



ESSAY
President Ikeda says that SGI centers should be open to all people.
page 4



PERSPECTIVE
Michael Lisagor on how therapy has supported his Buddhist practice.
page 8

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Now Is the Time To Build Your Foundation



Photo by LISA HOLLIS

In his speech at a recent youth division leaders meeting, SGI President Ikeda explains why youth is a crucial time. 'By living your youth in a way that you will have no regrets,' he says, 'you will build a foundation for all your remaining years. On the other hand, if you lose yourself in empty amusements and love relationships — and if you fail to build your character at this crucial time, just being satisfied with "getting by" — you will certainly suffer when you are older. The foundation for your life is determined by how you spend your youth.'

Thank you, youth division members, for coming from far away to participate in today's meeting!

The Milky Way streaming across the night sky sparkles with infinite mystery and wonder. I have looked up at it time and again and thought, "Ah, how beautiful!" I am

sure you have done the same.

Compared to that grand vista, our human world is small and sordid.

It is said that there is a place in the galaxy some 5,000 light years from Earth in which new stars are constantly being born. The other day, it was reported that an astronomical observatory in South America

had identified that location. A dramatic photograph was published with the reports, and I was very moved by it.

I love astronomy, because it views our small planet from the vast perspective of the entire universe.

The birth of a star is a momentous drama. An enormous, endlessly swirling

mass of energy coalesces and eventually bursts through the surrounding darkness, sending out brilliant shafts of light. A tremendous fight takes place; it entails a struggle. All existence is likewise constantly in flux — the universe, civilization and society, all unfolding in a continuous, flowing narrative of life and death.

Where, on this Earth of ours, is there a "galaxy" of education? One that gives birth to the "shining stars" of talented individuals, people dedicated to creating value in the 21st century? It is nowhere other than the distinguished, youthful Flores University in

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

General Director Zaitso and pioneer members cut the ribbon at the SGI-USA Visitor Center opening, Feb. 1.

Visit the New SGI-USA Headquarters!

On Feb. 1, the SGI-USA Visitor Center was officially opened — one of the finishing touches to the SGI Plaza at 606 Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica, Calif., where the SGI-USA Headquarters relocated last year.

SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitso spoke about the vital role the center will play in welcoming guests from across the country and around the world. "Cherishing each member, which is the spirit of SGI President Ikeda, is the fundamental point of this center," he said.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held and a commemorative

photo taken with more than 70 in attendance, 30 of whom were pioneer members.

Los Angeles Stage Crew members devoted many hours designing the 4,000-square-foot Visitor Center. Beautifully framed photographs by President Ikeda grace its walls, and in the near future, there will be a souvenir shop.

The Visitor Center hours are Monday–Friday from 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. To reach the Visitor Center, please call (310) 260-8978.

—STEPHANIE CELANO

STUDY

Ted Morino explores the Buddhist view of the secular world.

page 3

PERSPECTIVE

Dianne Moody likens the night sky to our Buddha nature.

page 9

LEADERSHIP

Recent points on leadership from the SGI president.

page 10

NEW TEMPLE ISSUE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We've been talking about achieving victory in the temple issue for a long time, but it helps to be clear on exactly what that victory is.

What's the Real Victory We're Seeking in the Temple Issue?

By JEFF FARR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

For the last eight years of the temple issue, SGI members have been talking about fighting the malicious and destructive forces of the Nikken sect — achieving victory in the temple issue.

But what *exactly* is this victory?

From talking to many SGI-USA leaders about this, I've learned that the real victory we're seeking is assuring that everyone in our organization and everyone in the temple organization — plus anyone else who is interested — is thoroughly educated about the difference between the fundamental spirit of the SGI and the distorted views of Nichiren Shoshu.

In other words, we want everyone to learn the difference between the correct and incorrect practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

It's important to understand that we are not seeking, in any sense, the unhappiness of temple members. We are instead seeking their happiness — their victory in their lives — through teaching them the correct understanding and practice of this Buddhism.

Although both the SGI and the temple teach the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the two organizations' philosophies are completely at odds. For example, the SGI believes, as the Daishonin teaches, that all people are equal, that all people are essentially Buddhas. All people have the Law within. This Buddhism is thus centered on the ordinary person, and the SGI is spreading it with this clear understanding.

The current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, though, doesn't see things this way. The temple believes that we are lesser beings than priests — especially the high priest, who has been set up as a supreme being. It's a

priest-centered religion.

The priests teach in their study publication, *Dai-Nichiren*, that correct practice entails "absolute faith in and strict obedience to the High Priest." They ignore the Daishonin's strict

posit as the greatest victory we can seek in our practice? Ultimate victory to the Daishonin was to make continual effort for kosen-rufu, to never give up. Our ultimate victory is when we've done our best, throughout

being," happiness. And to block off, once and for all, "the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering," the road of incorrect teachings.

If we make this goal our own and do all that we can to

pressed. They'll want to join us.

As SGI President Ikeda explains: "Dialogue is the lifeline of Buddhism. The Buddha's fundamental objective is to develop in the lives of all people a wisdom equal to his own.

"As this implies," he goes on, "we tell others about this Buddhism because, fundamentally, we venerate their lives. If, on the other hand, we had the attitude 'Even if I tell this person about Buddhism, it couldn't possibly do any good,' then we simply would not bother talking to them.

"We tell people about Buddhism because we respect them as human beings," he concludes (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 85).

Now must be the time for us to prove that we do respect all people, that we do care about everyone. Having opened people's eyes to what we're really about, it's certain that those who have left the SGI will return to the organization, that the priesthood's negative influence in the United States will fade out and that Nikken's distortions of the Daishonin's Buddhism will be seen with skepticism by all.

This is the education process in which we are now engaged.

One in a series

“
The temple issue raises this question: What does Buddhism posit as the greatest victory we can seek in our practice? Ultimate victory to the Daishonin was to make continual effort for kosen-rufu, to never give up. Our ultimate victory is when we've done our best, throughout our lives, to educate ourselves and others about this Buddhism.
”

assertion that we should follow not the person but the Law — that we should put the Law, not any high priest, in the center.

When the priesthood first excommunicated the SGI in November 1991, many SGI members felt that it was their responsibility as disciples of the Daishonin to educate people about the growing philosophical difference. This, we felt, was the same as educating people about what the Daishonin's Buddhism really is and is not, what it really teaches and does not teach.

In other words, this education was *shakubuku*, the spread of Buddhism.

The true victory we seek in the temple issue is indeed found in this educational process — one that doesn't necessarily have a clear endpoint, similar to the kosen-rufu movement not having a clear endpoint; kosen-rufu just keeps going on eternally; so does this education.

The temple issue raises this question: What does Buddhism

our lives, to educate ourselves and others about this Buddhism. To help every person attain Buddhahood.

In "Repaying Debts of Gratitude," the Daishonin writes that "if Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial

power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 272). This is his heart, his goal, stated simply: to educate everyone about Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, to thus give everyone, "every living

ward it, we win in life, we truly win.

Then, we cannot help but show actual proof to people. When people see us taking action for them based on our compassion, they're seeing a form of actual proof — they're seeing that we do practice what we preach. When they hear what we say and see that what we do matches it, they're naturally im-

NOV. 18 MEETING REPORTS:

**Thank You, Thank You,
Thank You!**

Thanks to everyone who sent us photos and reports of your Nov. 18 commemorative discussion meetings. We weren't able to print them all, due to space limitations, but they were all great! We deeply appreciate all your efforts to contribute to the *World Tribune*, despite your busy schedules. Any time that you want to report on what your district is doing, please send us photos (preferably in color) and a short report (about 200 words), and we'll do our best to include them in the *World Tribune*.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON FAITH

How Does Buddhism View the Secular World?

By TED MORINO

SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT
SENIOR ADVISOR

Q How does the benefit of Buddhist practice manifest itself in the secular world? And how should I deal with the everyday world?

A Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism not only enables us to develop every aspect of our lives, including our inner spirituality, but also helps us realize that our inner positive change can be reflected in the secular world, the ordinary world. Also, the Daishonin's Buddhism urges its practitioners to win in the secular world and contribute to the betterment of it instead of isolating themselves in their own spiritual world.

In "The Gift of Rice," the Daishonin quotes the Lotus Sutra passage "No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality [Buddhism]" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 269). The Daishonin teaches us that Buddhism pulsates in the way we live our lives on a moment-to-moment basis.

This means that all phenomena of life reflect the ultimate truth, the Mystic Law. This does not mean, however, that all religious practices are ultimately the same as Buddhist practice. In this regard, the Daishonin writes: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the heart of the Lotus Sutra. It is like the soul of a per-

son.... To mix other practices with this Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is a grave error" (MW-3, 266). Nikko Shonin likewise admonishes us to master the Daishonin's teachings first, before studying the teachings of others. So, when viewed with the supreme wisdom of Buddhism, the workings of the Mystic Law are apparent in all human affairs — but, at the same time, the truth of Buddhism can be diluted and obscured by mixing it with other forms of religious and spiritual practice that lead people to depend on some kind of outer, mysterious forces other than their innate Buddhahood.

In any case, an important point is that our Buddhist practice manifests itself in practical affairs. As is implied in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra — which reads in part, "This reality consists of...appearance, nature...and their consistency from beginning to end" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 24) — the benefit of Buddhist practice is not a matter of mere imagination. While it actually first appears in our enriched, deepened, elevated and purified life-condition, this enhancement unerringly manifests in our ever-developing character, behavior and even in our environment.

We may tend to make distinctions between the spiritual and the secular. But, based on his enlightenment, the Daishonin teaches that on a deeper level, such distinctions are futile.

Buddhism in no way exists apart from the realities of daily living. In other words, what we are encouraged to do through our Buddhist practice is to constantly polish and solidify our innate life-condition of Buddhahood.

To have a clear understanding of the Daishonin's view here, it is vital to understand the subtle difference he makes between the provisional teachings and the Lotus Sutra in the following passage, again from "The Gift of Rice": "Whereas they [provisional teachings] relate secular matters in terms of Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra explains that secular matters ultimately are Buddhism" (MW-1, 269).

Buddhism in no way exists apart from the realities of daily

living. In other words, what we are encouraged to do through our Buddhist practice is to constantly polish and solidify our innate life-condition of Buddhahood and live it to the utmost as ordinary human beings in the ordinary world.

Therefore, the crucial questions to ask in Buddhist practice are "What is my life-condition?" and "What actions am I taking?" Ultimately, Buddhism shines in the splendor of our character and behavior — in how we creatively deal with our surroundings.

After attaining Buddhahood, Shakyamuni, instead of enjoying his enlightenment just for himself, took action to share with other humans the Law of life he had mastered. Until the last moment of his life, he never ceased his efforts to awaken the people to this. To a king who had converted to his teachings, Shakyamuni is said to have advised: "Rule over your nation based upon the Law rather than upon irrationality. Rule the people with correct principles."

Shakyamuni's enlightenment was expressed in spontaneous, practical action for the happiness of the people.

Similarly, by submitting the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" to Hojo Tokiyori, the most powerful man of the Kamakura era in Japan, the Daishonin remonstrated with him to make the entire nation aware of the correct way of life. He did so to bring peace and security to the society of his time.

The Daishonin thus lived Buddhism among the people. Never did the people's happiness leave his mind.

The Law works in one's life from moment to moment. And our strengthening of the function of the Mystic Law within, in other words, the polishing of our inherent Buddha wisdom and compassion, and our manifestation of them through action is the ideal in Buddhist practice.

In his speech to the youth division in this issue, SGI President Ikeda explains how first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi "declared that a religion that refuses to involve itself in society, that seeks only to provide personal satisfaction through a selfish pursuit of individual happiness, has no reason for existing.

"From early on," President Ikeda says, "Mr. Makiguchi was absolutely clear on this: A self-serving religion, a closed, isolated religion, a religion that does not contribute to society, has no meaning. This was one starting point of the Soka Gakkai's dynamic movement of religious revolution and human revolution — a movement pursued amid the reality of this *saha* world, a realm of suffering and endurance" (see p. 10).

As Buddhists, we are working in the *saha* world to relieve ourselves and others of human sufferings. This is always based on the Law that we find in the depths of our lives. In this way, each of us proves every day that "secular matters ultimately are Buddhism." W

Study Material for April 25 Entrance-Level Exam

Source: SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook

1. "On Attaining Buddhahood" (pp. 6-12; 20-29)
2. "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" (pp. 32-43; 47-52)

Source: Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin

3. "Happiness in This World" (pp. 223-246; these pages were reprinted in the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*.)

Source: The Life of Nichiren Daishonin

4. Nichiren's Daishonin's life (pp. 11-18; 56-78; 83-115; these pages were reprinted in the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*.)

Source: Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue (pamphlet)

5. Introduction; Question No. 2; Question No. 4 (pp. 4-6; 9-10; 13-16; these pages were reprinted in the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*.)

The SGI President Meets With Dr. N. Radhakrishnan of India

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda met with Dr. N. Radhakrishnan, director of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, on Dec. 6, 1998. Dr. Radhakrishnan's institute, located in New Delhi, India, is dedicated to the study and propagation of the Gandhian ideals. Dr. Radhakrishnan said that in an age dominated by science and technology, the importance President Ikeda is placing on music, culture and the arts is great. As well, he praised the SGI's movement for human revolution — the inner reformation of human beings — at such a time in his-



SGI President Ikeda and Dr. N. Radhakrishnan discuss music, culture and the arts, Dec. 6, 1998.

tory. He further stated that if humanity is to survive, we must adopt the ideals espoused by President Ikeda and work

toward realizing them. Culture is of paramount importance for the present age, President Ikeda and his guest agreed. W

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA



OPEN TO ALL

SGI culture centers and community centers are open to all people. 'From the beginning, Buddhist gatherings were open to people from "the four directions," that is, from the entire world,' President Ikeda explains in this essay. 'Our centers, too, are places of hospitality, pervaded by the warm fragrance of culture and friendship — and are open to all.'

Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD



SGI-USA's restoration of the building that is now the New York Culture Center was awarded the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award in 1995.

At a recent meeting of the American Astronomical Society, it was announced that there may be approximately 125 billion galaxies in the universe. This estimate was based on observations made by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

From the Buddhist perspective on the cosmos, this is completely understandable. In fact, such findings validate the Buddhist view of life and the universe; the Lotus Sutra describes the universe as boundless, immeasurable, infinite and eternal.

The Earth is not the only planet on which life exists. Very likely, life can be found on millions of planets throughout the universe. Among that vast number, there are bound to be many where the process of Buddhist propagation is complete. And there are also sure to exist many perfect, ideal Buddha-lands populated solely by living beings who are good and benign.

Even in this world where we dwell, a realm defiled by the five impurities, the sun of peace and hope of the Mystic Law is slowly but inevitably rising. This has been achieved through our noble, unprecedented struggle.

I hope that you, the SGI members, will take supreme pride in this fact. I fervently pray, with all my heart, for the good health of all of you — Bodhisattvas of the Earth dedicated to carrying out the Buddha's decree.



The dawn of worldwide kosen-rufu is approaching, gradually but steadily. And our SGI centers around the world are the driving force for the advancement of our global movement to widely spread Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy and ideals.

Among our centers are facilities such as the Brazil Nature Culture Center and India's Soka Bodhi Tree Garden, which, in addition to serving the members, are also dedicated to preserving and protecting the environment.

Also, in recent years, several venerable, historical buildings have been reborn as SGI community centers. For example, there is the stately manor house that is the centerpiece of SGI-UK's Taplow Court Grand Culture Centre, some distance outside London. Then there is the elegant Chateau Pré in the Paris suburb of Chartrettes, overlooking a forest that has been the inspiration for the works of countless artists. It now serves as the SGI-France

Culture Center. One of the leaders of the French Revolution, Georges Danton, is said to have taken refuge at the chateau for a time.

The SGI-Germany Culture Center occupies the locally loved and renowned Villa Sachsen, just outside Frankfurt in Bingen am Rhein, a region praised for its beauty by Goethe and Hugo. SGI-Italy, meanwhile, has established its main culture center in Florence in the Villa di Bellagio, a building associated with the Medicis, the grand patrons of the Italian Renaissance.

These great historical buildings, which have survived the vicissitudes of so many centuries, have now been given new life as palaces of the people in our Soka Renaissance.



If we were to speak of the history that these great buildings have witnessed, we would find ourselves tapping into an inexhaustible font of poetry and drama. Taplow Court, for instance, was the setting of the book

Men Like Gods by British science-fiction writer H. G. Wells. (Incidentally, another of Wells' famous novels, *The War of the Worlds*, depicts extraterrestrial beings.)

On the Taplow Court grounds is a pond that has been there for 2,000 years, and a burial mound dating back 1,400 years. Queen Elizabeth I was held under house arrest at Taplow Court for a time, it is said. And in more recent history, the estate served as the scene of many festive gatherings of high society, including members of British royalty.

There is also an avenue of cedars, where one will find plaques recording the visits of eminent men and women. Winston Churchill planted a cedar tree there in 1938.

The grandfathers of two modern-day monarchs whom I have had the honor to meet, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand and King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, are also on record as having visited Taplow Court.

In May 1989, on the opening of the Taplow Court Grand Cul-

ture Centre, I proposed that we offer the facilities to the local community and make it a citadel of culture for all. The Taplow Court Grand Culture Centre this year celebrates its 10th anniversary. In that time, it has become well known to all in the area as just such a citadel of culture as well as a garden of peace.

In July last year, working together with a charitable organization dedicated to helping war orphans, the SGI-UK sponsored a festival on its grounds. It seems to have been very well received. Taplow Court has also served as a venue for many international conferences, symposiums and exhibitions.

From the beginning, Buddhist gatherings were open to people from "the four directions," that is, from the entire world. Our centers, too, are places of hospitality, pervaded by the warm fragrance of culture and friendship — and are open to all.



An elderly gentleman who visited the Villa Sachsen Culture

Center reportedly said: "I used to work here more than 40 years ago. This is one of the memories of my youth. I am so glad to see the SGI lovingly restoring this building." How happy it makes me to hear such remarks!

I have heard that when SGI-Germany opened the villa to the public one day last fall, a record turnout of a thousand locals came. This is sure proof of the trust the German members have gained in the local community. I have also received a very gracious letter from the mayor of Bingen inviting me to visit the city.

Caring for historical buildings indicates a concern for culture in general and a concern for the human spirit. Such efforts, I am pleased to say, have earned the SGI a fine reputation all around the world.

SGI-USA's New York Culture Center is located in a building constructed in 1887 and is registered with the New York Landmarks Conservancy. SGI-USA's restoration of the building was recognized as an important cultural contribution and awarded the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award in 1995.



The historic Villa di Bellagio has been known as a haven of beauty and pleasure for centuries.

The Lotus Sutra says of the land in which the Buddha dwells: "The halls and pavilions in its gardens and groves / are adorned with various kinds of gems. / Jeweled trees abound in flowers and fruit / where living beings enjoy themselves at ease." (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 230)

Today, these lines of the Lotus Sutra describe the SGI's culture

PLEASE SEE ESSAY, 10

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

a novelized history of the soka gakkai

'FRESH GROWTH'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 27-28

'We are still in our movement's pioneering days,' President Yamamoto encourages the members at the America West General Meeting. 'There are bound to be many difficulties on the road ahead. Yet the only way to ensure a truly happy, prosperous future for America is to spread this Buddhist philosophy of peace and human rights, of compassion and the sanctity of life, by sharing it with each person.'

Smiling, Shin'ichi Yamamoto continued: "Until now Gakkai songs have been written in Japan, and all of you have been singing those songs here as well. But there's no need for you to continue doing that from here on.

"If you feel the songs you've sung up to now are not quite appropriate or don't match the musical tastes of people here, you can go ahead and write some new Gakkai songs," he said. "And if those songs capture people's imaginations, then they'll come to be sung by members in Japan as well — and perhaps in many countries throughout the world. I have no doubt that the time will come when Gakkai songs with music and lyrics composed by English-speaking members will also be sung in Japan."

Among the questions there was also a request made for more English translations of Nichiren Daishonin's writings and of the Soka Gakkai's faith-related guidance as well as the publication of an English-language paper like the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper in Japan. These requests underscored how seriously the members were thinking about the future of the kosen-rufu movement in America. Shin'ichi was encouraged by their earnest spirit.

After having fielded about 10 questions, he brought the session to a close, saying: "All of you have stood up bravely for

your beloved America and the happiness of your friends, embarking on a struggle to which you have pledged to dedicate your lives. You have persevered despite language or cultural barriers and endured countless hardships and obstacles with tenacity and fortitude. I have not the slightest doubt that all your efforts will adorn your lives with immense benefit and good fortune. We shine only to the extent that we take action and work hard ourselves. This is a principle of Buddhism.

"The present development of the organization for American kosen-rufu has been achieved through your admirable efforts," he went on. "But we are still in our movement's pioneering days. There are bound to be many difficulties on the road ahead. Yet the only way to ensure a truly happy, prosperous future for America is to spread this Buddhist philosophy of peace and human rights, of compassion and the sanctity of life, by sharing it with each person.

"So together let's continue to sow the seeds of the Mystic Law in the soil of America," he concluded, "and through our own efforts write a history of kosen-rufu's magnificent triumph! Let's adorn our lives with victory as well!"

Loud applause followed. The members' faces were filled with passionate resolve. Fresh, green shoots of kosen-rufu had begun to appear in America, heralding the dawn of a new day, the arrival of a new spring.

When the West General Meeting was over, Shin'ichi went to one of the small rooms in the hall. Within a short time, a steady stream of leaders poured in to see him. They all looked happy and excited. Shin'ichi greeted each person with a smile and warm congratulations on this fresh start for the American organization.

Shin'ichi took time to encourage the members who came by to see him, presenting each with a small gift he had brought from Japan. These included books, *fukusa* (square cloths for wrapping prayer beads) and commemorative medals marking the Gakkai's achievement of a membership of 3 million households the previous November.

Masako Clarke also stopped by to see Shin'ichi. He invited her to sit in the chair beside his and said to her: "That was a wonderful experience you shared! I was deeply moved by it.

"I'm sure there will be many hardships and challenges ahead," he went on, "but please don't let them defeat you. You and your family living happily will serve as proof of your husband's attainment of Buddhahood. So please become so happy that you'll be the envy of all around you. I know that this will definitely happen.

"Raise your two children to be fine young people who can contribute to kosen-rufu," he said. "That's how you can show your love for your husband."

Shin'ichi then brought out a Soka Gakkai gold lapel pin, which was usually conferred on top leaders, and said: "I want to give this to your newborn son. When he grows up, please let him wear it when he does Gakkai activities."

He continued: "I know you'll hang in there. No matter what happens, never lose heart."

After handing Mrs. Clarke the pin, he shook her hand. Tears glistening in her eyes, she replied resolutely, "I'll do my best."

Shin'ichi gave all his energy to encouraging the members. Each day was singular; it would never come again. A few words of encouragement can help people make tremendous breakthroughs and strides in faith. But this can only

happen when we seize every opportunity that presents itself.

When Shin'ichi returned to the hotel, he reviewed the organizational structure for each region of the United States with the leaders from Japan and the new America General Chapter leaders, Emiko Haruyama and Nagayasu Masaki. They would only be together until New York, where they were headed the next day. After New York, Shin'ichi would travel to Europe with Kiyoshi Jujo and Nagayasu. The other leaders would travel to different parts of the United States to establish new chapters and districts.

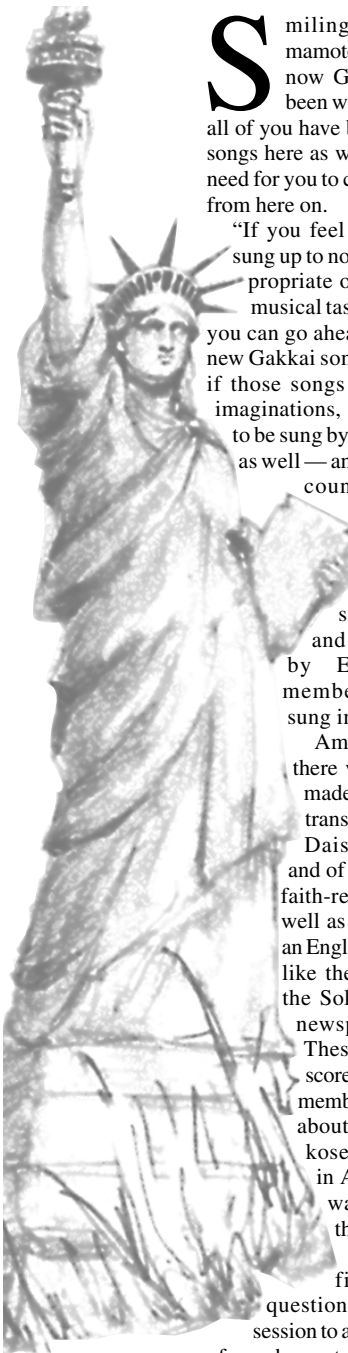
In New York, they also planned to form a chapter. Looking over the draft of proposed leadership appointments, Shin'ichi saw Emiko's husband, Tomio, listed as a candidate for chapter leader.

"Yes, Tomio might be a good choice, I think, for chapter leader," Shin'ichi remarked. Then, to the general chapter women's leader, he asked, "Mrs. Haruyama, would you mind asking your husband to come to the airport in New York tomorrow?"

They would be leaving Los Angeles the following morning and arriving in New York late in the afternoon. The America East General Meeting, which would also be the inaugural meeting for New York Chapter, was to be held that evening. Shin'ichi wanted to meet Tomio to interview him for the position of chapter leader.

To be continued

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



SPEECH, FROM PAGE 1

Argentina. I know Flores University will continue to grow and develop limitlessly in the future. [President Ikeda received an honorary doctorate from the university at this meeting.]

At the same time, I proclaim that the ranks of our SGI youth also constitute a magnificent "Milky Way" producing countless capable people.

A life still under construction is much nobler than one already completed.

I especially want to congratulate the youth division members who are participating in the new leaders and young leaders meetings being held around the country in conjunction with this leaders meeting.

Your future lies ahead of you. You are all very important. The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddhism of True Cause — of moving ever forward from the present moment.

The uphill path of a life still under construction is nobler than one where construction has already finished. Young people advancing with fresh determination toward the future are far more praiseworthy than older people who have stopped making progress. Your lives, filled with passion and energy, are billions of times more admirable and praiseworthy than those of arrogant famous people or celebrities. I hope that you will always remember that.

You can never develop your character, unless you experience many hardships.

Flores University Rector Roberto Kertész, a brilliant educator and world-renowned psychologist, and Mrs. Clara Inés Atalaya, his wife, true companion and colleague: I accept with great pride the honorary doctorate that has just been bestowed upon me by your fine institution, whose horizons are filled with infinite hope. Thank you very much.

I also thank you for coming all the way from the warm Buenos Aires summer — which often rises above 86 degrees — to the chilly winter of Japan. I will never forget your kindness as long as I live. Thank you very, very much.

The other day, I was asked to write something on the first page of the 1999 guest book of India's Delhi University. What would I write? Without hesitation, I wrote what has been my article of faith since I was young: "Adversity is the best education." These words of a famous philosopher have been my motto from the time I was 17 or 18.

Today, there seems to be a trend for people to take the easy way, but that is a mistake. You will never become a person of character unless you experience many trying hardships. Rector and Mrs. Kertész are perfect examples of true character.



Buenos Aires, Argentina, home to Flores University. The university conferred an honorary doctorate on SGI President Ikeda at the Jan. 15 youth leaders meeting.

To the extent that you young people have not really suffered yet, your ability to judge others may still be undeveloped. But people such as I, who have endured persecution by the authorities and who have fought through a life of great trials and tribulations, know true character when we see it.

Humanistic education is the key to the future.

Rector Kertész has urged us to live better lives — lives of greater value and higher quality. On the other side of the globe from Japan, this champion of education has advocated the same ideals as Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who formulated a system of value-creating education.

It was with this lofty ideal that Dr. Kertész founded his university for the people. What a noble undertaking! Flores University is a center of learning for humanistic education.

Humanistic education is the key. It is on this point that many intelligent observers have faulted the Japanese educational system as being fundamentally flawed.

What a task it is to found a university! Only one who has done it can really understand this. I believe that the words of the great Argentine educator Domingo Faustino Sarmiento aptly describe the immense conviction and enthusiasm of Rector and Mrs. Kertész: "Only through education can human beings reach their full development." "It has been said that education is my mania. But manias have made our world what it is today."

Don't worry about what others are or are not doing.

The new century will be built by the passion and energy of youth. Today, Coming-of-Age Day is being celebrated all over Japan. [Coming-of-Age Day is a public holiday celebrating when young people turn 20.] My congratulations to you who officially enter adulthood today!

If you have the opportunity in the future, please visit Argentina. I also hope that among you there will be people who one day will receive honorary doctorates.

I hope that you will be people of integrity and that, with the passing years, you will stay true to your youthful dreams and never abandon or betray them.

Burn with bright hope. Never be afraid to face the stiffest challenge. The trials you endure will become your greatest treasure, your wealth. Open new frontiers that you have never challenged before. Don't be held back by petty concerns, such as what others are doing or not doing. No matter what others may do, no matter what your situation, stand up bravely, and blaze your own path.

That is the only way to live. By living your youth in a way that you will have no regrets, you will build a foundation for all your remaining years. On the other hand, if you lose yourself in empty amusements and love relationships — and if you fail to build your character at this crucial time, just being satisfied with "getting by" — you will certainly suffer when you are older. The foundation for your life is determined by how you spend your youth.

Because the members come first in the SGI, the organization has become this strong.

Flores University is a great educational institution, where students come first. Rector Kertész is always out among the students, and he places great value on one-to-one dialogue with them. He knows almost all of the students personally, I have heard.

Nothing is stronger than such personal ties. Personal ties are what make the SGI as strong as it is, not its size. Size alone can be dangerous: It may seem to imply strength, but without the crucial structure of deep heart-to-heart connections, an organization soon crumbles.

A university that places its students first is certain to grow and develop. No matter how small that university may be, in the end, it will be a success. And no matter how large a university grows, once it succumbs to commercialism, it stops being a center of learning. It's nothing but another big business.

In the SGI, the members come first. This is what has made us strong; this is why we have such a superlative foundation.

A scholar has suggested that the SGI has become such a successful international organization precisely because of the profound respect the organization has for its sincere, hardworking members, and the strong personal ties that link the members. We must never forget this fundamental truth.

Religion can easily become dogmatic, so we must develop the SGI in the realm of education and culture.

With the receipt of this honorary doctorate, I have now been fortunate to receive

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60 honors and degrees from universities around the world.

The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that the humanism of the Lotus Sutra will be spread throughout the world by the protective powers of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy. In a broad sense, we may interpret this to mean that through the universally worthy power of wisdom the worldwide propagation of the Daishonin's teachings, or kosen-rufu, advances. The Daishonin's Buddhism must be understood and supported at the universal level of wisdom.

Unless great care is taken, religion can lapse easily into self-righteousness and dogmatism. That is why we must develop our religion on the universal plane of education and culture. This is the proper route for Buddhism to take, and I have followed it myself; I have engaged over the years in dialogues with leading thinkers around the world.

Without bold action, our movement to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's teachings cannot expand.

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Today's gathering is one of vigorous, energetic youth. You all look wonderful. People working to propagate the correct teaching of Buddhism have the faces of bodhisattvas. Their hearts are beautiful. Their hearts are filled with passion.

Buddhism explains that to rejoice on seeing a person practicing Buddhism and spreading the correct teaching forges a powerful connection with Buddhism and plants good causes in one's life. On the other hand, being jealous of a practitioner of Buddhism or failing to sincerely rejoice at the spread of the Law extinguishes one's good fortune.

People today around the world are joyfully praising our efforts. This in itself is leading to an unparalleled expansion of those who make a connection with Buddhism. I want you, my wise young friends, to be aware of this.

I hope that you will work boldly to extend our network of truth and courage in your community, the place of your mission. Without bold action, a new trail cannot be blazed, and our movement to propagate the Daishonin's teachings cannot be expanded. Without courage, there can be no happiness.

Incidentally, the United Nations estimates that in October this year, the population of the world will surpass 6 billion. Six billion people are waiting for your growth.

People of true faith live by their convictions, unconcerned with appearances or others' criticism.

The name Flores means flower. What an elegant name for a school! My wife, who has been my comrade in arms in my



Albert Einstein shows some of his equations to a visitor at the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C. A great source of pride to Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda was having heard Einstein once lecture on his Theory of Relativity in Japan.

spiritual struggle for almost a half-century, has today received her first honorary professorship [of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Sciences] from your "University of Flowers." I thank you in her stead.

My wife first began to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism as a fourth-grader, several years before I did. She is my senior in faith.

Today is the anniversary of the formation of the junior high school division, and we have junior high and high school division representatives with us here. Thank you for all your hard work!

My wife met Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, when he attended a discussion meeting at her family's home near Yaguchinowatashi Station in Ota Ward, Tokyo. Then still a young girl with pigtailed, she went to the station to meet Mr. Makiguchi and led him by the hand back to her house.

Three members of the Special Higher Police came to that meeting, too, observing the proceedings from the hallway. It was wartime, and the Soka Gakkai was facing a storm of persecution. Most of the neighbors of my wife's family were critical of their Gakkai activities. "They are being watched by the police," they'd say, "so they must be practicing a dreadful religion." There was no freedom like there is today.

But my wife, along with her parents, continued to strive for kosen-rufu through those times, fighting together with second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, having strong, strong determination. She never forgot Mr. Makiguchi. She introduced others to the Daishonin's Buddhism, while she was in high school, and later when she worked at a bank.

People of true faith live by their convictions. They are not worried about appearances or others' criticism.

I hope that all our young women's division members and junior high and high school division members will join me in walking the path of mentor and disciple of the SGI, which Rector Kertész praised in his speech earlier. I pray that you will do so cheerfully and with dignity, letting nothing defeat you.

The higher you rise in social status, the harder you should work for kosen-rufu.

For the sake of the future, there is something I want to say. There are parents who, as they rise in society, no longer think it important that their children practice faith diligently. Perhaps they have forgotten that it was through practicing with the SGI and accumulating good fortune that they rose so high in the first place. Or perhaps they fear what others will think of them, if it's discovered that they're Gakkai members.

I hesitate to mention my family, but my wife and I never allowed that to happen. We faithfully followed the guidance of our mentor, President Toda, and taught our children a way of life based on faith and putting the Gakkai first.

Also, when it came time for our sons to find jobs, my wife said: "I won't oppose you, if you decide to take a job with a big, well-known company. But make sure you continue to devote yourself to the Soka Gakkai. You must never stray from the organization of faith. If possible, I hope that you will find some sort of work in which

you can serve the Soka Gakkai. This is the best way of repaying what you owe the Gakkai, and it will also contribute to the achievement of kosen-rufu."

Of course, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't work in a company. Everyone doesn't have to work in a place directly linked to the Gakkai. It's the spirit that counts.

People whose main concern is how they appear to others, however, are unable to practice true faith.

The higher one rises in social status, the harder one should work for kosen-rufu — with deep appreciation for one's good fortune. Isn't that the real spirit of faith?

A religion that refuses to involve itself in society has no reason to exist.

With the assistance of Rector Kertész, Mr. Makiguchi's *System of Value-creating Education* has been published in Spanish. When I saw the finished book, I was almost moved to tears. How happy Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda would have been, if they could have seen this! I am sure that they would have been so overjoyed that they would have held it lovingly against their cheeks.

In his book, Mr. Makiguchi called on society to take action to establish the value of good. He declared that a religion that refuses to involve itself in society, that seeks only to provide personal satisfaction through a selfish pursuit of individual happiness, has no reason for existing.

Buddhism and Psychotherapy: A Personal Viewpoint

PERSPECTIVE

By MICHAEL LISAGOR
VIENNA, VA.

*Surrounded by a forest of towering giants
Bid farewell to a tragic spirit*

*Allow your life to shine
With a spirit of joy and good cheer*

*Live out your youth
With all your might!*

— SGI President Ikeda

Until the summer of 1997, I wasn't particularly open-minded on the subject of psychotherapy. I would meet people who were seeing a therapist and think to myself: "What a waste of time. All they're doing is dwelling in the past rather than changing their karma and making causes for the future." I believed that seeking the services of a therapist was a sign of weakness, an inability to use the practice to deal with problems. After all, I mistakenly reasoned, weren't we supposed to employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra to solve all our problems? And, wasn't the only way to change your karma on a fundamental level, the ninth consciousness, to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo? If I were to see a therapist, I thought I would be in essence admitting to myself that the practice didn't have the power to change my life or that my faith was just too weak.

My many years of chanting had enabled me to gain a large degree of control over my negative thoughts and I was much happier with myself. I had learned that if I chanted a lot, I could make my mind quiet down enough for me to function in daily life. I was also able to make and carry out strong determinations, had a warm loving family, and built a very successful career in marketing. Still, though I had overcome much of my unhappiness and insecurity through chanting, I was never entirely without the deep sadness and anger in my life that had tugged at me since my childhood.

What I began to realize was that through my practice, I had finally opened up enough to begin to explore some very painful as-

pects of my life. In "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," what Nichiren Daishonin actually said was "Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 246). He didn't say we shouldn't seek out the appropriate medicine and guidance to heal ourselves but that we should base these activities on the wisdom and fortune that comes from our Buddha nature. At that point, all I needed was a powerful catalyst, an event that would compel me to change. Soon, two traumatic events occurred that pushed me right over the edge.

The first was the suicide of my good friend, Gordon. He had been my business mentor and a source of inspiration for most of the seventies and had finally retired a few years ago. His family and friends thought they knew him very well. He was always cheerful and full of great advice. It frightened me that he could be harboring such overwhelming anguish that he saw no way to continue living. Obviously, there were major issues in his life, just as in mine, that he had not processed. I wondered if I could afford to do the same?

A few years later, my wife, Trude, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. For the first six months, we both focused on finding the benefit of her illness. We gained a deeper appreciation for our practice, friends and each other as well as a stronger sense of mission. We looked at the gain but had yet to face the loss in our lives. One evening, Trude discovered me lying down almost comatose, unable to move. I had fallen into an extremely depressed state, the kind of loneliness and helplessness I had experienced almost every day as a child and teenager.

There have been numerous SGI leaders over the years who have greatly encouraged and inspired me in my practice. However, it was through the additional help of a therapist that I was finally able to begin the painful but rewarding process of healing myself from the effects of my childhood, so that I could truly devote myself to my mission in the present. So, in the same way Trude went to a neurologist about her illness, I went to a psychotherapist about mine.

It was very important to me that I find a therapist whom I

WITH HIS BUDDHIST PRACTICE AS THE PRIME POINT OF HIS DEVELOPMENT, THERAPY HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN MICHAEL LISAGOR'S LIFE.

felt comfortable with and who had a supportive attitude toward my Buddhist practice, someone whom I felt a strong connection with — someone I could trust and who cared about me. I found one who had also studied Buddhist philosophy and meditation for many years and so was readily able to relate to my practice. Starting with my tremendous fear of losing Trude, I began exploring other aspects of my life that I had previously been too afraid to face.

This was not an easy process. I had to push myself through many tears and painful memories. I discovered that the messages I had assimilated as a child from an angry and abusive father and a disinterested mother greatly influenced my opinion of myself. I also realized that Buddhism and psychotherapy could be compatible. Perhaps Nichiren Daishonin could be considered a therapist! Understanding that human beings are often deluded to the truth, he wrote, "One should become the master of his mind rather than let his mind master him" (MW-1, 146). The same lessons I was learning from Nichiren Daishonin's letters from a spiritual perspective were consistent with the realizations I was having on a more personal level in psychotherapy. Some of these were: the difference between feeling I should do something, which means I don't have control, and choosing to do something; allowing myself to enjoy what there is to enjoy and to suffer what there is to suffer without judging myself; the importance of realizing that none of my attachments to people or things in this life will last forever; and not having to be busy or worried about something or like someone else to be respectable.

Trude and I just celebrated our 29th chanting and wedding anniversaries. For many years, we have chanted side by side in front of the Gohonzon. We like to think

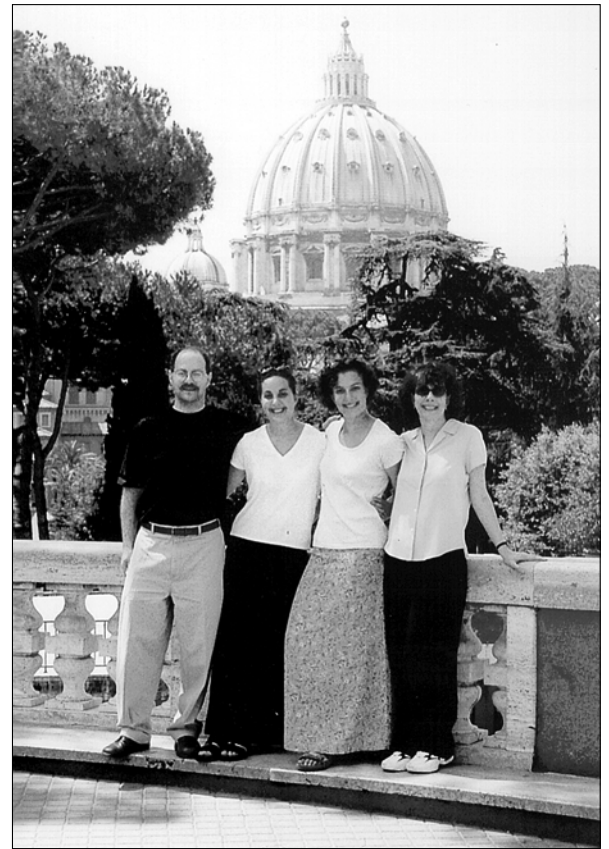
this has contributed to the strong love and unity in our family. About four months ago, we decided to chant 1 million daimoku to make significant progress in every aspect of our lives including extracting the most benefit possible from therapy. For the first time, we used the same chart to track our chanting. It was actually quite encouraging to be able to fill two boxes at a time instead of just one!

The ever-present heaviness that had plagued me has now diminished significantly. There is no way to describe how wonderful this makes me feel. I am also learning to allow myself to feel joy without guilt and to experience pain without panic. The essence of this is being able to live in the moment — something we

feeling do not always reflect the truth, and that they won't last forever, has helped me develop a more stable spiritual foundation. I am also learning new habits, new ways of thinking. My chanting has accelerated and strengthened this process. I am slowly overcoming my addiction to drama and constant turmoil, an obsession with being busy, and a belief that I have to be funny for people to like me.

With my practice well centered as the prime point of my development, therapy has played an important supportive role, much as my wife battles her illness with the help of medical professionals.


I now have a much more profound appreciation and respect for anyone who takes constructive steps toward increased self-



Mike, Megan, Jamie and Trude Lisagor in Italy, 1998.

are taught as Buddhists but that can be very elusive.

I don't feel that psychotherapy has in any way diminished my faith in Buddhism. Rather, it has enhanced my practice. I am able to sit quietly and concentrate on my prayers where before I had a difficult time focusing for more than a few minutes at a time. Accepting that the emotions I'm

awareness and self-improvement. I also believe these actions can be consistent with our Buddhist practice regardless of whether they are within or without our organizational and religious boundaries. The key isn't whether something has the correct label but whether it rings true. As Buddhists, each of us must judge that for ourselves. 

A Nighttime Kaleidoscope

PERSPECTIVE

By **DIANNE MOODY**
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.

Arriving home from a two-week business trip, I found myself jet-lagged and exhausted. My husband was due home the next day, and thus I had the opportunity to “reenter” my environment in any way I chose.



I decided to sleep out in the backyard for two

reasons — first I could cuddle with my dog, who is not allowed on the bed, and second I could share the moon and the stars with the people I had just left halfway around the world in South Africa.

I slept soundly for several hours, after which my eyes popped open and I was unable to sleep. I spent the rest of the night watching the vast kaleidoscope of moon, stars and clouds parading across a deep blue sky. I waxed and waned in and out of sleeping and waking consciousness and began to see the night sky as a metaphor for life.

I equated the clouds to my beliefs and perceptions. None of them is the “truth” but simply wisps of vapor representing my scattered and often ego-dominated thinking. I compared the more compact and longer lasting clouds to my biased and deeply entrenched views of life.

And behind both of these ever-changing perceptions was a deeper reality — the continuous blue night sky similar to the unchanging reality of our Buddha nature. I thought about the

Watching the sky from her backyard one night leads Dianne Moody ‘to see the night sky as a metaphor for life.’ She describes a ‘continuous blue night sky similar to the unchanging reality of our Buddha nature.’

shifting clouds and likened them to the process of our lives shifting within the Ten Worlds that form the reality of our lives. All the while, our Buddha nature is ever present in each of these worlds.

If I squinted, I could see elephants and raccoons, devils and angels, butterflies, stately princes and warriors, to name a few. I again realized that just as with the “truth,” no one else would see the same things I was seeing in these clouds. That brought to mind how frequently we can experience the same situation with other people and have a totally different perspective than others of the reality we have just shared.

At one point, I was convinced a star was moving rapidly across the sky. Logic told me otherwise, but I was disoriented, and for at least 15 minutes I was convinced that the star was zooming from East to West. When I used the apricot tree and nearby porch roof as reference points, I could clearly see how deceived I was — it was windy, and the fast migrating clouds were creating an il-

lusion. When I saw that I was wrong, I had to ask myself how many of my thoughts and beliefs were also an illusion. How many times do I put my reality out there as the “truth,” when in fact I am mistaken.

Just as these puffs of mist can eclipse the moon and the night sky, my vision can also be clouded by my perceptions. Of course it is always easier to see other people’s mistaken views, but perhaps I must be more suspect of my “truth.” I was also struck with the importance of looking behind our ever-changing perceptions and tapping into the unchanging reality that is our Buddha nature.

From there we can see the Truth from a much deeper perspective.

Contact Dianne Moody at moodylr@aol.com.

Verify the Source

PERSPECTIVE

By **S. D. YANA DAVIS**
JACKSON, MO.

Do you have it posted on or near your altar?

It’s called “President Ikeda’s Daily Determination.” It certainly sounds very Buddhist in spirit. It’s being distributed among leaders and members almost like a chain letter—and being taken as some special guidance



from SGI President Ikeda. But, unfortunately, it’s not by President Ikeda, even though it is a superb daily determination. And that’s why it’s never been published by the SGI in any of its publications.

The “Daily Determination” is, in fact, nearly word-for-word

“Promise Yourself,” the Optimist Creed, which the Optimists International adopted in 1922. “Promise Yourself” was penned by motivational author Christian D. Larson in his 1912 book *Your Forces and How to Use Them*.

It reads: “Promise Yourself— / To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind. / To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet. / To make all your friends feel that there is something in them. / To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true. / To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best. / To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own. / To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future. / To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet

MANY LEADERS AND MEMBERS HAVE UNKNOWINGLY BEEN CIRCULATING THE OPTIMIST CREED AS ‘PRESIDENT IKEDA’S DAILY DETERMINATION.’ THIS PROBLEM UNDERLIES THE IMPORTANCE OF VERIFYING THE SOURCE OF MATERIALS AND THEIR ACCURACY, S. D. YANA DAVIS SAYS, WHICH IS AN IMPORTANT THEME IN NICHIREN DAISHONIN’S BUDDHISM.

a smile. / To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others. / To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.”

How “Promise Yourself” was transformed into “President Ikeda’s Daily Determination” is a mystery that may never be solved. What is known is that it somehow appeared — in the form of photocopied sheets — and became popular in the SGI-USA over the last two years. At least two SGI-USA national-

level leaders assured me, while I prepared this article, that the “Daily Determination” was not by President Ikeda.

What value can we glean from knowing the truth about the “Daily Determination”? First, the importance of verifying the source of materials and their accuracy. This theme occurs in our school of Buddhism from the very first days, when Nichiren Daishonin, as a young man seeking to determine the correct Buddhist teachings, spent years studying sutras and commentaries.

The Daishonin rightly sensed that misinterpretations, inaccuracies and the like had resulted in serious, harmful distortions of Buddhist teachings. The results of following misinterpretations and distortions are exhaustively explained by the Daishonin in works such as the “Rissho Ankoku Ron.”

The second piece of value to be gained, in my opinion, is a realization that the bodhisattva spirit has long been present in American culture, even among those doubtless unfamiliar with Buddhism. President Ikeda has often suggested this; the Optimist Creed shows this. President Ikeda has pointed to great Americans, past and present, of all races, as exemplary optimists. Perhaps a little-known U.S. motivational author of the early 20th century is yet another example.

Contact Yana Davis at yanajune@clas.net

Share Your Experience With the ‘World Tribune’

Experiences in faith are among the most popular articles in the *World Tribune*. Whether told in the first or third person or in dialogue format, the story of how your life changed through practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism can deeply influence the lives of others. If you’d like your experience to be considered for publication in the *World Tribune*, please send

it to: *World Tribune*, Attn: Experiences Editor, 606 Wilshire Blvd., P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; or e-mail wt@sgi-usa.org. Please include your name, address and telephone number! Your story should be no longer than five typed pages, double-spaced (approximately 1,200 words).

LEADERS CONFERENCE

The Most Important Thing Is Kosen-rufu

SGI President Ikeda attended a conference with representative Soka Gakkai leaders from throughout Japan the evening of Feb. 3 in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. He shared the following points on leadership: "The most important thing is kosen-rufu. And it is no one other than the Soka Gakkai members who are working toward this goal. The fundamental criterion for all our undertakings is to advance kosen-rufu and make the Soka Gakkai

rock-solid. When the Gakkai is rock-solid, we can limitlessly expand our movement and lead humanity in the direction of peace and kosen-rufu. As leaders, we must unite with a solid commitment to work for the sake of kosen-rufu and the sake of our precious fellow members, no matter what happens. We must devote ourselves with deep sincerity, not relying on strategies. We must keep fighting resolutely, until we van-

quish those who seek to destroy Buddhism. We mustn't shrink back for even a moment. Only to the extent that we work for kosen-rufu will we, our families and the Gakkai be safeguarded by the protective forces of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe. I want all of you to crown your lives with such triumph that everyone will exclaim, "What great leaders they were! What wonderful lives they led!"

spoke of this event to me. In the midst of the struggle against the unspeakably evil Nazi regime, Einstein said that the Earth was just a small planet, that he believed somewhere far away there were much bigger, more important planets, perhaps nobler and happier. I understand his point well. It is similar to the Buddhist idea of countless enlightened Buddha lands existing throughout the universe.

I hope that all of you will live a youth committed to the ideal of kosen-rufu, with strong, invincible resolve, with hearts as big as the universe itself. Let's continue our efforts, without retreating even a single step, toward the 21st century!

We must press forward, forward, always forward. That's the key to victory. Never fall back even a step.

*noble goals.
Before us stands the fate of a nation —
when we, from the irrevocable fall
have preserved it and restored it to its heights,
fighting under the clear beam of the spirit,
we can say, returning to our ancestors
in the dust: "Thank you, life, for thy blessings —
this has been great joy, yea, the Work of Men!"*

Let's save those who are suffering! Let's protect the people! Let's struggle with all our might to illuminate the darkness! That is the spirit of these lines.

My friends of the youth division: The grand stage of the 21st century is now ready and waiting for you to take your places. I pray for your health, your victory and your glorious futures. I pray for an uninterrupted succession of victories for all of you.

And with a final prayer that you will bravely overcome life's tempestuous storms and enjoy a youth of great triumph and no regrets, I close my speech today.

Thank you.

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the Soka Gakkai Youth Division Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 15.

SPEECH, FROM PAGE 7

From early on, Mr. Makiguchi was absolutely clear on this: A self-serving religion, a closed, isolated religion, a religion that does not contribute to society, has no meaning. This was one starting point of the Soka Gakkai's dynamic movement of religious revolution and human revolution — a movement pursued amid the reality of this *saha* world, a realm of suffering and endurance.

Buddhism is manifested in society. The Nikken sect, which ignores the challenge of social involvement, has forgotten what Buddhism is about. They have

lost their faith and are doing their best to destroy the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Albert Einstein, whom I know Rector Kertész admires, once lamented, "It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man." This is why the field of psychology — the study of the human mind — which Rector Kertész has devoted himself to, is so important. On one level, such Buddhist teachings as a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms, the oneness of body and mind, and the oneness of life and its environment are expressions of a grand, sublime psychology.

Kosen-rufu is an eternal struggle against the mind of evil. The appearance of evil people and traitors who obstruct our path is proof of the validity of the Daishonin's Buddhism that we practice.

Live a youth committed to the ideal of kosen-rufu, with hearts as big as the universe.

A great source of pride to Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda was hearing Einstein lecture on his Theory of Relativity, when he was in Japan. Mr. Toda often

Let's save those who are suffering!

In closing, I offer my deepest prayers that Argentina's esteemed Flores University, which from today has become my precious alma mater, will enjoy eternal prosperity and success.

Please let me recite a verse from a poem by the great 19th-century folk poet, Mihály Vörösmarty of Hungary, the land of Rector Kertész's birth:

What, in this world, is our task? To struggle, according to our strength, for

ESSAY, FROM PAGE 4

centers, palaces where people can "enjoy themselves at ease" while working toward the important goal of world peace.



The great Chinese poet Po Chü-I (also known as Bo Juyi) wrote, "Make diligent efforts / to associate with the wise and honest, / and always encourage each other." The Analects of Confucius say, "A gentleman gathers friends through his culture; and with these friends, he develops his humanity." Our culture centers around the world have been the

starting points for many friendly dialogues in the pursuit of peace.

I remember fondly my dialogue with the world-renowned astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle and Dr. Chandra Wickramasinghe at Taplow Court. We spoke freely, without inhibition, of the great drama of the universe and humanity.



Our culture centers and community centers are the castles of global citizens — the SGI members.

In a letter to Toki Jonin, Nichiren Daishonin writes, "When you go to the Pure Land

of Eagle Peak, you may declare that you have built the supreme Lotus Hall [a hall for practicing the Lotus Sutra] in all Jambudvīpa [the entire world]" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 995). The significance of our culture centers, citadels of worldwide kosen-rufu, is profound indeed.

The Daishonin also says: "The Buddhas of the ten directions will all assemble in throngs and fill in the lands to the east, west, north and south, in the eight directions, the major world system and all the four hundred billion nayutas of lands. They will be seated side by side like the stars in the heavens or the rows

of rice and hemp plants on the earth, and will guard and protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra just as the various ministers and subjects guard and protect the heir of a great ruler. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 243)

The concept of a universe filled with billions of galaxies, something that was practically beyond human comprehension a few centuries ago, is now gradually being verified by scientific data.

In the same way, the validity of our pioneering movement — which has been unfolding from our community centers, castles of the Law, and spreading across the

globe — will be demonstrated in the next 50 and next 100 years. Of this I am certain.

I firmly believe that an unending stream of capable young people, who will shoulder the new era, will emerge from these precious citadels of kosen-rufu and work to realize peace in the 21st century. I look forward to them taking their place in the world.

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

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Please keep sending us your letters about the *World Tribune*. Our new address is 606 Wilshire Blvd. P.O. Box 1427 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1427; or e-mail wt@sgi-usa.org

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Gratitude for the Spanish Pages

I would like to express my gratitude for your Spanish pages every month. We use these pages in all our Hispanic Group meetings. We at the Miami Community Center have a small library with publications from SGI Latin-American countries, and also I myself have a longtime experience in translation from Japanese and English into Spanish.

Please say hello and thank you very much to all staff members and especially to Cesarina Caro for all her support.

— ALBERTO SANCHEZ,
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Thanks for the Changes

I wish to take this opportunity to commend all the great changes and the hard work all of you have put in to make the *World Tribune* such a wonderful publication. Thank you very much.

— LEW KAI KENG,
North Miami Beach, Fla.

The Real Fun

Hi, we really liked SGI President Ikeda's speech in the Jan. 8 issue. We all learned from it. We never really thought about this — that the real fun is in working toward a goal and not in the achievement of the goal. When we first read the quote from Gandhi — "joy lies in the fight, in the attempt, in the suffering involved, not in the victory itself" — we thought it was weird. But then when we thought about it some more, it kind of made sense. We had real good discussion about this.

— YOUTH DIVISION
OF ARCADIA DISTRICT,
Arcadia, Calif.

Thoughts on Ceremony

Lisa Jones' witty and mostly informative essay on formalities of gongyo "Bell, Book..." (Nov. 13, 1998, issue) captures the essential spirit of our

practice in a jestful manner. However, I'd like to comment on ceremony. Ceremony is an integral part of human civilization. It is comforting, enjoyable, calming. No wonder it's found in all religions. Of course like anything it can be distorted. However, especially today in a world that so rapidly changes, a consistent ceremony, for some, is often soothing. Thus I feel it shouldn't be treated so lightly as to deny its importance completely. While we shouldn't get stuck on ceremony, to the other end of the spectrum, we shouldn't make others uncomfortable by throwing it out the window.

There is in fact a traditional way to ring the bell — a specific number of hits at specific times during the ceremony of gongyo.... I find it soothing to hear the bell rung the same way when I chant, and somewhat unsettling when it is rung in other ways, such as at most meetings. Sometimes I wonder if the leader ever bothered to learn the tradition, and if not, why not? On the other hand, if I am tired and forget to ring the bell when performing my own gongyo, I don't chastise myself. Similarly, there is rich tradition and meaning behind the type of greens and the white candles used throughout the world on our altars, the offering of water in the morning, and the burning of incense. These things should be taught, at least, so members understand their significance and can decide for themselves whether it's important to maintain the traditions. I don't mean members should be chastised for choosing to use different candles or short-lived greens or whatever, just that they should be provided accurate information about the history and significance along with the option to make adjustments according to need.

While probably way un-PC, there's also the issue of the benefit we get for challenging ourselves for Buddhism; challenging our negativity toward, say, white

candles, or bells, or cleanliness, or consistency in providing fresh greens. As the saying goes, nothing is wasted in Buddhism, and offerings are an expression of our sincerity. Should we choose to use black candles out of rebelliousness, what kind of cause is that? Anyway, as I said, this is probably an unpopular view, though others holding it may be afraid to express it. (It's good to loosen up, but what's next — gongyo in English?)

I feel it's important to acknowledge the importance of ceremony to human life, the value of tradition, and would like to see those who lead meetings, maintain community center altars, or even hold meetings at their homes make an effort to keep a relatively traditional altar and perform a more or less traditional gongyo at those times, for the sake of the members. Remember that newer mem-

bers are often learning by example; the constant differences from place to place or person to person can be confusing, even frustrating. Some members won't express their frustration; others may inquire about the differences, but find the leader saying, "It doesn't matter" when he really means, "I don't know." If members can't handle the smell of incense or the open flame of a candle is a fire hazard, then of course, common sense should supersede ceremony. If people want to play the sax during gongyo when they are by themselves, or keep a potted plant or flowers by their private altar, that's their business, of course. But at least consider the value of ceremony and consistency and the comfort of members when acting as a leader of faith in public (or when publishing essays on the topic).

Keep up the ever-vigilant good work!

— LIZ CARTER,
Boston



SUA

Announcement

Now in its fifth year, Soka University of America's graduate school is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education.

Individuals seeking admission to the M.A. program must hold a baccalaureate or bachelor's degree with a minimum grade-point average of 2.7 or B- on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600. Applications for the 1999-2000 academic year are due by March 31. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Hwy., Calabasas, CA 91302. Telephone (818) 878-3717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu.

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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.

The Culture Department Makes a New Start

Twenty-five national representatives of the Culture Department met Jan. 30 with the Department's newly appointed leader, Eric Hauber, for their first conference in six years. The summit, held at the Los Angeles Friendship Center, began with a congratulatory message from SGI President Ikeda (see below), the announcement of new leadership appointments (see the Jan. 15 World Tribune) and encouragement from SGI-USA General Director Fred Zaitsu.

The participants powered through a full day reviewing their mission statement and discussing objectives and strategies for revitalizing the Culture Department nationwide. The conference included four sessions — a combined brainstorming session and smaller group discussions and reports. The SGI-USA Culture Department was formed by President Ikeda on Feb. 17, 1990, for the purpose of "developing capable people equipped with faith and in-

tellect" toward the development of American kosen-rufu. Consisting of various professionals — in the fields of education, academia, arts, healing arts and law — President Ikeda envisioned the Culture Department as a group that can have a great influence on society.

Amanda Rivera, principal at Ames Middle School in Chicago, gives her impression: "It was timely to clarify our mission as the Culture Department before the start of the

21st century. I feel we are now all on the same page together with President Ikeda." Wrapping up the final session, Eric Hauber refreshed everyone's resolve by reminding them of the importance of compassion as "the fundamental source of our life energy." He also reminded everyone of President Ikeda's strategy to always focus on the here and now, to put 100 percent into every meeting and personal encounter.

—STEPHANIE CELANO



Representative Culture Department members from across the country meet at the Los Angeles Friendship Center for a conference on Jan. 30. They discussed objectives and strategies for revitalizing the department.

Photos by Gregory Nakasuji



Capable People of Shining Intellect

To the members of the SGI-USA Culture Department, who are traveling through the era of wisdom, congratulations on your departure under the new leadership of SGI-USA Culture Department Leader Eric Hauber.

In 1990, during the opening of a new era for American kosen-rufu, I formed the SGI-USA Culture Department. This was because I firmly believed

that producing promising capable people equipped with faith and intellect would be vital for the development of America.

As we approach the 21st century, I want each of you to deeply confirm this fundamental reason for the department's formation by fostering a steady stream of capable people, who are brimming with hope, in your land of freedom.

I ask each of you, who are taking leadership for the next generation, to study Buddhism more deeply and seriously than ever before. Also, side by side with the members, please broaden the circle of dialogue filled with sincere encouragement and assiduously polish your compassion and wisdom.

I am looking forward to meeting all of you, capable people of shining intellect, in the United States soon.

Jan. 30
SGI President Ikeda

Propagación Foco del Primer Trimestre del 1999

Foto por GREGORY NAKASUJI



(De izq. a der.) Renu Jiandani, Div. Juvenil Fem. Wendy Clark, Div. de Damas. James Herrman, Div. Juvenil Masc. Richard Sasaki, Div. de Caballeros.

El World Tribune pidió a cuatro líderes nacionales de la SGIUSA que compartieran sus ideas sobre el tópico de la propagación, foco de la SGIUSA durante el primer trimestre del 1999 (diciembre 1998 – febrero 1999).

Renu Jiandani (Div. Juvenil Femenina): En la Conferencia Central Ejecutiva en diciembre, los líderes juveniles de toda la nación determinaron apoyar el foco en la propagación, ayudando a crear reuniones mensuales de discusión jubilosas y celebrando reuniones introductorias auspiciadas por la juventud, para conmemorar el 16 de marzo.

Si miramos a nuestro alrededor, hay muchos ejemplos de jóvenes que sufren o se sienten insatisfechos con la vida diaria. Recuerdo una amiga que, hace nueve años, me llamó con un problema. En ese momento tenía dos hijos pequeños, estaba encinta de un tercero, y tenía problemas familiares. Ella se quería ir. Yo no tenía experiencia alguna con tales asuntos y no sabía cómo o qué podía hacer para ayudarla. Había sólo una cosa que podía expresarle con confianza— le conté sobre el Gohonzon y compartí mi propia experiencia. Ella comenzó a practicar. Hoy día, ella y sus hijos están activos en su distrito. Siempre expresa un profundo agradecimiento por ese periodo durante el cual pudo encontrar la SGI. Al presenciar el crecimiento en su vida, yo he ganado aún más confianza y con-

vicción en mi práctica, y puedo lidiar con cualquier lucha personal o sentido de in satisfacción con esperanza y optimismo.

A través de esta experiencia, llegué a comprender verdaderamente lo que quiere decir el presidente Ikeda en el poema "Sol de Jiyu Sobre una Nueva Tierra" cuando escribe: "Las personas sólo pueden vivir a plenitud / ayudando a otros a vivir. / Cuando das vida a los amigos / vives en realidad."

Al principio no asocié esta experiencia de propagación con el 16 de marzo, pero mientras más pensaba sobre compartir esta práctica con otros, me di cuenta que el 16 de marzo de 1958 es el día en que el mentor pasó la batuta a sus discípulos. Aquellos 6,000 discípulos hicieron un compromiso de llevar a cabo el kosen-rufu. Desde entonces, el kosen-rufu se ha expandido hasta llegar a ser un movimiento mundial basado en muchos tremendos esfuerzos de compartir esta práctica con amigos, familiares y la comunidad.

En otra porción de poema, el presidente Ikeda escribe: "Mis amados amigos, / Bodhisattvas de la Tierra, / ¡Preparándose para el amanecer del nuevo siglo! / con sus propios esfuerzos / hagan surgir un renacimiento aquí, / ¡en esta 'tierra magnética'!"

Este es el último 16 de marzo de este siglo. Igual que los 6,000 jóvenes en 1958, hagamos de este 16 de marzo una expresión de nuestra determinación sólida

y compromiso para dar la bienvenida al nuevo milenio, conjuntamente con nuestro mentor.

Wendy Clark (Div. de Damas): Es importante tener en mente que la voluntad de Nichiren Daishonin es compartir este Budismo con el mayor número de personas posible. La propagación es parte esencial de nuestra práctica personal en la fe, y es la misión de nuestra organización ayudar a los individuos a lograr una felicidad indestructible a través de su práctica.

Una reunión introductoria tiene los componentes para hacer que una actividad sea exitosa. Primero, el ingrediente más poderoso es la oración. Nuestra oración unida realza nuestra habilidad de comunicar el Budismo del Daishonin a otros. Éste es el primer paso desde donde surge toda planificación y preparación. A través de la oración de cada persona (entonar Nam-myohorenge-kyo), podemos crear una atmósfera cálida y cómoda en la cual los invitados puedan sentirse en la tranquilidad de poder establecer un diálogo.

En estas reuniones hay que prestar atención a muchos detalles, pero lo más crucial son las experiencias. La calidad de las experiencias y la habilidad de los miembros de relacionar estas experiencias con su práctica es lo que hace la verdadera diferencia. El contenido puede variar desde darse cuenta de algo sobre la vida, hasta el vencer un grave obstáculo — la clave es conec-

tarlo a nuestra fe en el Gohonzon e invocar Nam-myohorenge-kyo. En un mundo cerrado y frío, compartir el corazón es lo que conmueve a las personas. Los invitados podrán identificarse con las luchas del diario vivir. También es muy útil incluir explicaciones de la práctica básica y sobre la organización de la SGI en el ámbito mundial. Hay muchas maneras de presentar este material, incluyendo el uso de videos. Es natural llevar a cabo una sesión de preguntas y respuestas. Asegúrense de que las contestaciones sean claras y concisas para que los invitados se sientan satisfechos e inspirados. He encontrado que algunos invitados preguntan sobre este Budismo con relación a otras religiones. La honradez y la franqueza se agradecerán.

Como expresan *Los Escritos Principales de Nichiren Daishonin* (vol. 1, pág. 23): "Cuando estén unidos así, aún la gran esperanza del kosen-rufu se cumplirá sin fallar."

James Herrmann (Div. Juvenil Masc.): En 1986, estaba destacado en una barco de la marina estadounidense en el golfo pérsico. Era el punto álgido de la crisis de Libia. En ese entonces, tenía 19 años y era la primera vez que experimentaba el practicar Budismo sólo, lejos de mi hogar. Tenía miedo y temía que jamás volviera a ver a mi familia y amigos de la SGI otra vez.

Mi práctica se hizo extremadamente difícil. Mi barco tenía una tripulación de 5,000 y yo era el único practicante de este Budismo. Con frecuencia hacía el gongyo en mi cama o en algún lugar del barco. Esto continuó por alrededor de cuatro meses en alta mar. Cierta día después de terminar de hacer el gongyo, me surgió la idea de que quería entronizar el Gohonzon en la capilla del barco. Así que fui al capellán del barco y le expliqué todo sobre mi práctica y mi deseo de entronizar el Gohonzon. Parecía comprensivo sobre mi situación y preguntó cuántos practicantes había entre la tripulación del barco.

Cuando expresé que yo era el único, afirmó que no podía permitir que cada persona que tuviera una religión diferente entronizara su objeto de veneración en la capilla. Dijo que según la política del barco, tenía que haber por lo menos ocho practicantes de cierta religión para justificar el uso de la capilla. ¿Ocho? ¿Por qué ocho? Entonces explicó porque eran ocho y reafirmó que era la

política del barco. Al concluir nuestra reunión, mencionó que yo estaba bienvenido a asistir a cualquiera de los otros servicios religiosos disponibles en la capilla del barco.

Demás está decir, me sentí decepcionado y sin esperanza. Así que, esa noche, buscando alivio, escribí una larga carta a mi madre explicando en gran detalle mi reunión con el capellán. Compartí mis sentimientos de desesperanza y dificultad de practicar por cuenta propia. Envié la carta a mi mamá y dos semanas más tarde recibí contestación. Era sólo una postal para que los invitados se sientan satisfechos e inspirados. He encontrado que algunos invitados preguntan sobre este Budismo con relación a otras religiones. La honradez y la franqueza se agradecerán.

La mayoría de mis amigos ya sabían de mi práctica, muchos la respetaban, algunos se burlaban. De todos modos, comencé a hacer daimoku para tener la valentía de presentarles el Budismo. Asombrosamente, mientras más daimoku ofrecía de esta manera, más me preguntaban mis amigos sobre la práctica. Ya en un mes había presentado esta práctica a siete de mis amigos. Entonces, nuevamente hice una cita con el capellán y le dije que ya teníamos ocho practicantes del Budismo del Daishonin en nuestro barco y le proveí con una lista de nuestros nombres. Sin duda quedó pasmado y un tanto escéptico. Pero me proveyó con la llave de la capilla del barco y me concedió el uso de la misma. Desde ese entonces, cada mañana y cada noche los miembros de la tripulación a través del barco escucharon el anuncio público "El gongyo matutino se llevará a cabo en la capilla del barco, El gongyo vespertino se llevará a cabo en la capilla del barco."

A través de esta experiencia me di cuenta de que había olvidado que la clave para la navegación segura hacia la felicidad no es otra cosa que presentar esta maravillosa práctica a nuestros amigos. Este fundamental acto compasivo no sólo nos ayudará a vencer nuestro propio sufrimiento, sino que proveerá a nuestros amigos un navío para alcanzar la orilla de sus propios sueños.

Richard Sasaki (Div. de Caballeros): La reunión de discusión es la principal arena en nuestra organización donde podemos llevar a cabo esfuerzos para compartir este Budismo con otros.

La Propagación y AutoReformación

La práctica del Sutra del Loto es shakubuku, la refutación de las doctrinas provisionales.

(Los principales escritos de Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pág. 101)

Por TED MORINO

CONSEJERO PRINCIPAL DEPTO. DE ESTUDIO DE LA SGI-USA

Nichiren Daishonin cita este pasaje del Significado Profundo del Sutra del Loto escrito por T'ien-t'ai en su "Sobre la Práctica de las Enseñanzas del Buda" para ilustrar el beneficio personal y social que proviene de la práctica de shakubuku — refutar lo provisional (lo superficial) y revelar la verdad (lo profundo). A través de las palabras de T'ien-t'ai, el Daishonin también nos enseña que el espíritu del Sutra del Loto es claramente señalar la superficialidad a los demás, así ayudando a despertar a la Ley o a su naturaleza de Buda que existe en lo más profundo de sus vidas.

El movimiento de la SGI es de propagación de la Ley basado en descartar filosofías superficiales e iluminando la verdad que conduce las vidas de las personas hacia una revitalización permanente, una reformación y una realización. Un bodhisattva vive tal propagación. En el budismo, una persona que propaga las enseñanzas de esta manera se define como un emisario del Buda. Un emisario es un representante totalmente facultado, y a los emisarios del Buda se les puede llamar así porque sus vidas se basan en su Budeidad innata.

El presidente de la SGI,

Señor Ikeda escribe sobre como la propagación permite "a otros descartar sus apegos a puntos de vista incorrectos, los cuales les traen dudas sobre su manera superficial de vivir. Este es un acto noble a través del cual enseñamos a otras personas una verdadera forma de vida y les enseñamos el eterno y correcto camino hacia una existencia feliz. No hay una atadura más grande o más misericordiosa para los seres humanos".

Mientras que la propagación dentro de la SGI-USA tradicionalmente se le ha referido como shakubuku el término en realidad es un término fuerte. Implica romper las ataduras que otras ideologías inferiores tienen sobre las personas, causándoles infelicidad. Como no somos una nación con una larga tradición de practicar formas provisionales del budismo, en general, la propagación en este país ha sido una de introducir el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin sin pedirle a las personas que abandonen sus filosofías personales.

Ayudar a otras personas a comenzar la magnífica práctica del Budismo del Daishonin y romper las cadenas de la confusión que proviene de una perspectiva incorrecta de la vida requiere extraer cualidades importantes dentro de nosotros mismos como la misericordia,

el coraje, la perseverancia, la sabiduría, la calma y la sensibilidad. Cada cualidad es un aspecto de nuestra Budeidad innata. Por lo tanto, compartir este budismo con otros afecta directamente el florecimiento de nuestra humanidad. La propagación que se lleva a cabo de esta manera es entonces un gran bien tanto para el que da como para el que recibe.

Así que un paso hacia establecer una forma de vida de felicidad absoluta puede ser tan sencillo como preguntarnos. "¿A quien voy a introducir a una vida más feliz basada en el entendimiento y la práctica de las enseñanzas del Daishonin?"

En el "Rissho Ankoku Ron," Nichiren Daishonin dilucida la importancia de reformar el dogma que llevamos en el corazón. El da énfasis a la necesidad de lograr una victoria interna al reconocer la Ley suprema — y nuestras mejores cualidades — en nuestro propio ser. Cada uno de nosotros nacemos en una cultura y un contexto educacional diferentes, sin embargo, las diferentes circunstancias y las perspectivas superficiales de nuestro contexto pueden contribuir a que no estemos conscientes que nuestro verdadero potencial ha estado oculto.

El acto de la propagación, por lo tanto, también puede ser el

proceso mediante el cual refutamos nuestra propia superficialidad y limitaciones. De cierto sentido, el propósito de la práctica budista es volver a encontrar el yo "perdido" que ha estado ocultado dentro de nosotros mismos. Extraer nuestra Budeidad inherente se expresa en el capítulo "Duración de la Vida" del Sutra del Loto como "Desde que logré la Budeidad."

El propósito de la práctica budista es de continuamente tratar de revelar el ser más profundo, fuerte y puro que existe dentro de nosotros y de ayudar a otras personas a hacer lo mismo.

Así escribió el presidente Ikeda en su poema "El Sol de Jiyu Sobre una Nueva Tierra":

*¡Mis amigos!,
Comprendan, por favor les pido,
que ya poseen
la solución a este dilema.
Primero deben romper el duro
casarón de su yo inferior.
Esto es imperioso y debe ser llevado a cabo.
Luego, dirijan la mirada
lúcida hacia sus amigos,
hacia sus compañeros.*

(Traducción del World Tribune, 1 de enero, 1999. Por: Ossie Lecuona, Nueva York)

PROPAGACIÓN, DE LA PÁG. A

En su "Pensamientos Sobre la Nueva Revolución Humana", con el título de "Nuestra Valiente Propagación del Budismo," el Presidente de la SGI, Daisaku Ikeda escribe: "La Propagación es la sangre vital de una religión. Una religión sin esfuerzos de propagación ha abandonado la función básica de la religión — que es extender una mano a las personas y ayudarles. Como él menciona, el espíritu de ayudar a aquellos que estén luchando y sufriendo es parte importante de nuestra práctica, una que siempre debemos tener en mente.

Los sucesivos presidentes de la Soka Gakkai han sido todos campeones de la propagación. En el mismo artículo, el presidente Ikeda menciona: "Cuando el Sr. Toda se convirtió en el segundo presidente de la Soka Gakkai e hizo su compromiso de alcanzar una membresía de 750,000 hogares, yo prometí, 'El Sr. Toda es mi mentor en la propagación; como discípulo suyo me comprometo a convertirme en un verdadero campeón de la propagación.' Y habiendo hecho ese compromiso, me lancé con tesón a este reto, creando la oleada de una propagación sin precedentes en Kamata, en Bunkyo, en Osaka, en Yamaguchi."

Bajo el liderato del Sr. Toda, el presidente Ikeda creó una asombrosa victoria de propagación en cada área por la cual asumió responsabilidad. Él sabía que el corazón de su mentor era compartir este Budismo con todas aquellas personas que estuvieran sufriendo en la sociedad, e hizo de esto su corazón también. Desde la muerte del Sr. Toda, el presidente Ikeda ha conducido la propagación mundial del Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin, respondiendo nuevamente a las expectativas de su mentor.

La historia de la Soka Gakkai es una de propagación — un esfuerzo por ayudar a las personas en la sociedad. En la

SGI-USA, creemos, similarmente, una historia de propagación donde extendamos una mano a amigos y familiares, y compartamos este Budismo con ellos para que puedan alcanzar la felicidad. Yo mismo logré presentar esta práctica a un miembro nuevo el año pasado y me sentí tan feliz de ver su entusiasmo y el crecimiento en su vida. Creo que si cada uno de nosotros comienza con el espíritu de propagación primero, podemos crear todos una gran victoria en 1999.

(Traducción del World Tribune, 22 de enero, 1999. Por: Andy Sanchez, San Juan, PR)

Poemas del Presidente Ikeda

El día de su cumpleaños. 2 de enero, el presidente Ikeda compuso tres poemas de agradecimiento al esfuerzo infatigable que sus compañeros de fe están dedicando al Kosen-rufu en el mundo entero.

Poemas dedicados a todos los miembros

*

En el día de mi cumpleaños, saludo a la cumbre nevada del monte Fuji.

*

Bajo la luz del sol, radiante nuestra magnífica Soka.

*

Cual majestuoso Sol matinal, luminosa nuestra deslumbrante Soka.

EXPERIENCIA

Cambiando Mi Vida

María Paniagua reta su circunstancias como inmigrante sin residencia en este país y se lanza a triunfar. "Muchas veces, incontables veces, me sentaba frente al Gohonzon a entonar daimoku, mientras me bebía mis lágrimas de impotencia y tristeza, pero al mismo tiempo de resolución y de coraje. No quería sucumbir, había venido con metas y tenía que lograrlas."

Por **MARIA PANIAGUA**
NUEVA JERSEY

Una hermosa y cálida mañana de junio del año 1987, en Santo Domingo, me dirigía a la Universidad O & M en donde yo enseñaba, cuando se me acercó alguien que ya conocía y me dijo: "diga estas palabras Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, y logrará todo lo que usted desee en la vida." Como yo me encontraba en una etapa de búsqueda espiritual, no me fué difícil empezar a entonarlas, después de todo, me dije, no pierdo nada con probar. Tan pronto empecé a entonar estas místicas palabras un cambio se iba operando dentro de mí. Sentía un estado de tranquilidad, de confianza, de alegría interior que antes no tenía.

Maravillada por todos estos beneficios inconspicuos (ahora lo sé, antes no tenía la menor idea de lo que me ocurría), le pregunté a esa persona acerca de la significación y procedencia de esas maravillosas palabras, pero sabía tanto como yo, es decir, ella no practicaba el Budismo, pero me puso en contacto con una persona (Kennedy Ortiz) que tenía muchos años en la práctica y quien me guió en mis primeros pasos en el conocimiento del Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin, mi eterno agradecimiento a esas dos personas que me abrieron la puerta de una nueva vida. Seis meses más tarde de mi encuentro causal, recibía mi Gohonzon y por consiguiente, el inicio de una nueva vida para mí y mi fa-

milia.

Desde entonces, mi práctica constante y mi fe inquebrantable, unido al seguimiento de las orientaciones del Presidente Ikeda y de mis líderes inmediatos así como también la dedicación al estudio y a las actividades de los distintos grupos a los cuales he pertenecido, me han remunerado una incontable cantidad de beneficios y experiencias que sería prolijo enumerar, pero que van (para dar una idea) desde la determinación de venir a los Estados Unidos con visa de paseo en viaje de exploración y quedarme, hasta la recuperación total de uno de mis hijos (Omar) de una enfermedad que el diagnóstico de los médicos calificó como irreversible.

A una edad en que muchas mujeres en mi país están pensando en retirarse, yo vine a los Estados Unidos en el 1989 pensando empezar una nueva vida con mi Gohonzon en mi cartera y como equipaje mis metas, determinaciones y fe. Una de mis determinaciones fue la de nunca trabajar en una factoría y lograr trabajar y desarrollarme en mi campo: la educación. Fué recibida en Nueva Jersey por unas primas a quienes les estoy eternamente agradecida por el apoyo y cariño que he recibido. Tres semanas después de mi arribo a este país, fué contratada para trabajar como ayudante de ama de llaves en un pueblito en Massachussetts. Menciono esto porque la soledad y el alejamiento en que me encontré durante 5 meses me sirvieron para

fortalecer mi práctica y una gran capacidad de entonar daimoku por horas, pues era la única forma de combatir la tristeza por la separación familiar.

A mi regreso a Nueva Jersey, mi condición de indocumentada me impidió conseguir trabajo, y sin pensarlo mucho, decidí lanzarme a la lucha por mi cuenta, y me mudé a Nueva York, en donde consideraba había más y mejores oportunidades. Aunque la situación precaria continuaba, mi práctica se mantenía constante unida al imperioso deseo de ponerme en contacto con los miembros de la SGI-USA. No fue sino hasta principios de 1990 cuando alguien me llevó al Centro Cultural en Nueva York, y allí me pusieron en contacto con un grupo en el Bronx: ¡Había encontrado la familia Gakkai!

A partir de entonces empecé de nuevo a llevar a cabo el principio de: práctica, estudio y actividades; y aunque no tenía un trabajo estable, lograba producir para subsistir ya fuera limpiando un apartamento, vendiendo productos de belleza o substituyendo un maestro en algún instituto de idiomas.

Pasaron los meses y la situación de trabajo y económica era cada vez más difícil de sostener. Las entrevistas de trabajo doméstico por alguna desconocida razón eran infructuosas y, aunque había determinado no trabajar en factorías, no tuve más opción que solicitar en dos o tres de ellas, también infructuosamente. Muchas veces, incontables veces, me sentaba frente a mi

Gohonzon a entonar daimoku, mientras me bebía mis lágrimas de impotencia y tristeza, pero al mismo tiempo de resolución y de coraje. No quería sucumbir, había venido con metas y tenía que lograrlas. No importaba que tuviera que pedir prestado algún traje para una entrevista de trabajo; y que mi abrigo de invierno hubiera dado calor a muchos cuerpos antes que al mío; ni que alguna vez en la mañana no tuviera con que comer.

Lo único que importaba era que allí tenía a mi Gohonzon y una familia Gakkai que me apoyaba, me daba ánimos alentándome siempre a seguir adelante. Entre esos miembros tan preciados quiero hacer especial mención de Mrs. Kurima a quien llamo mi madre espiritual y a la Dra. Hazel Dubois.

Todo ese tiempo de (10 meses) de inactividad laboral lo aproveché para hacer las gestiones de mi residencia y para

llevar a cabo el proceso de solicitud y adquisición de mi licencia de maestra. Aunque los obstáculos no faltaron en ambos procesos, mi fe, mi determinación y mi daimoku lograron vencerlo todo.

De pronto todo empezó a cambiar, para octubre de 1990 empecé a trabajar como encargada de una oficina médica en Brooklyn, así pues, pude recibir a mi hija Deborah quien quería tener su primer bebé a mi lado como una recompensa a mi pena de no haber estado en su boda. En diciembre del mismo año obtuve la residencia americana, y en enero del 1991 me llegó mi



primera licencia provisional de maestra. A partir de abril del 1991 empecé a trabajar como maestra en el sistema de educación pública de la ciudad de Nueva York. La nueva meta era pues, lograr cumplir todos los requisitos que exigía el Ministerio de Educación de la ciudad y del Estado de Nueva York para obtener la certificación permanente. Aunque los requisitos eran muchos y muy difíciles, yo estaba plenamente segura que los lograría. En la vida todo es cuestión de tener una firme determinación y tomar acción. Como dice el presidente Ikeda en una de sus guías diarias: "No importa cuan dolorosa sea la situación en que estés, debes perseverar y supera cada obstáculo con fe. En efecto, si persistes en tu fe, el sufrimiento que experimentes hoy, el cual diría que es pequeño, definitivamente te permitirá acumular cientos de miles de veces más fortuna y gloria en tu vida."

Mi práctica constante y mi inquebrantable fe me han permitido superar incontables obstáculos en estos nueve años y medio que tengo en este país. No me canso de dar gracias a Gohonzon por todos los beneficios obtenidos. Desde hace más de dos años tengo la certificación permanente tanto del Estado como de la ciudad de Nueva York. Soy ciudadana, he estudiado en europa, he viajado, pero sobre todo, tengo una hermosa y sana familia, mis hijos (los tres varones) están aquí conmigo y las dos hembras (que por ahora no les interesa vivir aquí) se encuentran en la República Dominicana.

Cada nuevo día y cada nuevo año, nuevas metas y nuevas determinaciones me trazo como reto a mí misma con la absoluta seguridad que a través de mis acciones basadas en mi fe en el Gohonzon todo es posible.

Termino mi experiencia con otra de las guías del presidente Ikeda, que para mí han sido mi norte e inspiración de cada día: "la fe no existe fuera de la realidad de su vida diaria. El gran beneficio del Gohonzon aparece en la vida diaria de uno y en su relación con la sociedad. El budismo expone la gran Ley que nos capacita resolver los problemas prácticos. Por consiguiente, cuando los problemas y dificultades aparecen usted debe primero enfrentar al Gohonzon y dedicarse a una fuerte práctica de fe."

(Daily Guidance, vol 4, 21 de noviembre)

¿Qué significa calumniar el Sutra del Loto? Si lo hago, se partirá mi cabeza en siete pedazos?

Por Akemi Baynes

El término japonés *hobo*, es generalmente traducido como 'calumnia' en realidad significa 'quebrantar la ley'. En el caso del Sutra del Loto, cualquier pensamiento, palabra o acción que traicione el espíritu o intención de la Ley Universal expresada en el Sutra equivale a 'quebrantar la Ley'. La enseñanza principal del Sutra del Loto es que todo el mundo y todas las cosas poseen la Budeidad. Cuando recitamos el Sutra del Loto y entonamos Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, estamos alabando la Budeidad en todas las cosas y en todas las personas. Calumniamos el Sutra del Loto cuando negamos decha Budeidad.

Por supuesto, las personas que no practican el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin no están conscientes de que toda vida posee la naturaleza de Buda. Sin embargo, ya que la Ley Universal de causa y efecto es absoluta, aquellas personas ignorantes de esta Ley, aun cuando su intención sea no lastimar, denigran dicha Ley a través de su ignorancia de la existencia de la misma.

Por ejemplo, supongamos que estamos irritados por el comportamiento de alguien que nos desagrada. Si nos quejamos y criticamos tal persona a sus espaldas, en ese momento estamos negando no solamente su naturaleza de Buda, sino también la nuestra. Basado en el Sutra del Loto, Nichiren Daishonin aclaró que la naturaleza de Buda. Las quejas y las críticas son difamadoras de ésta. Ellas nos dañan a nosotros al igual que aquéllos que las escuchan, y ¡ellas ciertamente no ayudan a la persona acerca de quien nos estamos quejando!

En *Guías de la fe*, el señor Izumi describe cómo él preguntó al primer Presidente de la Soka Gakkai Makiguchi acerca de un pasaje del capítulo 28 del Sutra del Loto. Este pasaje lista las serias consecuencias que acarrea para aquéllos quienes 'ven a una persona que acepta y apoya este sutra y trata de exponer sus faltas o maldad, ya sea que lo que dice sea cierto o no'

(pág. 66) El señor Izumi estaba preocupado acerca de la frase 'ya sea que lo que dice sea cierto o no,' aduciendo que era absurdo no señalar las faltas de una persona, si las acciones de la persona eran en realidad destructivas. En respuesta, el señor Makiguchi dijo: "Todo se reduce a si usted tiene misericordia. Si usted señala los errores de otro miembro con deseo sincero de ayudarlo a corregirse, usted está haciendo bien. Por otro lado, si usted lo hace solo por criticarlo o menospreciarlo, entonces aunque lo que usted señale sea cierto, usted está haciendo mal". (ibid, pág. 66.)

Si abrigamos rencor en contra de la gente, les ridiculizamos a sus espaldas, o hacemos algo para lastimarles, ¿cómo podría nuestra acción ser misericordiosa? Cualquiera de estos pensamientos, palabras o acciones constituyen calumnia del Sutra del Loto.

Como cualquier persona que haya tratado de entrenar un perro sabe, la forma más rápida de hacerlo es premiarle la conducta correcta en vez de castigar la incorrecta. Cuando hacemos Gongyo de mañana y tarde, recitamos porciones del Sutra del Loto, el cual es una alabanza poderosa a la vida. Tal como señala Nichiren Daishonin: "Los 28 capítulos del Sutra del Loto contienen solo unos cuantos pasajes respecto de elucidar la verdad, en cambio contienen muchas palabras de alabanza." (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol 5, pág. 203).

Somos afortunados en haber encontrado una poderosa filosofía y práctica que nos enseña una forma positiva de vivir. Ese es el propósito de la religión. Nuestra práctica diaria nos reconecta con la Ley Universal de la Vida, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Cuando entonamos Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, estamos expresando el deseo de reconocer la Budeidad en nosotros mismos al igual que en los demás. Y cuando tomamos acción para compartir las enseñanzas del Daishonin, surgen nuestras cualidades positivas, de esta forma nuestra auto estima crece

y podemos realmente comenzar a valorarnos y atesorarnos a nosotros mismos.

Todos cometemos calumnias menores constantemente; ¡somos seres humanos! Pero el entonar Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, a la vez que alentamos a los demás a hacer lo mismo, es tan poderoso que podemos purificar nuestras vidas de cualquier efecto negativo. Nichiren Daishonin nos asegura esto:

"Hay muchos grados de calumnia. Aun entre aquéllos que abrazan el Sutra del Loto, muy pocos lo profesan tanto en su mente como en sus acciones. Pero aquéllos que profesan fe en el mismo, no sufrirán retribución grave, aunque hayan cometido ofensas menores contra el budismo. Su fe fuerte les permitirá expiar sus faltas, tan cierto es esto, como que una inundación apagaría fuegos pequeños." (MW-3, 157.)

Tal como indica el Daishonin, hay diversos grados de calumnia. Si entonamos Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, pero continuamos negando la Budeidad dentro de nosotros mismos, o en nuestro ambiente social y físico, los efectos serán más serios que el negar la Ley Universal, debido a que seamos ignorantes respecto de la existencia de la misma.

En otro escrito, Nichiren Daishonin afirma:

Atesore estas enseñanzas en su corazón y recuerde siempre que los creyentes en el Sutra del Loto deberán ser los últimos en abusar los unos de los otros. todos aquéllos que profesen fe en el Sutra del Loto son ciertamente Budas, y aquél que calumnia un Buda comete una ofensa grave. (MW-3, 208.)

Por lo tanto, las acciones de Nikken Abe son de gran gravedad. Apesar de que invoca Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, la cual alaba la Budeidad en toda la vida, él ha excomulgado veinte millones de miembros de la SGI, de esta manera trantando de

desunir la conexión de los miembros de la SGI con la vida iluminada de Nichiren Daishonin y desdeñando sus deseos y esfuerzos en pos del Kosen-rufu. Sus acciones no están sólo afectando su propia karma, él y los sacerdotes que lo están apoyando están deliberadamente ejecutando influencias destructivas que están afectando el futuro de nuestra sociedad y nuestro planeta. Nuestro deseo de que Nikken no permanezca en la posición de Sumo Prelado es por lo tanto misericordioso quitarlo de su posición lo prevendrá de hacer causas tan graves.

El capítulo 26 del Sutra del Loto afirma. 'Si hay quienes perturben a aquéllos que enseñan la Ley, sus cabezas serán partidas en siete pedazos.' Esta frase también esta inscrita en el Gohonzon. Aun cuando esto pueda sonar drástico, ello significa que cualquiera que trate de obstruir o traicionar el espíritu de la Ley Universal sufrirá confusión mental, lo que significa incapacidad para percibir y juzgar las cosas correctamente.

Si no poseemos un marco de referencia firme en el cual basar nuestras decisiones, es difícil vivir armoniosamente y misericordiosamente con aquellos alrededor de nosotros. La conducta poco misericordiosa y destructiva puede deslizarse dentro de nuestras vidas y asentarse profundamente en ella. La secuela de sufrimiento que esto ocasiona conduce a un círculo vicioso de confusión moral y desorden mental.

Sin embargo, el Gohonzon también tiene la inscripción, 'Aquellos que hagan ofrendas acumularán buena fortuna que sobrepasa los diez títulos honorarios (del Buda). Por tanto, me gustaría voltear la pregunta de su lado deprimente de la calumnia hacia enfocarnos en los beneficios de nuestra práctica. Después de todo, preocuparse demasiado acerca de los efectos de la calumnia es completamente contrario a una de las características primarias del Buda — valentía o ausencia de miedo.

Nuestra práctica no se trata de culpa o preocupación. Por tanto, en vez de deprimirnos por la calumnia, usemos nuestras energías en una forma más positiva y ¡hagamos nuestras vidas más fáciles para nosotros mismos! Ya que como dice Nichiren Daishonin, citando el Sutra del Loto:

Si hay alguien que busca el camino del Buda y... (junta sus manos en presencia y recita innumerables versos de alabanza, debido a estas alabanzas al buda, obtendrá innumerables bendiciones.) Y si alguien alaba y apoya aquéllos que protegen este sutra, su buena fortuna será mayor' (MW-7, 94.)

La filosofía budista provee una guía para vivir una existencia satisfactoria y plena de valores positivos. Entonando Nam-myoho-enge-kyo a la vez que desplegamos las acciones de los Bodhisattvas de la tierra, nos convertimos en personas capaces de ver la Budeidad en todas las cosas.

El Presidente Ikeda describe a estas personas con esta mentalidad como "Bodhisattvas Budas". Al guiar a otros a practicar el Budismo de Nichiren Daishonin, estamos purificando nuestras propias vidas, nuestras acciones están, por lo tanto, completamnte en ritmo con la Ley Universal. En consecuencia, no podemos fallar en ver prueba real en nuestras propias vidas.

Cuando podemos ver lo mejor en las personas, y en cada situación, podemos experimentar verdadero júbilo. Por tanto, paremos de preocuparnos por la calumnia y concentremos en celebrarnos los unos a los otros, nuestros amigos nuestros colegas y nuestra familia, sintámonos agradecidos por la vida. Esto es lo que significa alabar el Sutra del Loto.

(Traducción del *UK Express*, Taplow Court, noviembre 98. Por: Miriam Pinilla West Palm Beach, Florida)