tests and had to give up my job and devote all my time to school. Since the GI bill alone was not sufficient to cover the expenses, my savings were depleted to pay tuition.

I was extremely discouraged, but my wife continued to encourage me not to worry. Together, we kept chanting for me to pass my tests, find enough money to get by and be happy. I was so thankful to my wife for giving me encouragement when I needed it the most. I would not have made it without her help.

At first, I applied for veteran disability benefits but was denied them. Then, suddenly, the policy was changed and I received full veteran financial aid to cover my college expenses. For the next two years of pharmacy school, my family and I chanted for my success, and I passed all my tests without any major difficulties.

During this time, my parents suffered from ill health and I had to travel back and forth to New York to care for them. Eventually, my father died. Though I regretted that I could not convince him to chant, I

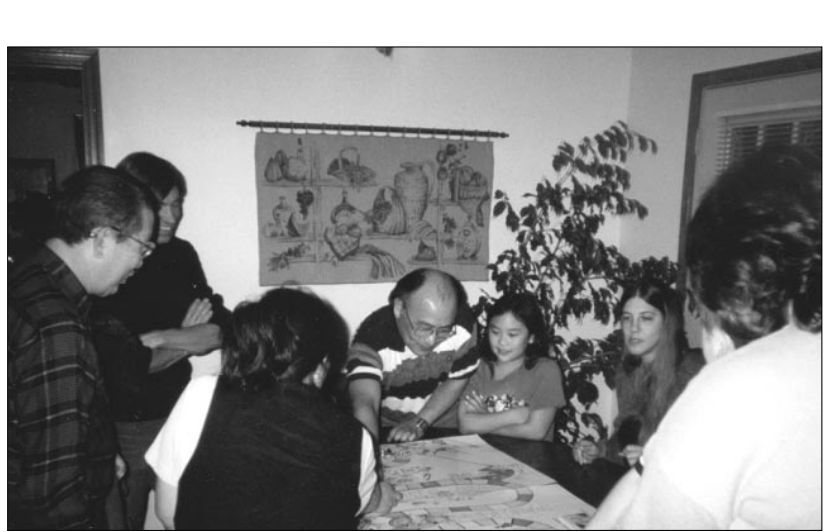
knew in my heart that he could see the power of my practice to the Gohonzon. My mother has since begun to practice this Buddhism.

In May 1995, I was appointed as the district leader of Garden State District. I was concerned about having enough time to complete my schooling and fulfill all of my responsibilities, but I chanted to attend school through the summer, so that I could graduate before June 1996.

In December 1995, I graduated from Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and joined Rite Aid Pharmacy as a pharmacist. Since then, I have been promoted to pharmacy manager at a Rite Aid store only 10 minutes from home.

After 17 years of practice, I realize that anything is possible with the Gohonzon. I will always keep in mind some guidance given by President Ikeda during a meeting in Dallas: "Everybody is entitled to happiness, and we all possess the same potential to become happy. Through chanting abundant daimoku to the Gohonzon and taking action, you can attain that happiness."

I am glad to be an SGI member and will continue to chant wholeheartedly for the happiness of my family, my members and to show actual proof in society. **WTT**



Nov. 18 COMMEMORATIVE DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Eagle Peak District, Nashville, Tenn.

"Let's do something different for this year's general meeting," suggested Eagle Peak District Leader Meredith Green. "How about a game?" I ventured. And so Journey to Eagle Peak, a board game of indescribable delights, was born. The game uses dice and two sets of cards. Coming up with the rules of play and what to put on each card was a group effort. The game takes you from the Swamp of Suffering through the Forest of Obstacles and the Desert of Doubt. Finally, you reach the River of Dreams and Flowers of Faith. At the top, there's Eagle Peak, illuminated by the Light of Wisdom. The game was a great success. Our guest, Tom Geckle, had a ball. And Ken Tanaka, our area leader, exclaimed, "Every district should have one of these games!" Our winner, Nagisa Konuma, 9 years old, said: "I know why I won this. It's because I chanted."

—ESSRA MOHAWK

TRIUMPH, FROM PAGE 4

Mahatma Gandhi used this story to teach his grandson that, if we can touch another person's life and save that life, we can make a tremendous difference by that very action.



The grandson to whom Gandhi told the story of the starfish is Arun Gandhi, who with his wife, Sunanda, founded the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, based in the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi have traveled all around the United States conducting surveys concerning racial discrimination and spreading the message of nonviolence. Just recently, they visited the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools in Japan and gave a lecture to the students. They also attended the World Peace Youth Culture Festival in Nagoya [on November 14]. The couple have the highest praise and appreciation for the SGI and our activities around the world.

.....
It is a momentous spiritual struggle to purge feelings of powerlessness and resignation that assign change to the realm of the impossible.
.....

The history of our movement to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism is a history of reaching out to others and cherishing the life of each individual. The Gakkai is the only organization that is carrying out the spirit of that wonderful story of the starfish. Our movement focuses on the individual. It is a process of heart-to-heart communication where we share each other's problems, inspire each other in our struggles, and call forth the courage, wisdom and strength to survive all obstacles.

It is also a vigorous nonviolent struggle against external forces that threaten human dignity, such as violence and political and economic oppression, and an effort to build an age of human triumph. Such an effort

demands an enormous amount of hard work and patience, however. In a sense, it is a momentous spiritual struggle to purge feelings of powerlessness and resignation that assign change to the realm of the impossible.

Yet our first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as well as our second president Josei Toda set out fearlessly on that long, long journey.



Mr. Makiguchi once visited a famous scholar who was a good friend. At first, as they each spoke about their work, the conversation was quite warm and pleasant, but when Mr. Makiguchi began to talk about the Lotus Sutra and the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, the scholar suddenly stood up and shouted: "Get out! Get out!" He pushed Mr. Makiguchi out the front door and slammed it shut behind him. Mr. Makiguchi said, regret in his voice: "This is how Japan's top intellectuals behave. It's symptomatic of the arrogance of people of the two vehicles [that is, Learning and Realization]."

Mr. Makiguchi never intended to use the authority or influence of intellectual or political leaders to spread the Daishonin's teachings. In his encounter with the scholar, his only intent was to communicate to a friend what he knew was the true way of human existence based on the true teaching of Buddhism. Mr. Makiguchi's constant struggle was to carry that message to those who were suffering, to all humanity, and to the very depths of each individual's life — and that is the proud tradition of the Soka Gakkai.

.....
For the sake of our century, let us set forth again on the journey of kosen-rufu.
.....

Inheriting this spirit from Mr. Makiguchi, we have ushered in the dawn of an age of the victory of the people. Who has accomplished this enormous feat?

It is you — all of you — who have chanted and prayed for the happiness of your friends day and night, and worked hard to

teach them about Buddhism and introduce them to the practice.

It is you, the inexpressibly noble members of our organization, who have continued to energetically promote the Soka Gakkai's organ publications and proclaim the truth and justice of our movement.

It is you, who have upheld the spirit of the Buddha, bravely encouraging your fellow members day after day out of selfless concern for their growth and development, while enduring the abuse and criticism of thoughtless and malicious individuals.

It is you, who, as foremost champions of humanism and peace, have risen to realize these goals in every region, proudly showing the world the greatness of the SGI through your own dauntless examples.

With the deepest respect and appreciation, I crown each and every one of you who has carried out the compassionate actions of the Buddha a monarch of the people. I shake your hand firmly and declare: "Let us go forth! For the sake of our century, let us set forth again on the journey of kosen-rufu." **WTT**

Chairman of the World

EDITORIAL

What is a capable person, a capable leader, anyhow?

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

I was recently reading E.B. White's *Stuart Little* to my daughter. There's a scene where the philosopher-mouse Stuart Little becomes a substitute teacher and tells his elementary school students that someday he plans to be Chairman of the World (a title that he's made up).

But one little girl tells him that he's too small to ever be Chairman of the World.

He shoots back: "Size has nothing to do with it. It's temperament and ability that count. The Chairman has to have abil-

ity and he must know what's important. How many of you know what's important?"

That's an important question, I thought — we should always be asking ourselves what's most important in life, and what's most important in our Buddhist practice. If Nichiren Daishonin were asked "What's most important?" he would probably answer, "Faith alone is what really matters" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246). Or that "what matters is one's heart" (MW-5, 289).

So, if ability can be called knowing what's important, and if what's most important is our faith, our hearts, then all of us already have ability; we're already capable. We know that we have faith. And we definitely have hearts.

In *The New Human Revolution*, volume 1, when one of the leaders accompanying Shin'ichi

Yamamoto to America says that there are no capable people in a new district just formed in San Francisco, Shin'ichi objects: "I completely disagree. They are all capable people. They will begin to shine from here on. If they persevere with pure-hearted faith, their names will all go down in the annals of kosen-rufu as pioneers. I'm looking to their future with high hopes."

It's important to remember that when we talk in the SGI of becoming capable people, capable leaders, etc., although developing our various talents may be part of this, what's most important is developing our faith. And since all of us can do this, since all of us are doing this, we're all capable.

If we "persevere with pure-hearted faith," we're sure always to keep becoming more capable, deepening our faith all the time.

In this *World Tribune's* "Discussions on Youth," President Ikeda emphasizes the importance of persevering this way, saying that we should keep praying for our goals for as long as it takes for all of them to be achieved (see p. 6). As long as we continue like this, we need never consider ourselves incapable.

To continue is to be capable.

So why not have confidence in our determination to win and consider ourselves capable now? Not in an arrogant sense, of course — we all have a lot of growing still to do — but because we do know what's important: faith. We do know what's important: the heart. We just have to keep reminding ourselves of what we already know as we continue.

This qualifies each of us to be Chairman of the World. ☸

Changes in Publications Staff

As we enter a new year, we have once again taken steps to strengthen the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism* — some you have already seen, others that will unfold in the coming months. In concert with our continuous efforts to stay fresh, we are also pleased to announce a reorganization of the Publications Center.

Greg Martin, an SGI-USA Study Department senior advisor and former head of the Organization Department, has assumed the duties of assistant to the publisher. Working closely with him is Ted Morino, also Study Department senior advisor, who remains as executive editor of the publications.

Dave McNeill leaves his two-year post as managing editor of the *World Tribune*, whose staff he joined 10 years ago. He now heads up the Books Section, which will be generating much needed books and pamphlets, including materials that will teach children about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Assisting him in Books is Lisa Kirk, who spent eight years on the *World Tribune* staff, the last two as assistant managing editor.

Margie Hall, a vice Study Department leader, returns to the *World Tribune* after a two-year stint as managing editor of *Living Buddhism*. She assumes her new responsibilities as the managing editor of the *World Tribune*, bringing with her more than two decades of previous experience with the newspaper.

Jeff Kriger, staff translator for 15 years and a vice Study Department leader, was formerly the Books Section manager; he takes over as the managing editor of *Living Buddhism*. Assisting him is *Living Buddhism's* assistant managing editor, Dave Baldschun. ☸

SGI-USA Participates in AAR Conference

Photo by DEBORAH MULLIS



SGI-USA Public Relations staff member Nancy Simms converses with Dr. Aftab Kazi of Johns Hopkins University, who is a visiting scholar from Leipzig University in Germany.

SGI-USA had a booth at the annual American Academy of Religion conference in Orlando, Fla., Nov. 20–24. Hundreds of scholars got updated information on SGI-USA and were introduced to various books authored by SGI President Ikeda. AAR is the largest national gathering of religion scholars — many of whom teach religion at the university level — with more than 7,000 attending this year. By participating in AAR, SGI-USA is becoming an information resource for religion scholars. SGI-USA also participated in a Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies meeting in Orlando, Nov. 19. This is an organization of Buddhist and Christian religion scholars interested in dialogue and engagement. SGI-USA has been involved with it the last few years. A presentation on daily Buddhist practice in the SGI was made during this meeting.

— ROB EPPSTEINER

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

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Speak English

Things sure have changed a lot in our organization in recent years. One thing that hasn't really changed yet is that we, as members, often continue to include Japanese words in what are otherwise English sentences. I'm talking about *kosen-rufu*, *daimoku*, *shakubuku*, *Sensei*, *toso*, *toban*, *kofu*, *gokuyo*. I occasionally even hear *han!* While some words convey very precise meanings for which it is difficult to find accurate English equivalents, there is a larger issue at hand: GUESTS! Guests are frequently present. When a speaker is using Japanese words, the guests are obviously unable to comprehend our speeches.

One scenario then involves a member sitting next to a guest providing a simultaneous translation. This is not a foolproof solution because while the member is politely translating the previous sentence into the guest's ear, they both are missing the speaker's next sentence. We could simply take notes, and wait until after the meeting to give the guests a full translation, but that would get pretty complicated. Why not just agree to make an effort to break the habit of using Japanese words?

The *World Tribune* long ago stopped using these words, and we ought to follow its lead. For example, the translation of SGI President Ikeda's essay on page 5 of the Nov. 20 edition uses the phrase propagation activities instead of *shakubuku*.

Why should a guest have to memorize a list of Japanese words just to understand us, especially many of us who learned English as a first language! If a meeting is being conducted in English, or any other language, for that matter, then the words spoken at that meeting ought to be in the language of that meeting.

I appreciate the Japanese pioneers who moved to America and taught us these words, and concepts. As immigrants, it was natural to use these Japanese words. But as Americans, as members of an organization seeking to harmonize with the rest of American society, continuing to use these words in our public speeches at meetings is creating unnecessary obstacles. Old habits die hard, but this is one that we've GOT to break! What's so bad about saying "world peace prayer

meeting," "reception," "contribution," "chanting," "chanting session," etc.?

— CESARE CIVETTA,
Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Comparative Religion

In a recent installment of *The New Human Revolution* (Nov. 20), leaders question the appropriateness of asking, "Why is Nembutsu in error?" on the U.S. study exam. Now that 35 years have passed, maybe we should take another look at that question in the context of other sects of Buddhism that are gaining in popularity in the United States.

Non-member acquaintances and friends frequently ask me questions about Zen, Tibetan Buddhism, mindfulness meditation, etc. I just don't know enough about those practices to make an informed comparison to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I appreciate all the material that's been provided about why Nichiren Shoshu is in error. I'm hoping some similar study material about other American Buddhist sects can be made available to help members address non-members' questions.

— RITA WILLOUGHBY,
Seattle

Democracy?

As much as I support the various large events the SGI puts on and that I read about in the *World Tribune*, such as the children's rights exhibit and the Earth Charter, I do wonder how these events are decided upon. For example, could any one of us say: "I'm thinking about doing XYZ, anyone wanna join me?" If carried out, should such an activity be called "an SGI activity" or, instead, simply mention that it was "carried out by some SGI Buddhists"? It seems that there is a difference.

Relatedly, I wonder how the SGI can encourage members to participate in democracy, even discussing political issues with fellow members, perhaps forming "FOR" and "AGAINST" groups on an issue, and still, as opinions differ, continue together on our Buddhist path.

Ideally the discussion participants would be able to place their Buddhist practice above the ballot results; the victory would

be that we had explored an issue as fellow Buddhists.

The First Amendment to the Constitution states: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." That's all! Clearly government is not to get involved in religion. But often the phrase "separation of church and state" is taken to mean that citizens should not bring their religious views and values into the public discussion. Or clergy should not speak of political matters as if politics, our self-governance as a community, were somehow disconnected from people and their values and those who would lead them in values! What this has done is to leave the political system largely void of values except for individualistic materialism.

The principle here is that people must speak in the political process and they must speak based on something: their life experience and values. Thus, attention to values is crucial to a democracy. And for communities of values to look at political deci-

sions and proposals in light of their values would seem to be only logical.

A problem that we as a society face is the ability to voice our thoughts, listen and respond, think and discuss and then make proposals and vote. In a democracy a variety of views is to be expected. Even within the SGI, there will be differences of opinion. Rather than squashing all discussion because the SGI can't come to a unanimous position, we need to encourage the discussion and let voting decide. Yet there is no need for us as Buddhists to all come to the same conclusion, and there is no shame in being in the minority on an issue....

— DAN DEWEY,
Cambridge, Mass.

About Posture

The editor's reply to Susan Masotti (Nov. 27 issue) starts: "Crossing your legs while chanting is not a big issue. In general, when we chant we should be alert and focused on the Gohonzon, and our posture should reflect this."

It is interesting to note that psychotherapists have linked posture to self-esteem and one's outlook on life. My understanding of this, through my experiences in therapy, is that poor posture can sometimes be the manifestation of low self-esteem, or it can signal a life-condition burdened (as in heavy burden) with unwanted responsibilities, pessimism, doubts and lack of self-confidence. So in another sense, it's like the old chicken/egg debate. Your posture can improve when your life-condition is optimistic and strong; or, when you can't see what it is you're battling, you can sometimes improve your life-condition by working on your posture.

I've found that maintaining the best possible posture during gongyo is the physical cause I can make when my focus is slipping.

— NATALIE BLISS,
Philadelphia

Correction: In our Nov. 27 issue, one of the captions for "Artober Fest in Seattle," page 12, incorrectly says that *La Boheme* was written by Verdi. *La Boheme* is actually a Puccini opera. We apologize for the mistake.

SGI-USA General Director Zaitzu Named to Third Term

Fred M. Zaitzu was nominated to a third, three-year term as SGI-USA General Director when the SGI-USA Council met Dec. 5. His new term, which the SGI approved, will end on Nov. 18, 2001. He was first appointed SGI-USA General Director on Nov. 22, 1992.

Mr. Zaitzu joined the Soka Gakkai in Japan on March 16, 1962, and participated in youth activities while attending Kanagawa University. He was hired by the Soka Gakkai in 1964, the year he graduated from college, and began working in public relations. He became a reporter for the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, in 1967 and came to the United States for the first time in 1971 to report on the Seattle Convention. He moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1973; from 1979 to 1992 they lived in Seattle, then returned to Los Angeles.

At the recent Council meeting, Mr. Zaitzu said: "My determination is to make the foundation of kosen-rufu rock solid in the coming three years and entrust everything for kosen-rufu to the



younger, new generation. Let's exert ourselves with the spirit of unity in our propagation efforts as we strive to expand the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout this great land of America."

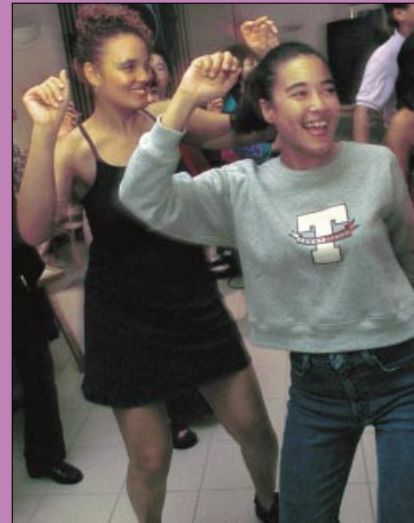


PHOTO PERSPECTIVE — JONATHAN WILSON, PHILADELPHIA

Behind the Scenes

I attended the first youth support groups conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center last month as a *World Tribune* photographer. I devoted my youth to kosen-rufu in the support groups in another era. Now, I saw more facial hair, a sprinkling of ear pierces and an occasional crop of hair-streak with primary colors. But what had not changed since my cherished behind-the-scenes days was the youth division members' incredible grasp of SGI President Ikeda's heart. If anything, their understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and President Ikeda's spirit seems to have surpassed that of my generation. Since 1990, President Ikeda has challenged us to create a new SGI organization, an organization that embodies strictness toward the Law and tolerance toward the membership — and is a whole lot of fun to be in. We SGI "elders" have struggled mightily with this task. What was clear to me from this conference was that the youth division members there had figured it out!



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Photo by DIXON HAMBY



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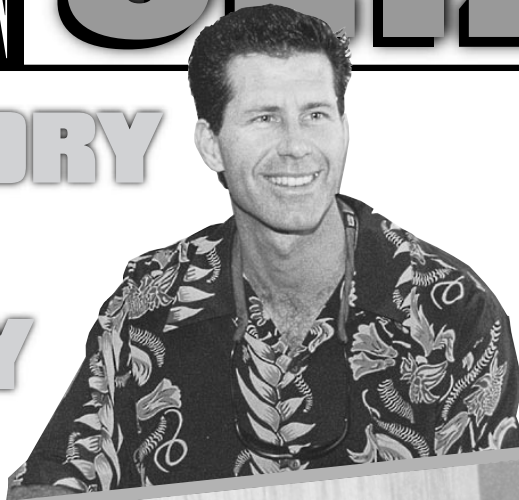
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VICTORY
IS
EVERY
DAY!



By ARTHUR DICKEY
Culver City, Calif.

My challenge is to win every day, thus feeling fulfilled and happy. Over the past 10 years since I started my Buddhist practice, I have done activities like Music Corps, Gajokai, Soka Group and motor pool. Yet, reflecting on the past, my consistency with my young men's division members would be strong but then slacken after a big activity. So would my chanting.

told that in 30 days, I could change anything I wanted to, and that the only reason I couldn't change it would be me. It was up to me, only me. That was what fueled me to fight like I had never fought before.

I set goals to do home visits and have all five YMD members in my district present at the general meeting — and two new YMD members. During this time, a grandmother in one of our district member's families died, and many people in our district went to chant with the family. We all became closer. Through many struggles and a lot of chanting, we had a successful meeting. All seven YMD members attended. The youth division read part of SGI President Ikeda's poem "The Sun of Jiyu Over a New Land" accompanied on guitar by Anthony, a YMD member of two months. What a great victory!

Before our Nov. 18 commemorative meeting for West District, I had failed my final at school and failed in other areas in my life that had to change once and for all. I went to receive guidance from a senior leader. I was

Now, how can I create this victory every month? By winning every day. P.S. Just two days before the district meeting, I took my anatomy final again — and got an "A." ♪



We Must Win!

By ED FEASEL
SGI-USA Youth Division Leader

This year has marked a major step forward for the youth of SGI-USA. From the great success in our March 16 commemorative meetings to our amazing victories across the nation during the Nov. 18 commemorative meetings, the youth have initiated a momentum of growth throughout our organization.

I really want to express our appreciation for the warm, encouraging support of the men's and women's divisions. Because of this support, we have advanced so much during this last year.

Recently, I was reading volume 10 of *The Human Revolution*, which describes the Kansai campaign, in which SGI President Ikeda, as a young man in his 20s, achieved an impossible victory. Through this victory, President Ikeda responded to the great expectations of his mentor, Jo-

sei Toda. As I read the following passage, I once again felt the importance of the mentor and disciple relationship: "The lifeblood which flows between mentor and disciple — this is the fundamental force which binds the two. In order to attain this state, the disciple must first grasp the source from which the mentor's innermost intention derives, and then make it his own. This is a difficult process, which can only be accomplished through

Continued on page B



How do we achieve 'impossible' victories?

SEIZE ^{the} DAY

Their hearts aflame with a sense of justice, youth should never fail to seize the moment, to stand up....

— SGI President Ikeda, Aug. 17, 1997

IT'S TIME TO SHARE

YOUR STORY

It's your turn to seize the day! Share your experience of doing human revolution with all the "Seize the Day" readers across the country. What struggles have you been through? What victories have you achieved? Write it all down — get a friend to help you, if you want — and send it in to "Seize the Day." Experiences for "Seize the Day" should be around two pages, double-spaced (approximately 600 words).

SEND YOUR EXPERIENCE — and a photograph of yourself to:

World Tribune
525 Wilshire Blvd.
Santa Monica CA, 90401

By fax to:
(310) 260-8910

Or e-mail to:
seize@sgi-usa.org

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"We Must Win" Continued from page A

strong faith. The source for the power of both the mentor and disciple is, needless to say, none other than the Gohonzon."

As I read this passage, two things struck me: The first was the idea of grasping the intention of the mentor.

During his last trip to the United States, I had the opportunity to accompany President Ikeda when he traveled to Los Angeles, Denver, New York and

mentor's intention — I must make it my own. That is, I must also develop the heart to exert myself to help others.

During that trip, I made a determination to President Ikeda on behalf of the youth of the United States. I told him that "a new generation of youth is arising. We see that our peers in society are suffering, and we want to create an organization where they can join us to help

tion that struck me was the idea that the Gohonzon is the source of power for both the mentor and disciple.

As I thought about President Ikeda's 51 years of practice and all the obstacles he has overcome, creating victory after victory, I realized that his source of power has always been the Gohonzon. Through sincere prayer, he has created an amazing history of victory,

I feel that this poem expresses President Ikeda's great expectations for all of us. As youth, we must take the lead! As youth, we must win! As youth, we must create the new century!

This relationship of mentor and disciple is a very profound one, one where we can continue to advance and realize our true potential. There are many examples in history of the



SGI President Ikeda encourages youth at the FNCC on his last visit to America, 1996.

Miami. I saw how much effort President Ikeda puts into his daily activities — at times almost to the point of physical exhaustion.

I asked myself, "Why does he push himself so much?" I believe that the answer is that his whole intention is to encourage and inspire people who are suffering and struggling; to give people hope.

I realized while reading this passage from *The Human Revolution*, however, that it is not enough to understand the

people."

President Ikeda responded: "That is a beautiful spirit. That spirit, to see someone's suffering and to feel like its your own, is the spirit of the bodhisattva. Your statement is proof that the youth of America are true bodhisattvas."

I believe that the spirit and action of the bodhisattva should be the heart, the spirit, that we strive to develop as youth.

The second point in the passage from *The Human Revolution*

overcoming every obstacle that tried to prevent his progress.

In the same way, each of us should create a great history of victory in our lives with the Gohonzon as our source of power.

Recently, President Ikeda wrote the following poem for the youth of America:

*Because of you
The new century
Brims with hope.
Take the lead!
Continue to win!*

greatness of this relationship, perhaps the most famous being the relationship between Socrates and Plato. These examples in history are only great if the disciple also achieves victory in his or her life and contributes to society. With the heart to help others and with the Gohonzon as our foundation, let's once again prove the greatness of this relationship through the victories that we achieve in our lives. ♪

YOUTH STUDY FOR JANUARY

REPLY TO KYO'O



BACKGROUND

By DAVID TEMPEST
Los Angeles

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter while in exile on Sado Island. Following the Tatsunokuchi Persecution on Sept. 12, 1271, where an attempt was made to execute him, he was exiled to Sado. The Daishonin not only survived this exile but spread his teachings among the populace and wrote some of his most profound, influential works there.

While in exile, he also began inscribing Gohonzon for some of his closest followers. From this letter, it is clear that Shijo Kingo and his wife, Nichigen-nyo, were already recipients. This letter was dated Aug. 15, 1273; at the time, their youngest daughter Kyo'o Gozen was suffering from illness. Although brief, it contains three main points: First, that faith in the Gohonzon enables us to accomplish anything. Second, that the Gohonzon is a physical manifestation of the life-condition that the Daishonin possessed. And third, that having a courageous practice is important.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle? It is written that those who embrace

the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra will be protected by Kishimojin and her ten daughters. They will enjoy the happiness of Aizen and the good fortune of Bishamon. Whichever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will be free from fear like the lion king. ("Reply to Kyo'o," *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 119).

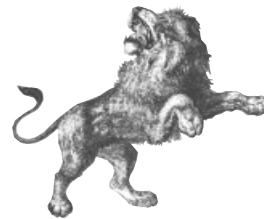
FAITH IS COURAGE

By NAOKO MIYAUCHI
Atlanta

In this passage, the Daishonin teaches us the importance of our faith in the power of the Gohonzon, so that we may surmount any obstacle and enjoy the protective workings of our environment, which are here personified as Buddhist deities such as Kishimojin and Aizen.

No one wants to be sick. Illness (or any other obstacle), however, may be viewed as an opportunity to further strengthen our faith instead of despairing. Despite the Daishonin's reassurance, we sometimes try to escape from our negative circumstances or accept them with a sense of resignation. So what should our attitude be in the face of obstacles?

When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo without shrinking from obstacles, we empower our lives on the most fundamental level. In this sense, to believe in the Gohonzon with all your heart is to have courage. "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion" — when the lion roars, all other beasts are silenced. The Daishonin is saying that faith is the courage to believe in your own power to create happiness from within.



Kyo-o Gozen's misfortunes will change into fortune. Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved? You should believe the Lotus Sutra when it says, "This sutra fulfills one's desires. It is the pond's cool, clear water that quenches thirst," and "They will have peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next" (MW-1, 120).

MISFORTUNES INTO FORTUNE

By PATRICIA FORD
Kansas City, Mo.

At times when you're suffering or miserable, it's difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. You may say to yourself, what did I do in my past to deserve this? It's easy then to complain or admit defeat. The Daishonin says in this letter that with faith in the Gohonzon, a person's misfortune will turn into fortune. This illustrates the concept of changing poison into medicine. When you do this — change a negative situation into a positive one through faith — you also change your karma.

The Lotus Sutra states that by devoting yourself to the sutra, you will achieve security in your present life and the next. *Security* doesn't mean that you will never have obstacles or difficulties. It means that you will have a strong, powerful life-condition wherein you use obstacles as fuel to advance and grow. We should strive to make our life-condition unshakable even in the midst of problems. It is our determination and our courage to persevere that enables us to change poison into medicine. ♪

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- ➊ How do you muster the courage to challenge obstacles?
- ➋ "This sutra [the Gohonzon] fulfills one's desires" — but what can you do when your prayer does not seem to be producing any result?
- ➌ Give an example of how you have experienced *changing poison into medicine*.



A Physical and Spiritual **WASTELAND?**

**Can doing
human
revolution
really save
the world?**

By THE PROMETHEUS GROUP
San Francisco



ON HUMAN REVOLUTION

When people fail to seek happiness by changing their own lives and instead seek to change the environment in a superfi-

cial manner, no truly enduring happiness and security can be instilled in their hearts. This is common sense when viewed from the perspective of Buddhism, that life and its environment are one. According to this principle, world peace will be enjoyed only when each individual becomes enlightened or undergoes human revolution.

The happiness of a people depends on the beliefs that guide their actions, as only a philosophy that acknowledges the oneness of life and the environment can bring about ultimate and lasting social change. If humans do not act soon, the next generations will inherit a physical and spiritual wasteland.

In all ordinary thinking, such an undertaking is perhaps so massive that it would appear more attractive to let the human race remain in the dark, stagnant waters it is in now. However, inside each person is an inexhaustible spring of energy that, when tapped, will allow everyone to dauntlessly tackle any problem.

In fact, for those who have tapped this profound spring, the bigger the problem, the more enjoyable life is. Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th century sage and the founder of this Buddhism, said about one who could tap this intrinsic power, "The greater the hardships befalling him the greater the delight he feels...." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 9)

One might therefore ask, "Then why not use this innate power to remove the suffering from the world and replace it with joy?" Actually, according to the

above principle, working toward the happiness of all humanity would probably be the biggest cause for joy, since world peace is probably the biggest challenge of all.

The purpose of this Buddhism is ultimately to become happy and help others do the same. This is accomplished through strong prayer and applying oneself to daily life, never forgetting the grand focal point of life: to replace the world's suffering with joy. This entails hard work.

World peace is not a passive undertaking, and neither is one's daily life! Those who think that world peace will simply be achieved some day, regardless of effort put forth now, do not understand the true significance of world peace.

The Daishonin alludes to this fact when he says: "Buddhism is like the body and society like the shadow. When the body is crooked, so is the shadow" (MW-3, 307). This is to say that when people use faith to undergo human revolution, the positive change within their lives will be reflected in a more joyful and humanistic society. Therefore, the peace and happiness of a people, a nation or the world depends not on a select group of leaders or a select group of revolutionaries but on each individual's inner condition of life.

It is out of this desire for clarification that President Toda coined the term *human revolution*. Instead of regarding world peace as a distant principle, applying only to those in power, he declared that world peace applies to everyone, especially the common people.

a lot of time on their hands but to everybody, especially the common people and especially in their daily lives.

President Toda wanted to bridge the gap between the lives of ordinary people and the seemingly far-off goal of enlightenment. He wanted everyone to see that enlightenment was within their reach.

The historical definition of world peace has usually meant the absence of war. Webster's dictionary defines the word *peacetime* as a time when a country is not at war. Commenting on this definition in a Kosen-rufu Day essay in the March 16 *World Tribune*, Deborah Goodwin calls it "a strangely transient definition, which communicates the uneasy reality that a time for war still looms in the future."

The SGI, in refreshing contrast, seeks to use the philosophy of the Daishonin's Buddhism to establish not only a world free of war but a world with true and lasting happiness. SGI President Ikeda has said, "True and lasting happiness only and always comes from our own efforts, our own wisdom, our own good fortune."

Accordingly, this practice of Buddhism by which we can establish this true and lasting happiness is deeply rooted in daily life.

Our definition of *world peace* is deeply involved in the cumulative advances of each person on a daily basis. That is, world peace is human revolution.

Three in a series

In the same way, attaining enlightenment or bringing out one's highest potential does not apply only to mystics and those with