

# living BUDDHISM

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*Living Buddhism* is the monthly journal of the SGHUSA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

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# GLOSSARY

## Buddha

“Enlightened One.” One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

## Gohonzon

The fundamental object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, expressing in graphic form the life-state of Buddhahood, which all people inherently possess. *Go* means *worthy of honor* and *honzon* means *object of fundamental respect*.

## karma

Sanskrit word meaning *action*. The life tendency or destiny each individual creates through thoughts, words and deeds that exert an often unseen influence over one’s future.

## kosen-rufu

Literally, it means to *widely declare and spread* (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

## Lotus Sutra

The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members’ daily Buddhist practice.

## Nam-myoho-rence-kyo

The fundamental law expounded in

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it expresses the true aspect of life. Chanting it allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the essential law of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *rence* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (Buddha’s teaching), all phenomena.

## Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82)

The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of devotion, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one’s mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as the universal practice for attaining enlightenment. *Daishonin* is an honorific title that means *great sage*.

## Shakyamuni

Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in India (present day southern Nepal) about twenty-five hundred years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

## Ten Worlds

Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (or Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. The Ten Worlds are also interpreted as states of life.

## living BUDDHISM

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## Frequently Cited Sources

*For convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:*

—*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin:* **WND**, followed by the page number.

—*Gosho Zenshu:* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese) **GZ**, followed by the page number.

—*The Lotus Sutra*, by Burton Watson: **LS**, followed by the chapter and page number.

# A NEW COMMON SENSE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

F R O M   T H E   G E N E R A L   D I R E C T O R

**F**ebruary is always a significant time for the SGI. February 16 is the date of Nichiren Daishonin's birth, and on February 11, we also celebrate the 100th anniversary of President Toda's birth.

These important dates are a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the spirit of selfless dedication exhibited by both the founder of our school of Buddhism and by the successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai who established our lay Buddhist organization. While we may be well acquainted with the persecutions and struggles they underwent, their effort and dedication amidst tremendous deprivation and difficulty are unimaginable. We who practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at the dawn of the 21st century don't face their hardships. But we do possess a profound mission to build upon their work into the new millennium.

February is also a time to reflect upon the events ten years ago when President Ikeda made his historic visit to the United States. As I read and reread the guidance he gave us on that occasion, its profundity and significance become clearer to me. I am convinced that his words are not simply for those who heard them a decade ago; rather, they teach us important principles for our growth and development as an organization dedicated to kosen-rufu into the next century.

During this historic stay in the United States, President Ikeda taught — or rather, reminded us of — many essential points about our Buddhist practice. For the

first three decades of what was then called NSA, we American members were earnestly seeking the correct way to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. But in our sincere desire to spread this Buddhism, in some cases we went too far, creating an atmosphere in which the organization took precedence over people. This contradicts the Daishonin's spirit to cherish each individual and President Ikeda's guidance and example that leaders and organizations exist to serve the people. During his 1990 visit, President Ikeda said:

Spontaneity underlies the spirit of autonomy and independence; conversely, taking action because one is told to amounts to slavery of the spirit. Kosen-rufu will be accomplished by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*. Because they struggle on their own volition, they have no complaints or grievances. (p. 11)

The essential point of Buddhism is for each of us to awaken to our own mission and to take action based on our own sense of purpose. Autonomy and independence, not obedience and dependency, will allow us to accomplish kosen-rufu. Freedom is not simply freedom from external constraint or compulsion. It is actually the freedom to live a life of value in which we pursue the mission we have chosen. "Mission" doesn't refer simply to what we do within the organization; rather, our mission expresses itself in our relationships with our friends and family, in our workplace and in every-

thing we do on a daily basis. Our practice of Buddhism is the soil from which our mission and benefit emerge, and our activities within the SGI are like the cultivation and tending of the fields of our lives.

**T**herefore, the meaning of freedom and independence is that, regardless of the difficulty of our lives, we can choose to lead lives dedicated to a great purpose. When we are dedicated to a mission, we take action voluntarily, and our efforts ennoble and energize us. We have “no complaints or grievances,” because we are living exactly as we want.

As President Ikeda pointed out in his New Year’s poem this year, the “common sense” of the 20th century was the culture of war and coercion. But the common sense of the 21st century must become peace, respect for the dignity of all life, and an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things. “Kosen-rufu will be accomplished by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*.” Kosen-rufu — “to widely declare and spread” — makes the profound humanism and pacifism of Buddhism the “common sense” of our society.

But this transformation doesn’t happen passively. It will only happen when each of us — spontaneously and of our own initiative — becomes deeply convinced of our mission to inspire hope in others. It is not enough to simply talk about Buddhism and hope people understand the general principles. I think we must take the additional step of teaching our friends and loved ones how they themselves can transform their suffering into joy. This is the practice of *shakubuku*, the propagation of Buddhism and kosen-rufu, communicating the principles of Buddhism broadly throughout society.

It is young people to whom SGI President Ikeda entrusts the future. I sincerely hope that this is not taken to imply that the lives or contributions of those of us who are older are any less valuable. Rather, I believe that President Ikeda is demonstrating the spirit to nurture young people. This is because the youth of today are responsible for tomorrow. By teaching, encouraging and fostering young people, we are in fact creating the 21st century. Our focus to raise and entrust youth in the SGI-USA expresses the truly profound mission we have to raise the next generation and thereby create a new culture of peace and humanism in the next century.

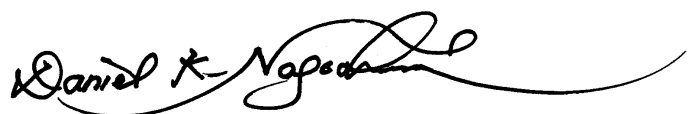
**B**ut since it is the young people who will live in and create the new century, I hope that they will take seriously their own mission to be the ones to transform the 21st century into a century of life. If I may speak frankly to the youth, if you don’t take on this challenge, if you yourselves don’t decide to transform a culture of war to a culture of peace, then it simply won’t happen. But if you decide to fulfill the mission to contribute to lasting peace, then, based on your Buddhist practice, you will definitely accomplish what you set out to do.

This is freedom. This is living a life of value creation. And the aggregation of such powerful, meaningful individual lives is the definition of actualizing kosen-rufu.

Finally, I want to express my deepest respect to the women’s division members who, during their annual general meetings, return each year to the guidance President Ikeda gave at the women’s division training meeting on February 27, 1990. I am moved by their spirit to deepen their understanding of their mentor’s expectations.

The women’s division general meetings being held this month are a time for all of us to unite and support those people who are quite frankly the backbone and the engine of our organization. We all know how much these women do to support all the other members through their prayers, phone calls, encouragement and even through feeding the rest of us! Let us in the men’s and youth divisions take this opportunity we have each year to support them fully as a small, partial repayment of the deep debt we owe them.

The many commemorative dates and events during February are significant only if they inspire us to action. I hope we can use these events as an impetus to forge a deep determination to share the benefit and joy of our practice with others. Let’s make each day of this short month a meaningful step away from a culture of war to a culture of peace, and advance proudly, step by step, in our work to create the future.



Daniel K. Nagashima  
SGI-USA General Director

*Buddhist Concept for Today's Living (10)*

**HAPPINESS IN THIS WORLD**

*This world is a place to enjoy*

**W**e practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, in reciting the sutra with our practice of gongyo, read the phrase "*shujo sho yuraku*" a number of times each day. It appears in the "jigage" or verse portion of the "Lifespan" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This phrase is translated in English as "where living beings enjoy themselves at ease."

Simply stated, it means that the world where we live is, as it is, a "Buddha Land." The place where we live and work, eat and sleep, is a place to enjoy and be at ease. For this reason, it is often expressed as "happiness in this world."

Experience tells us that, while the real world offers some enjoyment, living in it entails many difficulties and hardships. And in fact, many perceive Buddhism as having little to do with fun or enjoyment, but as teaching a strict regimen of practice and discipline. To such people, these words from the "Life Span" chapter might come as a bit of a surprise.

What specifically then does this phrase "where living beings enjoy themselves at ease" have to teach us? The word "enjoyment" for most of us brings to mind some sort of play or recreation. And the Chinese term translated as "enjoy" in this phrase can also be rendered as "play." For most of us since our youth, play has always been a fragile opportunity, punctuated with pleas from our mothers or fathers, such as, "Stop playing and do your homework!" And clearly, no one has much use for an adult who does nothing but play all day, whatever

the sport or pastime.

**O**n the other hand, the idea of "work hard, play hard" is a tradition in our culture. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," a well-used saying made somewhat infamous in the movie *The Shining*, is part of America's healthy work ethic. A branch of psychotherapy known as "play therapy" recognizes that play can enhance emotional growth in children and even adults. And few would question the fact that play in the form of sports promotes physical development and a capacity for teamwork.

Thus play or enjoyment has its positive and negative value. On one hand, it suggests a break from the daily routine, an opportunity to ease the stress and tension that living brings. But to make it integral to that daily routine seems a contradiction. Play, when it becomes the rule rather than the exception, can actually become burdensome. It is as Shakespeare wrote, "If all the year were playing holidays, To sport would be as tedious as to work" (Prince Henry, in *Henry IV*, Pt. 1, act 1, sc. 2.).

In addition, when facing a difficult problem, it's hard to genuinely enjoy oneself, even if there is time to do so.

Going back to the Lotus Sutra, in the third chapter, "Simile and Parable," we find the passage, "The sons at that time danced for joy, mounting the jeweled carriages, driving off in all directions, delighting and amusing themselves." This is from the Parable of the Great White Oxcart. The sons in the parable indicate ordinary people of the world, and

*a state of life in which, whatever the circumstances or conditions, one can enjoy life with confidence and vitality, with courage and dignity, like the lion who is king among*

the “jeweled carriages” drawn by white oxen are the Lotus Sutra. The father, who brings the great cart to lure his children out of a burning house (this world, filled with suffering) represents the Buddha. The above-quoted passage means that the function of a Buddha and of the teaching of a Buddha is to enable people who are engulfed in the “flames” of suffering to freely enjoy life without any encumbrance or restriction.

Nichiren Daishonin writes to his followers Shijo Kingo and his wife, “Wherever your daughter my frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will move about without fear like the lion king” (WND, 412). “Frolic or play” here suggests a state of life in which, whatever the circumstances or conditions, we can enjoy life with confidence and vitality, with courage and dignity, like the lion who is king among all other beasts. It is a far more substantial kind of enjoyment than can only be had by taking off of work, school or leaving behind other responsibilities. It is the ability to tackle our work with energy and composure, lacking any sense of insecurity, restraint or restriction. This free and self-assured state of life is what the Daishonin means by “frolicking and playing,” and it is also what the sutra indicates by “enjoying themselves at ease.”

The Chinese and Japanese term for “hell” is directly translated as “earth prison.” The idea of a prison suggests a state of restriction and restraint, where all freedom is gone. The state of “enjoying oneself at ease” is the exact opposite of this.

Nichiren Daishonin associates “enjoyment and ease” with enlightenment. He states, “There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.” (WND, 681) “Happiness” here is a translation of the term *yuraku*. This is the same word which, in the context of the sutra, is ren-

dered “enjoy themselves at ease.”

When we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon, which was inscribed for the happiness of all humankind, we bring forth the innate condition of Buddhahood. This enables us to “enjoy ourselves at ease” wherever we are and in any circumstance. The purpose of life and Buddhism is not merely to create “enjoyable” circumstances. Rather it is to create within ourselves the ability to enjoy all of life to the fullest and be at ease under any circumstances.

It is natural that we face problems, challenges, setbacks and disappointments in life. But faith in Buddhism means that when such things occur, we chant daimoku with persistence and determination. This gives rise to wisdom, with which we can move things in a positive direction. Concerning living in this world, which is full of both suffering and joy, Nichiren Daishonin said, “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, no matter what happens” (WND, 681). Buddhism nowhere teaches of a life that is free from pain or troubles, or that life should be just a succession of favorable circumstances. In fact, such a life does not exist; even if it did, as Shakespeare suggests, it would probably become quite tedious.

Instead Buddhism encourages us to step confidently into a world and society intertwined with joys and sufferings, and to develop a condition of life to fully enjoy all we encounter. This state of life—the capacity to “enjoy ourselves at ease” unperturbed by external ups and downs—is what Soka Gakkai second president Josei Toda often called “absolute happiness.” It is absolute because it is self-created. We create it. It is not dependent on something or someone else. The purpose and goal of daily Buddhist prayer and practice, and of our activities to teach Buddhism to others, is to create such an inner world of profound enjoyment and ease. □

# Almsgiving of the Law

By Josei Toda

*Josei Toda was the second president of the Soka Gakkai and is responsible for rebuilding the organization after World War II. He was imprisoned during the war for his opposition to Japanese government policies. He died in 1958. February 11, 2000 is the one-hundredth anniversary of President Toda's birth. The following essay is from Toda Josei Zenshu (Collected Works of Josei Toda) vol. 1, pp. 108–110.*

Confucius states, “Don’t give others what you don’t want.” These words, though representing a non-Buddhist viewpoint, deserve our attention. It is human nature to recommend or give to others what we ourselves like. If the other person’s taste is the same as our own, he or she will be overjoyed. But if it is the opposite, it will cause that person trouble.

For instance, suppose someone who likes liquor insists that his guests also drink it. If the guests like to drink, they’ll be delighted, but if they would rather just have some sweets, they will be very uncomfortable. Or suppose someone who likes to travel invites someone along who hates to travel. Again, the latter will feel put off. If someone who likes sweets insists on sharing them with someone who doesn’t, wouldn’t that person be annoyed?

There is a story from the age of the Tokugawa shogunate [1600-1865] of a poor man who was presented with a horse. Though having a horse was a luxury, it was also a tremendous burden for him to care for it while living in poverty.

Thus, giving others things that are of your own liking more often than not creates some kind of negative side effect. And it would be overly cautious to refrain from giving others anything that you might not personally like, simply to avoid troubling them. I think that would be a very narrow-minded and passive way to live—I cannot see any spirit in it. This kind of narrow and overly cautious approach to life reminds me of the kind of person who goes to work each day just for the



paycheck, never taking on any significant challenge.

Then, should we interpret Confucius’s statement to mean that we should give others that which we ourselves like? No. What I want to stress is that we should give to others what will be of benefit to them. In other words, we should give them value. If I were to put it as Confucius might, I would say, “Give others what will benefit them.”

You might give food to enhance another’s health or to save a starving person. Vegetables or miso might help; much more so might gifts of money. Buddhism calls such actions the practice of almsgiving. Religious sects that concern themselves more with what they can get than what they can give are not practicing almsgiving. True almsgiving is giving something to the people.

Concerning this practice of the almsgiving or offering of material things, deep consideration tells us that this is the age of the Latter Day of the Law, when Shakyamuni’s Buddhism has lost its power and impurity and evil abound. Thus, regretfully, the practice of almsgiving of material goods today only brings about laziness and a dependent attitude on the part of the recipients. Not only that, an offering of material goods is limited in quantity, and cannot be distributed equally among all who need it. It is the way of the world today that the quickest and most aggressive win.

Besides the almsgiving of material goods, there is also the almsgiving of the Law. Today, in the Latter Day of the Law, this means offering the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws to others. Those who receive this Gohonzon and maintain a consistent practice with strong faith in it will gain a dynamic, refreshing life-force, as the sutra clearly indicates, and will start a new life in every respect—including at work and in the realm of health. And from those who tap and bring forth this powerful life force, such benefits as money, food and good health will well forth ceaselessly like water gushing from the ground. No material offering, which provides only temporary, limited benefit, can compare to this in its magnificence. □

# Become a Model for the World

SGI President Ikeda's Speeches in the United States in February, 1990



To celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the historic visit of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda to the United States in February 1990, *Living Buddhism* presents excerpts from the speeches and guidance he shared at that time. The SGI-USA organization was called NSA in 1990. The following material has been edited to reflect the current name as well as current translations of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and *The Lotus Sutra*. All dates are from 1990.

## Become a Model for the Rest of the World

*First SGI-USA Training Meeting at Malibu Training Center, February 12.*

The worldwide kosen-rufu movement was launched here in the United States thirty years ago. These thirty years have been the first phase. Now, I would like to designate this last decade, up to October 2, 2001, as the second stage in the worldwide kosen-rufu movement. The purpose of my current visit to your country is to see that this new phase gets off to a smooth start. All of you are together as like-minded seekers of the way from the infinite past. I hope you will advance further in harmony as wonderful companions who have a deep connection with each other, based on the Mystic Law.

All members are equal in front of

the Gohonzon. You are beautiful friends sharing the same faith. I would like all of you to move forward cheerfully, amicably, and with hearts and minds in unison.

True leaders are those who protect their members, praising them and being tolerant toward them. In contrast, leaders who exploit their positions in the organization, rebuking people and acting in a high-handed manner, not only cause the Buddha's children to suffer but make causes for their own suffering in the future as well.

If you allow that kind of leader to have control, then both parties—the leader and the members—will end up in misery. This must be avoided at all costs. The world of faith exists for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood and true happiness in this life.

It is important to have a sufficiently elevated life-condition so that you can calmly accept whatever happens in life, always striving to put problems into proper perspective and solving them with a positive attitude. Happiness blossoms forth from such a strong and all-encompassing life-condition.

You can forge the path to a fulfilling and enjoyable life if you have the depth of faith to regard everything as a source for creating happiness and value. Conversely, if you see everything in a

negative or pessimistic light, your life will gradually but inevitably be plunged into darkness. Buddhism teaches the subtle principle of *ichinen* (basic attitude of life) and, moreover, the power of faith.

## Build a Solid Foundation

*SGI-USA Representatives Conference in Malibu, February 13.*

Today I would like to talk briefly on five points that I hope you will always bear in mind.

In the first place, please advance steadily with the awareness that you are now building a foundation for the next thousand years of the kosen-rufu movement in the United States. There is no need to be impatient. Anything that is accomplished quickly and easily will not long endure. Now is the time to concentrate on the construction of a solid foundation. I hope you will complete this work slowly but surely, filled with hope and joy.

Laying the groundwork may sound unexciting and lack the brilliance that attracts people's attention. However, such painstaking work is indispensable and extremely important. Once the foundation is solidified, on it you can construct anything. Please remember that the task of building the foundation of the castle of the Law, which will endure for a thou-

sand years, is in the hands of the current generation of SGI-USA members. For my part, I will spare no effort in supporting you in any way I can.

The second point that I want to make is that capable people are the greatest treasure. Without capable people neither the eternal establishment of the Law nor kosen-rufu can be achieved.

First of all, you must “find” capable people. Just as a miner searches for gold ore in ordinary rocks, you have to look for members who possess great potential, and then work to develop their ability with your heart and soul.

Prayer is most fundamental in raising capable people. You should pray earnestly to the Gohonzon that the person you have found will become an able person important to SGI-USA. And then, with this prayer, you take the utmost care to help that person develop.

◆  
**Y**ou should sincerely respect capable people and raise them with the determination to make them even more outstanding and abler than you are yourself. Looking down on one’s juniors or exploiting them for personal gain is an offense comparable to that of slandering the Law. Please remember that one who raises capable people is great. Such a person is truly capable and important.

The third point concerns holding joyful meetings and conducting dialogue that is imbued with joy and wisdom. By making these your mottoes and living up to them, SGI-USA can become an exemplary organization for kosen-rufu.

The *raison d’être* of the world of faith is to help people become happy. In essence, it is a gathering of supreme freedom and joy. No one has the right to reprimand and cause suffering for others. Nor is anyone obliged to let himself be reproved and made to feel badly.

For example, whether or not someone succeeds in helping others take faith



GREGORY INAKASUJI

Soka University of America at Calabasas

in the teachings of Buddhism, the simple fact that he or she practices is in itself most praiseworthy. If one can feel heartfelt joy in being able to expound the Law and share it with others, one’s blessings will increase still further. Joyfully engaging in propagation and other activities—this is the spirit of Buddhism.

Again, no matter what difficulties you may have, when you go to a meeting and see friends, you feel relief and a sense of joy, and your heart is filled with hope. It is my sincere hope that you hold wonderful meetings of this kind—happy gatherings where friends warmly pat each other on the back, encourage one another and share their joys and sorrows.

My wish is that SGI-USA will become an organization overflowing with smiles, friendship and humanity. I hope that all of you, without a single exception, will lead lives of the greatest fulfillment and joy

Intellect will play a very important role in the coming age. By intellect I mean refined wisdom, clear reasoning, profound philosophy and broad-ranging knowledge. We are entering an age when the people will develop their intelligence and wisdom, infusing society with their new outlook.

◆  
**F**ourth, you must respect those who are fighting for kosen-rufu, irrespective of their race or nationality.

There are many differences, for instance, between the cultures, climates and social systems of Japan and the United States. Therefore, it is only natural that there might be differences in how kosen-rufu is advanced in the two countries.

Fundamentally speaking, however, infinite variety derives from the one

Law, and the true entity of life—as described by the one hundred worlds and one thousand factors as well as three thousand realms in a single moment of life—is the same in all societies. Viewed from this dimension, it is important that we respect anyone who is struggling on the forefront of our movement for kosen-rufu. This attitude will become a great driving force behind the spread of the Mystic Law.

President Toda once said, “If you fail to respect those who are fighting for kosen-rufu, you will be unable to develop correct faith and there will be no development in the organization that you are leading.” In this sense, I ask that you receive guidance on what is important for advancing kosen-rufu.

Fifth, I would like you to forge ahead, always taking good care of your health. All of you are extremely precious children of the Buddha who are dedicated to the cause of kosen-rufu. Nothing would be more regrettable than for you to impair your health.

Therefore, I ask that you maintain a rhythm in your daily life and get ample rest. Things that you volunteer to undertake on your own initiative aside, there is no need to overstrain yourself at the expense of your health on account of organizational pressures.

I sincerely hope that you will devote yourself to kosen-rufu and Buddhism while living with a correct rhythm and carrying out meaningful and enjoyable activities. Please establish a splendid life. I would like to conclude my speech with my prayers that you will be able to open up a path for the prosperity of your families.

## Cultivate a New Common Sense

*SGI-USA Youth Division Training Session at Minuteman Hall, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 14.*

Today I would like to share with you some of my ideas on history and life. What I desire above all is to raise leaders who are well equipped with the power of intellect. Therefore I hope that each of you will study broadly and develop your understanding of life, society and the universe, based on your faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This type of learning enables you to cultivate a rich state of life, or inner world, drawing forth profound wisdom and limitless leadership ability from the depths of your life.

When the long-entrenched barriers of established "common sense" in people's hearts are broken down, a new common sense, borne on the wings of lively dialogue, begins to take shape. This signifies the beginning of a new era and of fundamental change in society.

Before Copernicus, the heliocentric theory was beyond or outside of common sense, as was the theory of evolution before Charles Darwin. Today, however, those ideas are widely accepted. Likewise, there are currently many misconceptions and prejudices regarding Buddhism. Nevertheless, I am confident that in the future the Buddhist teachings will become a matter of common sense among all people. That will be the time of kosen-rufu.

Buddhism is so tremendously far-sighted and profound a religion that, externally, it is difficult to grasp its true message. People with little understanding of Buddhism can no more discern its value than a child can understand the real value of a diamond. However, please be confident that the development of human wisdom will produce

an increasing body of evidence pointing to the greatness of Buddhism.

In the course of the struggle for American independence, there was a small fifty-page pamphlet that triggered a momentous change in people's outlooks. This pamphlet served to alter the destiny of America and the world.

The pamphlet to which I refer was "Common Sense" (1776) by Thomas Paine. This publication shook dispirited and cowardly people from the shackles of their accustomed common sense as colonial subjects.

The author appealed to his fellow citizens to take a brave step toward free-



Oregon backroads

JEAN PRITCHARD

dom and independence, never succumbing to the authority and power represented by tyrannical rule and hereditary distinctions of class. He asserted that by taking one courageous step forward they could arrive at common sense that was new and correct.

This pamphlet sold 100,000 copies in only three months. Considering the difference in population size, this would correspond to roughly ten million copies today. It was truly a bestseller.

The power of the written word

sometimes defies the imagination. The cry for freedom in this booklet galvanized the hearts of the people.

We are now advancing toward a new century, a century of life, in which all people will enjoy the benefits of equality, happiness and freedom to the fullest. The fundamental "common sense" of Buddhism and of life itself forms the basis for our activities toward this goal.

The road we walk is not level. We must climb a great mountain, a task that invariably requires painful effort. However, in the world of Buddhism, no effort is wasted or in vain. All causes that you make will be engraved in the depths of your life; they are passages in the golden diary of your eternal existence.

Thomas Paine volunteered to serve in the American War of Independence. He was then 39, roughly the same age as many senior leaders of our youth division.

I always place high value on personal initiative. Spontaneity underlies the spirit of autonomy and independence; conversely, taking action because one is told to amounts to slavery of the spirit. Kosen-rufu will be advanced by brave people armed with the spirit of independence who voluntarily strive to fulfill the vow they made at the time of *kuon ganjo*. Because they struggle on their own volition, they have no complaints or grievances. The greater the obstacles they face, the greater the courage, wisdom and power they muster from within.

When Paine joined the War of Independence, the American forces, led by General George Washington, were at a grave impasse. They were no match for the enemy forces, and in battle after battle they were defeated and forced to retreat. Soldiers deserted in droves.

Paine dared to join the army at a time when its defeat seemed certain. In what Paine later called "a passion of patriotism," he poured his heart into

writing a document based on his own experience in the continental army. It was the tract “The American Crisis” that begins with the famous sentence, “These are the times that try men’s souls.” In this piece he posed the question: Will we shrink from this moment of crisis on which the war’s outcome hangs, or shall we stand firm and turn the situation to our favor?

He also wrote, “Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have the consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the glorious the triumph.” Victory is not easily won. If it is, it will not be a source of pride. What gratification, for instance, could a sumo wrestler derive from defeating a child? Only when one fights and wins over dire circumstances will one’s victory shine brilliantly in history.

On a cold, blizzard day toward the end of the year, General Washington gathered soldiers who, after successive defeats, had lost their spirit and become thoroughly exhausted. The brave general had Paine’s essay read to these soldiers, as though calling out to them on the front lines of the battlefield. Passion raced through their hearts, and their spirit to carry on the war for justice was revived. Paine’s cry, arising from his soul as he contemplated the desperate situation, filled each soldier with the power of infinite courage and hope.

In this way, the American army righted itself and launched a great offensive. Crossing a frozen river swiftly, they crushed the enemy soldiers who had been caught off guard capriciously celebrating Christmas. This battle changed the course of the war and eventually led to the victory of independence.

In any struggle, the critical point is how a leader inspires others. As you are leaders of kosen-rufu, I ask that you encourage friends of the Mystic Law in such a manner that the powers of faith and life force surge forth in their lives. I

hope that your efforts in the struggle of faith will serve to increase the majesty and strength of the Buddhist gods.

### Profound Happiness Exists in Efforts for Construction

*Second SGI Pan-American Joint Conference held in Minuteman Hall, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 15.*

All of you are noble forerunners in your respective countries and communities, and the benefits to which you are entitled are immeasurable. This calls to mind a passage from “Letter to Myomitsu Shonin.”

Although this letter was addressed to a male believer, Nichiren Daishonin’s guidance is directed to his wife as well. When the Daishonin wrote to a follower, male or female, he never failed to show great consideration for the person’s spouse. The Daishonin respected both men and women equally. Where such an attitude is present—in the household as well as in the organization—there is solid growth.

The Daishonin writes: “As first one person, then two persons, then a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, and then all the people throughout the country come to chant the daimoku, before you know it, their blessings will accrue to you. Those blessings will be like the drops of dew that gather to form the great ocean, or the specks of dust that pile up to become Mount Sumeru” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 672).

As this passage indicates, although at the outset the membership in your country may be small, the Mystic Law will spread without fail when the right time arrives. Thus, there is no need for you to be impatient. If you can achieve something very easily right from the start, you will find no sense of fulfillment or joy. It is in making tenacious, all-out efforts for construction that profound happiness lies.

In a letter to the Ikegami brothers and their wives, who had begun practicing during the initial stage of the Daishonin’s propagation activities, Nichiren Daishonin states, “Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart” (WND, 502). These words of the original Buddha suggest the immeasurable value of pioneers.

For pioneers, hardships and sufferings are inevitable. However, the fact that they have blazed a trail and the growth that they achieve as a result are undeniable achievements. This is indicated by the sutra passage “If you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present” (WND, 279).

There is no doubt that with the passage of time and in lifetime after lifetime, you will enjoy immense good fortune welling forth from the depths of your life. You will enjoy both material and spiritual happiness and develop a profound state of life. Some of you may become great leaders in society, others distinguished scholars or master artists—all working to further advance kosen-rufu. In every lifetime throughout the 10,000 years of the Latter Day of the Law, you will be able to live such full and fulfilling lives. Please be convinced of the great blessings that you will enjoy in your present and future existences. Firm confidence in this will enable you to elevate yourself to an even higher plane.

Second President Toda detested formality. And for this reason, as his disciple, I have tried to place foremost emphasis on substance. Formalities are important in certain cases, but mere formality that lacks substance is an evil. Formalities in and of themselves have no life, whereas substance is alive. Formality is provisional and substance essential. Formality is conventional and therefore



STEPHANIE STONEY

conservative, but substance provides the impetus for progress and development.

Suppose a meeting is held. If one is caught up with formality, concerned only about how many people attend or whether the meeting goes off without a hitch, one loses sight of substance. This is a sign of failure as a leader.

Even if the participants are few, if they are convinced of the greatness of faith and feel joy, thereby deepening their confidence in the Gohonzon, the meeting is a success. In this case, you are focusing on substance. Let's say, for example, there are only three people at a meeting, but when they pray to the Gohonzon, read the Goshō and inspire one another, their lives are illuminated by the flame of faith. From the standpoint of Buddhism, such a meeting is a great success.

On the other hand, even though thousands may attend a meeting, and it may proceed smoothly and with an air of grandeur, if it does not inspire the joy of faith in the hearts of members, in the final analysis it is a vain and pointless charade.

Our meetings are held neither for the sake of leaders nor for the sake of the organization. They are intended to awaken and support the development of individual members. Both an organ-

ization and its leadership exist for the sake of individuals. This accords with the teachings of Buddhism. If, instead, individuals are manipulated to serve the needs of an organization and its leadership, the spirit of Buddhism is contradicted. In Buddhism, such a perverse relationship between the organization or leadership and the individual will block the power of the Law, stop the flow of benefits and stifle the development of kosen-rufu. Giving warm encouragement and care to each person is the basis for victory.

The organization is a gathering of human beings, a network of individuals. If a leader feels that his organization is dull and lifeless, unable to produce remarkable results, in reality this is an indication of the leader's and the individual members' states of life.

If, blinded by the mirage, of an organization, a leader tries to operate by giving orders and applying pressure, nothing will change, because no spontaneous or genuine power will be generated among the people who make up that body. We must understand the subtle character of people's hearts.

### Advance With Awareness That You Are 'SGI-USA of the World'

*Eleventh SGI General Meeting, World Peace Ikeda Auditorium in Santa Monica, February 17.*

**A**t this significant general meeting, I would like to speak about the Declaration of Independence of the United States.

Today, the deep shadows of autocracy and tyranny are rapidly receding. Historically, America's Declaration of Independence represents the first ray of democracy and the dawn of liberty. It was on July 4, 1776, that the Continental Congress of the thirteen federated states unanimously adopted the

Declaration of Independence.

The declaration sets forth the principle that all human beings are equal and asserts this to be self-evident. It also proclaims outright that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are natural inalienable rights of all people that no one may infringe upon. This historic declaration has much in common with the Buddhist ideal of the inherent dignity of human life.

This document preceded the French Revolution by thirteen years. In this sense, the American War of Independence was a landmark divide in world history. Fifty-six delegates representing thirteen states signed the document. Along with the Declaration of Independence, their names will live forever.

Like history itself, the lives of those who create history are everlasting. All of you have dedicated yourselves over these past thirty years to opening the hitherto untrodden path of kosen-rufu in your respective countries. Each of your names, without exception, will be remembered forever, throughout the Latter Day of the Law. And the blessings you accumulate are everlasting, indestructible and inexhaustible. This is due to the workings of the Buddhist Law; it is the promise of the Buddha.



The Declaration of Independence was drafted by Thomas Jefferson, who subsequently was elected the third president of the United States. The important task of drafting the document fell on Jefferson who, at age thirty-three, was the youngest of the five committee members. Replying to the great trust they had placed in him, the young Jefferson is said to have prepared the document in just a few days.

To actively promote young people of outstanding ability to positions of responsibility and allow them to give free rein to their potential accords with the spirit of Buddhism. It is also the spirit of the SGI, and it ought to be the spirit of

each member-organization. The reason for this is that the dynamic activities of young people are the fundamental driving force for fresh development.

Now, what was it that Jefferson labored over? To what did he pay the closest attention? It was neither novelty nor affected formality. His sole wish was to make the Declaration of Independence the crystallization of the American spirit. Jefferson was a person who, throughout his entire life, maintained the vibrantly pulsing spirit of America.

It is the cry of the spirit from the very depths of a person's life that shakes and moves other people's hearts. Similarly, Buddhism is above all concerned with the world of the heart. It expounds the principle that enables us to manifest the infinite power of the spirit. People of faith should strive to become outstanding citizens of their respective countries. There is no need for you to try to imitate others or force yourself into following any specific pattern of behavior.

In 1800, when Jefferson was fifty-seven years old, he wrote in a letter, "I have sworn... eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." I am of the same belief. Freedom is something that you must fight for and gain by and for yourself. It is not something that is handed over on a silver platter.

One who has the courage to speak the truth lives a truly splendid and fulfilling life. In any sphere of society, if one loses this courage and becomes obsequious, one will be unable to resist exploitation by corrupt authorities.

The life of a person who shrinks before oppression and tries to get by with cunning strategies and falsehood is extremely pitiful. Such a life is self-defeating.

Rather, by fighting against and pushing through all the evil that oppresses one, both internally and externally, one establishes a magnanimous self and a

profound and happy state of life. This is the purpose of faith.

Buddhism describes the fundamental anguish that restricts the freedom of life as the four sufferings or the eight sufferings. The four universal sufferings comprise birth, old age, sickness and death. In more detail, we can describe them as follows: the suffering of living bound by the shackles of karma; the loneliness of old age; the anguish of sickness and the fear of that most fundamental fact, death. The eight sufferings include four additional sufferings: the suffering of having to part with loved ones; the suffering of having to meet those whom one hates; the suffering of being unable to obtain what one desires, as in the case of one who wishes to become wealthy or successful but is unable to realize these desires; and the suffering arising from the five components, in other words, the suffering of being unable to realize harmony in the physical and spiritual aspects of one's life and of feeling heavy and depressed.

It is the sharp sword of the Mystic Law and the great power of faith that enable us to completely sever the chains of these sufferings. Therefore, I wish to make it clear that in order to secure eternal freedom and happiness, you must absolutely not be cowardly, especially in faith.

By coincidence, Thomas Jefferson died at the age of eighty-three on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence. A similar example of historic coincidence is evident in the fact that Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, died on the anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Ten days prior to his death, in a letter of thanks for an invitation to a ceremony commemorating fifty years of independence, Jefferson expressed the sentiment that the Declaration of Independence would become a signal

to awaken people around the world, encouraging them to sever the chains of ignorance and superstition that had hitherto bound them in order to win liberty. I feel that now, some one-hundred-sixty years later, as we contemplate the current toward a century of peace that has emerged in all parts of the world, we can see Jefferson smiling brightly in victory.

## Become People of True Wealth

*SGI joint training session at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 18.*

**W**e are gathered at a university, a seat of wisdom. Therefore, let me first speak about the significance of the university.

When the British poet John Masefield (1878-1967) wrote "There are few earthly things more beautiful than a university," he was not admiring the beauty of a university's buildings or its appearance. Rather, its beauty lies in the fact that it is "a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see."

In other words, the university is a place for the liberation of humankind. It leads people from the darkness of ignorance to the light of intelligence, from spiritual blindness to awakening, from barbarous chaos to civilized order, and from slavery of the soul to its independence. To put it another way, the university is a fortress where, led by the light of reason, human beings achieve spiritual development; it is also a castle for defending civilization against barbarism, a castle founded on the love of truth. A university no doubt is in the vanguard of the effort to expel ignorance—the basic cause for all miseries—from the earth. It is therefore aptly said that nothing in this world is

more beautiful than a university. President John F. Kennedy once cited these impressive words of Masefield in an address.

Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), a renowned twentieth-century philosopher who taught at Harvard University, remarked that “the task of a university is the creation of the future.” He meant that universities, in the name of reason and civilization, determine the future of humanity, that they in fact shape the future course of history.

In this sense, because we have founded a university we have participated in the creation of a future. A university in the present is the epitome of society in the future. Therefore, please be convinced that the victory of our university will contribute to the victory of humankind.

One of the mottoes of the Soka University Los Angeles campus is: “Be a dynamic force in developing a Pan-Pacific culture.” Soka University will host the Second Pacific Basin Symposium on the campus this coming summer, with the participation of representatives from the United Nations University. It is argued from various angles that the twenty-first century will be an age in which Pan-Pacific nations flourish.

## Gongyo Is a Grand and Noble Rite

*To SGI-USA youth at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 19*

I would like to take the opportunity provided by today’s training session of the youth division to present a succinct and easily comprehensible discussion of the significance of gongyo. Because of the limitations of time I cannot pursue the subject in all its details, so I would like all of you to consider and explore this topic on your own afterwards as well.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches that our existence is identical to the universe as a whole, and the universe as a whole is identical to our existence. Each individual human life is a microcosm.

The practice of gongyo is a grand and noble rite to achieve the vital communication of the microcosm of each person’s existence with the universe, based on the Gohonzon.

The correspondence of each part of our bodies to parts of the universe is proof that our existence is a microcosm. Our heads are round like the heavens above us are round, and our eyes are like the sun and the moon. We close them and open them, like day and night. Our hair shines like the sparkling stars. Our eyebrows are like the seven stars of the Big Dipper.

Our breath is the wind, and the quiet breathing from our nostrils is like the still air of the valleys and dales.

There are some 360 joints in the human body, and they stand for the days of the year. The twelve major joints signify the twelve months.

The warm, front side of our body—our abdomen and stomach—is spring and summer. The cold, hard back is fall and winter.

Our blood vessels and arteries are streams and rivers. When we suffer a cerebral hemorrhage, it is as if a dam or dike has burst. Our bones are stones, and our skin and muscle are like the earth. Our body hair is a forest.

Buddhist scriptures discuss in detail these correspondences, including each of the internal organs, teaching that our body is indeed a universe in miniature.

There are clouds in the heavens. The wind blows, the stars twinkle. There are oceans on earth. The rivers flow. Volcanoes erupt. And great quantities of metals and minerals—gold, silver, copper, potassium, calcium—lie in the earth’s depths.

The activities and qualities of all of

these materials are also contained in our bodies.

The infinite elementary particles of the cosmos—atoms, protons, photons, electrons, neutrons, and all the rest—microscopic animals such as bacteria, the activities of good and evil, and the laws of gravity, the conservation of mass and energy, and all other laws of the universe also apply in almost the same fashion to the microcosm of our bodies.

A look at the operation of our bodies suggests that they are great pharmaceutical plants. They have the capability to produce the drugs we need to preserve our health. They take in food and transform it into nourishment and energy.

The human brain has the capability of a giant computer—even though we may not always be able to use it!

The sixty trillion cells of our bodies work together in their established order in a perfect biorhythm. This is the original order of things.

Our existence is the universe, and its life processes are sublime. A slight change in the heat of the sun will enormously affect not only the Earth but all the other planets. If the Earth’s rotation were to stop for the briefest instant, or if its axis were to tilt the slightest degree, all living things would be threatened with extinction.

That is how subtle the natural order is. And further, a firm and irrevocable law of the universe exists. This holds true for the microcosm as well.

It is science that pursues this invisible but truly existent law, and technology is the invention of machines and other devices based on the fruits of scientific research.

Nichiren Daishonin discovered and awoke to the great law of all existence that underlies all the partial laws governing all spiritual and physical phenomena, and it was he who revealed that law to humanity as Nam-myohorenge-kyo. This Mystic Law applies

equally to the universe as a whole and to each and every individual human existence. The universe and the individual are one in this Mystic Law.

Under certain circumstances, an invisible law takes form as a visible existence. The individual human existence, for example, emerges out of its state of fusion with the rest of the universe by taking shape in the womb and being born in the world.

A ship can be regarded as a tangible representation of the law of buoyancy, just as an airplane is a representation of the laws of aerodynamics, a radio or television program a representation of the law of electromagnetic waves. All of these objects give shape to invisible laws.

The fundamental law of the universe and individual existence is also invisible. The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon as a visual representation of that Mystic Law for the people of the world. The Lotus Sutra and other Buddhist scriptures are the instruction manuals for the Gohonzon.

Josei Toda, my teacher and the second president of the Soka Gakkai, explained the Gohonzon in an easily comprehensible way as “a machine to produce happiness.”

When we practice gongyo and chant daimoku before the Gohonzon, our individual existence is perfectly harmonized with the universe.

Both the universe and our individual existence are the concrete manifestation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, as is the Gohonzon. That is why, when we practice gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon, our existence and the universe mesh as perfectly as two gears, and with an initial creak begin to work together.

The single life-moment (*ichinen*) of the individual becomes one with the three thousand (*sanzen*) factors and realms of the universe and begins to produce great value. This is the con-



Participants at Soka University of America at Calabasas, 1990

GREGORY NAKASUJI

crete practice of *ichinen sanzen*.

Through that practice we can acquire wisdom and good fortune, and glow with the energy to overcome any obstacle throughout the four seasons, three hundred sixty-five days a year; we can enter the way to the eternal happiness and attain eternity, joy, true self and purity (*jo raku ga jo*).

Gongyo is a practice which calls forth and activates the infinite power that the microcosm inherently possesses. It transforms your fate, breaks through any apparent dead end and converts sufferings into happiness. It creates a transformation, a revolution of the microcosm. It is a diagram in miniature of kosen-rufu in our lives.

The kosen-rufu that is our aim is a movement to transform the universe, the Earth and human society into a world of peace, comfort and harmony in accord with the rhythm of the Mystic Law.

If you let an automobile or any other machine fall into disuse, it will rust and stop working correctly. You have to use it and maintain it regularly and properly. Why, the same thing is even true of the hair on our heads: If we don't wash it regularly, we'll be encrusted with dandruff!

If we don't practice gongyo, the rhythm of our lives will be thrown off kilter, just as a machine that isn't oiled will rust.

Gongyo and chanting daimoku are like starting the automobile's engine every day and driving in the direction of happiness and truth.

By doing so day after day, you will gradually attain perfect unity with the universe and the Law. That state is the state of the Buddha.

Once that has happened, you will be able to enjoy yourself with complete freedom for all eternity. Your existence will be a diamond that will never perish throughout the three existences.

To attain Buddhahood in this life, the Daishonin warns us with firm concern that we must never retreat in our practice.

Even though we may experience a period of sadness or depression, the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment teaches us that great sufferings are bound to be transformed into equally great joy, progress and value. There is nothing to fear, since the Gohonzon possesses the infinite power of the Law and the Buddha.

We often say that strong faith, valiant and untiring practice and courageous acts are important. This is an expression of the truth that without a strong will and courageous practice it is impossible to achieve great things.

You will not be able to communicate in a discussion with another unless you are clear and direct. If you lack the

courage of your convictions and mumble vague things, you won't make any impression on your listener. Nor can you strike a chord in another's heart. And of course you will not be able to move or convince that person. To do that you need to be very determined and sure.

Isn't the same thing true of love?

It's certainly true in a job interview. Unless you present your thoughts clearly and forcefully, you won't make any impression on the interviewer. In other words, mental determination and courageous actions can change any situation and they possess a critical capability to produce happiness.

To fly, a plane needs the extra push it gets by accelerating down a runway. To get good grades in school, you need the extra push of study before a test.

Whatever you do, to achieve something better, to reach a higher level, you need a push. Buddhism teaches practice for oneself and practice for others. If either one is lacking, you cannot practice properly.

The Gohonzon is the concrete manifestation of the very existence of Nichiren Daishonin, who taught kosen-rufu. Because of that, if you only practice gongyo and chant daimoku and don't take any other action for the sake of kosen-rufu or improving your own life, the Gohonzon will not have its true, full effect.

If, however, you take actions to achieve kosen-rufu, they will serve as that extra push for your own life and help you leap to higher and higher states of mind in your gongyo and chanting as well.

And it is only natural that the energy you acquire through the gongyo practice for yourself will be channeled back into your activities for others, for kosen-rufu.

The fact is that the practice of gongyo and your actions in service of kosen-rufu will become one, and together they will unlock the infinite power of the Mystic Law in your life.

In Buddhism, practice is faith. That means action is faith, and without action there can be no true faith. The action I speak of is the way of practice for oneself and for others that is taught in Nichiren Daishonin's writings.

Action is the source of blessings and merits. In propagating the teachings, for example, whether the person you are presenting the teachings to arouses faith or not is that person's concern. The effects of our action of propagating will vary, depending on the person's capacities and other conditions.

There is no need at all to rejoice or lament over each effect. You can be proud that you have practiced the truest, most wonderful law of life in the universe to the best of your ability and go forward with your head held high. One who has acted for the sake of kosen-rufu is already a great victor in life.

The words "the heads of those who cause affliction will be split in seven pieces" are written on the Gohonzon. This is a warning that it is wrong to seek to harm this law of your own being. Abandoning the teachings or slandering them are self-destructive actions that are bound to split you apart.

We also find the words "those who make offerings will acquire blessings surpassing the Buddha's ten names."

This forceful statement tells us that the merits of one who makes offerings to the Gohonzon and spreads the teaching will be far greater than the magnificent merits of the one who makes offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha. This is a promise that our personal microcosm will absorb the nourishment of all the blessings in the macrocosm, the whole universe, and be elevated to a state of existence of the highest happiness itself.

Thus we know that the children of the Buddha who strive for kosen-rufu are each guaranteed to attain the ultimate degree of happiness. There is no one who will be more blessed.

"For both the present and the future" is also written on the Gohonzon. For present and future. That is what faith is for, what the Buddhist Law is for.

When we worship the Gohonzon, the eternal life of time without beginning wells up within us. Our faith is that every day, every instant begins from time without beginning.

We are always setting out, full of hope, from today to the future, from this moment to eternal happiness. We are always young, always beginning.

My message to you is that you must be absolutely certain of this and live your wonderful lives without regret, with joy and brightness, always moving forward.

## Worshipping the Gohonzon Opens Your Life to the Entire Universe

*To SGI-USA youth at Malibu Training Center, February 20.*

I want our young people to study doctrine, and I also want them to test themselves in action. With that hope in mind, as well as with the great appreciation I feel for your daily efforts, I would like to discuss today several points concerning the basis of faith.

We just finished evening gongyo together and expressed our deepest prayers to the Gohonzon. It is inappropriate to discuss the Gohonzon lightly, but the history of Buddhism in the United States is short and it is my duty as a leader to implant conviction and determined faith in your hearts to whatever extent I can.

For that reason, I would like to discuss several essential points concerning the Gohonzon, though I may not be able to explain it completely.

Gohonzon means fundamental object of devotion. It is the object which we pray to and have faith in as the basis of life. It is

only natural, then, that our lives are fundamentally determined by the object we take as our object of devotion.

Traditionally, the objects of devotion in Buddhism were most frequently images of the Buddha. In some cases, paintings of the Buddha were used. In early Buddhism it is true, there were no Buddhist images, but in later ages images of the Buddha were created in northwest India, in the Gandhara region, under the influence of Grecian culture. Buddhist images were one of the products of the cultural intercourse of the Silk Road.

Ordinary people became familiar with the image of the Buddha through these statues and paintings, and they aroused faith in the Buddha and reverence for him through such works of art.

But Nichiren Daishonin's basic object of devotion consists of writing, of words. Rather than worshipping a graphic image, the Daishonin made the written expression of the world of the intellect, the great and lofty wisdom of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, the object of highest reverence.

In this one respect alone, the object of devotion of the Daishonin is fundamentally different from that traditionally worshiped in Buddhism.

Words are mysterious. They have tremendous power. Take a person's name, for example. One signs it. In it is included one's personality, position in the world, strengths, mental and physical state, past and the causes and effects that made one what one is.

In the word Japan, written with two Chinese characters, the geographical features of the country, its people, its flora and fauna—all are encompassed.

In actuality, a person and a country are always changing, moment to moment, without a moment's pause. The name of a person or country is the single word that expresses and encompasses all of those activities and functions.

The daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, is just like that: it encompasses all phenomena in the universe. The true aspect of all phenomena in the ever-changing universe is perfectly expressed just as it is in the Gohonzon. The true aspect of the universe is precisely the same for each of us, who are each a microcosm of the universe. Nichiren Daishonin tells us this in his writings.

That is why the Daishonin's Gohonzon embodies the basic Law of the universe; it is the true fundamental object of devotion.



### The Mystic Law Which Operates as Both Good and Evil

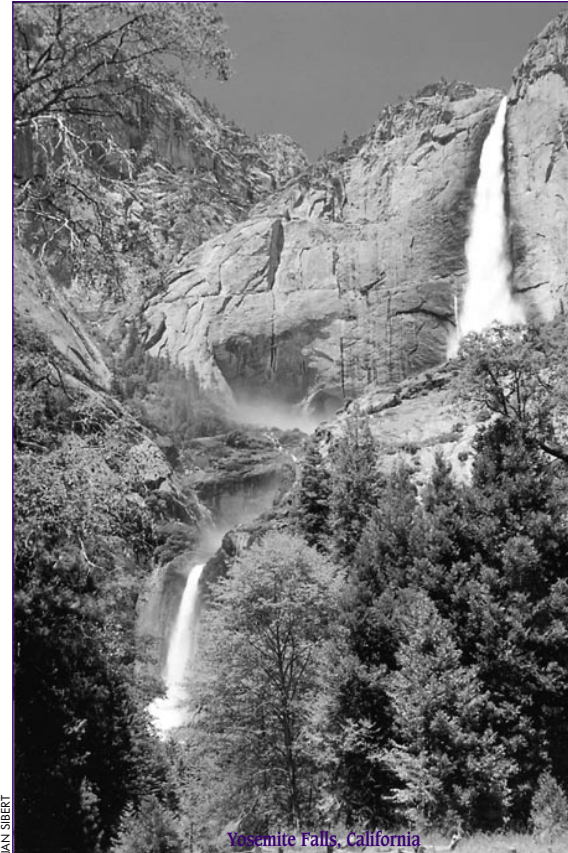
The universe includes both the powers of good and evil.

In the Gohonzon, all of the Ten Worlds are represented, from Shakyamuni and Taho, who represent the Buddha realm, to Devadatta, who represents the state of Hell.

And both the representatives of good powers and capacities and the representatives of evil powers and capacities are illuminated equally by the light of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Both then display the "exalted form that inherently exists in them," which means the exalted forms and functions of existence just as it is. The exalted form of fundamental existence is manifested as the fundamental object of devotion.

When we practice gongyo and chant daimoku before the Gohonzon, the good and evil capacities of our life begin to function as the exalted form of fundamental existence.

Lives that are full of the pain of Hell, lives that are in the state of Hunger, lives warped by the state of Anger—such lives, too, begin to move in the direction of creating their own personal happiness and value. Lives being pulled toward misfortune and unhap-



Yosemite Falls, California

piness are redirected and pulled in the opposite direction, toward good, when they make the Mystic Law their base.

It is as if sufferings are made the fuel for a fire of joy and wisdom and compassion. It is the Mystic Law and faith which ignite that flame.

If that is true, it goes without saying that the worlds of good—such states as Buddhahood, Bodhisattva and Heaven—only increase their brightness and their power and glory by the power of daimoku chanted.

The sun and moon of our individual microcosms, too, shine forth with brilliant light and illuminate the darkness of life.

Good and evil, all the three thousand realms and factors of existence merge and make a 180-degree revolution and lead us to happiness, to a life of eternity, joy, true self and purity.

It is only natural that sometimes we fall sick. But we must see that sickness as a sickness that exists originally in life,

based on the principle of the Mystic Law. In other words, there is no reason to allow yourself to be controlled by illness, for it to fill your life with suffering and distress. From the standpoint of eternal life through the three existences, your fundamentally happy self is incontrovertibly established.

That realization will remove any obstacles or blocks you experience in life and will serve as a springboard for a leap to a more expansive state of being.

Life will be enjoyable. And death will be peaceful, a glorious journey to the next enjoyable life.

When winter arrives, the trees and other plants temporarily lose their leaves. But those plants possess the life to send forth new green shoots when spring comes. Human death is like that, but we possess a life force that leads us to a new life—to a new mission—immediately, and without pain.

On the other hand, if the roots and even the seeds wither, no new life will spring forth. In one sense, such a life has perished. It will not send forth green leaves, beautiful flowers, or fragrant fruits. You must not allow yours to become that sort of life.

### The Voice Chanting Daimoku Reaches the Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions

Next I would like to reply to the question whether there is any value in chanting daimoku and reciting sutra passages without understanding their meaning.

Of course it is better if you understand their meaning. That will strengthen your commitment to the Law. But if you understand and yet fail to practice, it's all of no use. Not only that, but you can't understand the real depth of the teachings through reason alone.

Birds, for example, have their own language, their own speech. People don't understand it, but other birds do.

There are many examples among humans as well—codes, abbreviations, or foreign languages are well understood by experts or native speakers but unintelligible to others.

In the same way, the language of gongyo, of chanting daimoku, reaches the Gohonzon and the realms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three



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existences and the ten directions. We might call it the language of the realms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

That's why the voice of gongyo and daimoku directed to the Gohonzon, whether we understand it or not, reaches all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly deities. They hear it and say, "Excellent, excellent!" in response, rejoicing and praising us, and the entire universe envelops us in light.

### Up the Mountain of Supreme Enlightenment, to the Sky of Tranquil Light

The Daishonin has taught us that through gongyo and chanting daimoku we can reach an elevated state in which, while engaged in our daily

lives, we traverse the entire universe.

In his "Letter to Sairen-bo," Nichiren Daishonin writes, "And, without having to take a single step, those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. What a truly inexpressible joy it is!" (WND, 313).

When you worship the Gohonzon, the door to your microcosm is opened to the entire universe, the macrocosm, and you experience a great, boundless joy, as if you were looking out over the entire cosmos. You feel great satisfaction and rejoicing, a great wisdom, as if you held the entire universe in your palm. The microcosm enfolded by the macrocosm reaches out to enfold the macrocosm in its own embrace.

The Daishonin also writes, in his "Letter to Niike," "When nurtured by the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo... (we are) free to soar into the sky of the true aspect of all phenomena and the reality of all things" (WND, 1030).

And, in "On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Though he himself is like the wisteria vine, because he clings to the pine that is the Lotus Sutra, he is able to ascend the mountain of perfect enlightenment. Because he has the wings of the single vehicle to rely upon, he can soar into the sky of Tranquil Light" (WND, 821).

Just as we might look down on the bright, clear scene of the world below from a lofty mountain's highest peak, we can climb the peak of the mountain of wisdom (supreme enlightenment).

And we can attain a state of eternal bliss, experiencing the infinite expanse and depth of life moment after moment, as if we were flying through the universe and gazing at the brilliantly shining Milky Way, blazing comets, and all of the beautiful stars.

Nichiren Daishonin adds, after the

passage from “On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors,” quoted above, the promise that we will be able to bring great fortune not only to ourselves but also to our ancestors for seven generations back and our descendants for seven generations into the future. How wonderful indeed are the enormous merits of the Mystic Law!

### The Great Merits of Faith Are in Inconspicuous Benefits

Nichiren Daishonin writes in “The Fourteen Slanders,” “But how great is the difference between the blessings received when a sage chants the daimoku and the blessings received when we chant it? To reply, one is in no way superior to the other. The gold that a fool possesses is no different from the gold that a wise man possesses; a fire made by a fool is the same as a fire made by a wise man” (WND, 756).

In other words, the benefits of the Gohonzon are completely unrelated to a person’s position or wealth. They are equal for all. The Daishonin tells us that any person who chants daimoku will attain happiness.

The merits of the Gohonzon can be divided into conspicuous and inconspicuous benefits.

Conspicuous benefits reveal themselves when you have some problem with your health or with work or in some other aspect of your daily life and you are protected and a solution suddenly presents itself.

At the same time, you accumulate blessings and gradually establish a rich and expansive state of life, just as the waters of the sea gradually rise with the swelling tide. Once you have established that state, you will never be defeated, no matter which of life’s troubles you might be confronted with. And you will be able to enjoy yourself in a state of happiness not only in this existence but for all eternity. This is the

meaning of inconspicuous benefits.

They are like a spring: once you wind it up, it is always ready to be set in motion. But if the spring isn’t wound, it will not work when called on. To continue this metaphor, it is faith that winds the spring, and the state of the spring when it is fully wound and has the potential to act whenever necessary is a life filled with inconspicuous benefits.

The power of the Mystic Law allows us to naturally achieve a life in which all our wishes are fulfilled and we enjoy eternal happiness.

But how do those benefits depend upon faith? The Daishonin writes, in “The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood,” “No matter how sincerely one believes in the Lotus Sutra, if one is guilty of failing to rebuke slander of the Law, one will surely fall into hell, just as a single crab leg will ruin a thousand pots of lacquer” (WND, 747).

The fourteen slanders are taught as the causes of evil. Among those slanders are contempt, hatred, jealousy and grudges. These mean being contemptuous of, hating, being jealous of, or holding grudges against those with faith.

There are cases when we wonder why merit doesn’t reveal itself in spite of our earnest and high degree of faith. At such times, rather than suspecting that you may entertain doubt about the Gohonzon, it is better to ask yourself whether you are not guilty of these four types of slander. Because a person who is contemptuous, hating, jealous, or holds grudges will realize no benefits.

Of course you are perfectly free to say what must be said even to your fellow members in faith, and it is necessary to do so. But there is a difference between words spoken with real concern for your listener and those spoken with feelings of hatred or jealousy. It is extremely important to understand and observe this distinction.

All of us who gather here together before the Gohonzon in the cause of kosen-rufu are the Buddha’s children, the family of the Mystic Law.

That is why we must respect and encourage each other throughout our lives. Let me end today’s speech by urging you to be absolutely convinced that the merits of the Gohonzon and the protection of the deities are bound to increase for precisely such a person.

### Take the Next Great Step Forward

*First SGI-USA Executive Conference at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 21.*

It is important for leaders to be fair and impartial and to hear out opinions that differ from their own. Having the broad-mindedness to consider others’ views will win you the respect of your juniors. If you have the humility to treasure members who offer good suggestions, you will be able to raise many capable people. By giving sincere consideration to diverse opinions, you can develop a broad, flexible outlook and make stable progress.

Discussing all things openly as siblings or members of a family, please proceed hand in hand, step by step, toward construction and growth. In this sense, the world of Buddhism must be a model of democracy.



Equality and human rights are the ideals of America. At the same time, it is in fact Buddhism that places the greatest importance on these fundamental values and seeks their practical application.

All people are equal. There are absolutely no distinctions of superior and inferior among human beings. Differences of position in an organization are temporary and provisional. They are no more than an expedient

means for enabling all members to practice joyfully and become truly happy.

Therefore, a leader in an organization is not someone who stands above others but one whose role is to serve and support everyone else. This is something that the second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda used to explain by saying, “Leaders are servants of the members.” In a sense, a true leader of kosen-rufu is one who is determined to sacrifice himself for the sake of the members.

If leaders are under the illusion that they are somehow great or superior to others because of their position, their attitude goes against the Buddhist spirit of equality

In this connection, I would like to emphasize the importance of fostering an atmosphere where members feel free to speak their minds to leaders and say what they feel has to be said — for we are all equally good friends (*zenchishiki*) who are dedicated to the same cause.

Buddhism teaches in “The Opening of the Eyes II,” “One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent” (WND, 286). From the standpoint of faith, to keep silent when one sees something amiss is tantamount to lacking mercy. Although to criticize and censure someone out of petty emotionalism is of course incorrect, it is necessary that constructive and valuable opinions be aired. If a leader is broad-minded enough to listen with a sense of appreciation, both the leader and those sharing their views can expand their state of life.

A leader may sometimes have occasion to call something to a member’s attention in the interest of his or her growth. That is an act of compassion. But to scold someone out of emotionalism is a sign of arrogance. Leaders should never reprimand members without good cause. The human mind is infinitely delicate.

Men and women are equal. People

who ignore this in their behavior cannot be called civilized. It sometimes happens that if women blindly follow male leaders, both will wind up suffering in the end. Rather, Buddhism teaches that women and men should complement one another like a bow and arrow. In order that the arrow may proceed along the correct path, a correct direction for the bow must be set, and from time to time corrective adjustments made.

In his guidance to the wives of the Ikegami brothers, Nichiren Daishonin states in “Letter to the Brothers,” “If both of you unite in encouraging your husbands’ faith, you will follow the path of the dragon king’s daughter and become the model for women attaining Buddhahood in the evil latter age” (WND, 502). This passage reflects the Daishonin’s strict and yet compassionate advice to his female followers. I hope that you will take it deeply to heart.

Buddhism places highest value on human rights and seeks to ensure that human rights are respected. In caring for a single person, one tries to thoroughly protect and do everything one can for that person. One who respects and embraces the children of the Buddha in this way is a true capable person and a true leader.



In making a phone call, if you misdial just one number, your call will not go through as desired. If even a single wire is misplaced in a sophisticated machine, it will fail to operate. How much more true is this in our practice of Buddhism, which reveals that each phenomenon, without exception, strictly possesses all of the 3,000 realms and factors of life. Unless a person embraces the correct Law, maintains correct faith, and carries out a correct practice, he will eventually lead many astray. This is an extremely serious offense, and those who follow such a leader are to be pitied.

In this connection, it should be

pointed out that the “Law,” not the “person,” is to be regarded as the proper standard in all things. Putting the person first gives you an uncertain standard; it is to let that person’s mind become your master. At some point, relations based on such a standard will become like those existing between a paternal, godfather-like figure and those bound to him by personal loyalty.

In contrast, if you establish the Law as your standard, you will become the master of your mind. The great development that we have realized in Japan has been possible because we have exerted ourselves in the practice based on the Gohonzon and in accordance with the Gosho.

Nichiren Daishonin laments people’s approach to Buddhism, saying in “Reply to Hoshina Goro Taro”: “The people of our time — whether clergy or laity, nobles or commoners — all revere persons and do not value the Law. They make their own mind their teacher, and do not rely on the sutras” (WND, 156). If one makes his mind his sole standard, he will in due course become self-righteous. But if one carries out faith and practice based on the Law, he is a true leader of Buddhism.

## Humanity Is the Essence of Buddhism

*Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 22.*

## A Mother’s Prayer Reaches the World of Buddhahood

There are many passages in which the Daishonin refers to people’s indebtedness to, and yearning for, their mothers. I would like to cite several examples here.

At one time, Nichiren Daishonin wrote to a believer who had lost her son:

There was a pheasant that

braved the fire to save its chick, and the destitute woman who drowned in the Ganges River with her child held tightly in her arms. That pheasant is the present Bodhisattva Miroku, while the woman who drowned in the Ganges has been reborn as the heavenly King Bonten.

Moreover, you, Konichi Shonin, so deeply concerned for your deceased son, have become a votary of the Lotus Sutra. The two of you will certainly meet and reach the pure land of Eagle Peak together. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 934)

The Daishonin addresses the recipient of this letter using the title of “shonin,” a title given only to a high-ranking priest, thus expressing his respect for this female lay believer. In the use of this single word, we can also see the Daishonin’s exemplary sincerity and profound humanity

The Daishonin likens the selfless love of a mother for her offspring to the compassionate actions of a bodhisattva and the majestic power of the heavenly god Bonten. He further encourages her by saying that if the mother takes faith in the Mystic Law, her love for her children will surely be communicated to the Gohonzon and enable both the mother and child to reach the world of Buddhahood.

Humanity is the essence of Buddhism. As stated in this Gosho passage, when sincere and beautiful affection, as symbolized in this Gosho by a mother’s love, is nurtured by faith in the Mystic Law, one can elevate his or her state of life to that of a bodhisattva or a Buddha. At the same time, one’s children and other relatives can share in the blessings one receives.

Mothers are truly a blessing. They are priceless treasures. I sincerely hope that all of you will become people who appreciate the obligations that you

owe your mothers. In “The Gods Same Birth and Same Name,” written to Nichigennyō, the wife of Shijō Kingō, Nichiren Daishonin states:

A baby may not recognize its mother, but the mother never forgets her baby. Shakyamuni Buddha is compared to the mother and women are compared to the baby. If two people long for each other, as a rule they will never be parted. If one person yearns for the other, but the other

istic attention, compassion and sensitivity to the other person’s state of mind in expounding the teachings of Buddhism in a manner that is most appropriate to the situation of that particular person. In his letter, he explains that we are children of the Buddha. Therefore, the Buddha who is our parent constantly has our welfare at heart, and thoughts of us never leave his mind. Nonetheless, like infants who do not recognize their mother’s care and concern, common mortals are ignorant of the Buddha’s compassion.

Please do not forget your mother’s



STEPHANIE SYDNEY

yearns not, sometimes they will meet, and sometimes they will not. The Buddha is like the one who yearns, and women are like the one who does not. If we yearn for the Buddha, how could Shakyamuni Buddha possibly fail to appear? (WND, 315)

When she received this letter, Nichigennyō was then nursing her eleven-month-old daughter, Tsukimaro Gozen. The Daishonin uses the analogy of a “mother and her baby” to explain the compassion and great concern of the Buddha. Nothing could have been more appropriate to her situation or moved her heart more profoundly than this particular analogy. This is a perfect example that illustrates the Daishonin’s character-

love or the hardships she has endured for you. I am convinced that while a person keeps the memory of his mother’s loving face alive in his mind, he will never go far astray. Similarly, as long as we bear in mind the Daishonin’s profound compassion and live in deep appreciation of it, our lives will be illuminated brightly by the light of Buddhahood. And, enveloped in the Gohonzon’s great compassion, we will walk along a path that is fundamentally filled with tranquillity and immeasurable joy.

Therefore, I would ask that you take very good care of your parents—especially your mothers. A mother’s love is unimaginably deep and her influence profound. If all people treasured their mothers, the world would undoubtedly be filled with peace and happiness.

## Bring Forth the Great Flower of Absolute Happiness

*First SGI All-America General Meeting held in the SGI-USA World Peace Ikeda Auditorium, February 24.*

The lotus flower is invested with profound significance in Buddhism. It is thought to be the only plant that simultaneously produces both flower (cause) and seed-pod (effect). This unique trait is used to indicate the Buddhist principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

The Daishonin explains the significance of cause and effect: All sutras other than the Lotus Sutra expound that Buddhahood (effect) can be attained only after having made good causes, that is, practicing their teachings (causes) over a length of time. With the Lotus Sutra, however, the very act of embracing it (cause) enables one simultaneously to become a Buddha (effect).

Such is the splendid power of the Mystic Law. It does not require that you undergo lifetime upon lifetime of practice to become a Buddha. Moreover, the Mystic Law releases us from the shackles of our past negative karma. Based upon our firm faith in the Gohonzon each day, we can enable the most precious state of Buddhahood to pulsate vibrantly in our lives every moment.

This is the Daishonin's Buddhism. In general, it teaches that practitioners who possess strong faith and remain committed to kosen-rufu throughout their lives are already Buddhas. Therefore, leaders who deprecate and look down on such members, in essence, despise Buddhas. And those who disparage Buddhas are naturally creating bad causes. On the other hand, we cannot praise too much an individual who is dedicated to the Mystic Law.

## The Pure Flower of Good Fortune Blooms in the Mire

Chapter Fifteen ("Emerging From the Earth") of the Lotus Sutra reads, "Unsoiled by worldly things/like the lotus flower in the water" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 222) That is, the lotus flower brings forth pure and beautiful blooms from muddy pond waters. Just like the lotus blossom, a person who embraces this great Law can never fail to establish a vigorous and beautiful life filled with the aspects of eternity, joy, true self and purity, even in the mire of this troubled world.

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin expounds that we should not seek a heavenly paradise somewhere outside ourselves. Nor should we seek an emotional escape from reality. The lotus flower of our own lives blooms in no other place than in actual society and in our daily existence.

Society is a place of confusion, full of contradictions and collisions of egos. It is precisely in these murky waters of earthly desires that the state of Buddhahood—in other words, the great flower of absolute happiness—fragrantly blooms forth.

## Become a Philosopher of Life

*Youth Training Session held at Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 25.*

## Establish a Warm Home of Kosen-rufu

You are the true successors of SGI-USA and future leaders of worldwide kosen-rufu. Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to confirm some basic tenets of our Buddhist practice.

The first point is that we are one big family whose members are joined by

the lifeblood of faith in the Mystic Law. The organization for kosen-rufu should be a "home" of comfort and fulfillment in life.

I hope that all members, their lives illuminated by the Gohonzon, will gather together with a feeling of relief and relaxation and a sense of energy welling up from within.

## On Meetings

Suppose you come back home exhausted after a hard day of work or study. And the moment you walk through the door, someone in your family barks at you: "You're late. What on earth have you been doing?" If such things occur frequently, you will naturally feel negative and lose a sense of attachment to your home.

By the same token, sometimes members cannot be on time to certain meetings or cannot come at all. No one in the organization has the right to scold a person in this kind of situation. On the contrary, leaders should warmly welcome such members. A true family is pervaded by a spirit of praise and encouragement for individual members' sincere efforts.

## Propagation

The same can be said about the relationship of husband and wife, or parent and child. If a woman constantly badgers her husband that his salary is too low or harshly reprimands her child for low grades, to vent their frustration the husband may think of going out drinking and the child of going to an amusement center. My sympathy lies with them. Both the husband and the child, in this case, know their own problems; so another person pointing them out can only add to their misery.

We exert ourselves to spread true Buddhism and carry out other activities in connection with our practice so that we can accumulate good fortune and become happy. We do all this for

Ariel view of Soka University of America at Calabasas



GREGORY NAKASUJI

our own sake and not for the sake of the organization, and most certainly not for the sake of our leaders.

Leaders should not needlessly give members a hard time. Scolding a member who is sincerely doing activities amounts to the offense of holding a fellow believer in contempt, one of the Fourteen Slanders.

Propagation is a practice that we carry out on the direction of Nichiren Daishonin. Whether people to whom you explain Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism decide to take faith depends mainly upon their life tendency and their capacity to understand and believe in Buddhism. In any case, whether a person determines to take faith in Buddhism after listening to an explanation (Jpn *hosshin geshu*) or listens to the teaching and does not decide to take faith in it (Jpn *monpo geshu*), the benefit that the believer receives is the same.

Propagation is the action of the Buddha's envoys. We should treasure and most highly respect those who carry out this noble and benevolent practice.

"You've done well. You were able to plant the seed of Buddhahood in your friend's heart. That's a splendid thing." So saying, you should praise and encourage one another, sharing one

another's joy like brothers and sisters. Touched by such a family-like atmosphere, more and more people will begin to take faith in true Buddhism. Love and peace are the lifeblood of a home.

### Respecting Society, Your Job and Your Daily Life

Furthermore, faith manifests itself in daily life, and Buddhism in society. By refreshing your life force through faith, you can work and study much harder than others, and you can also build a model family. People will then place their trust in you and may remark at how, as a Buddhist or as a member of the SGI-USA family, you stand out among others. This is a kind of actual proof.

One who takes good care of his job, daily life and family is a person of deep and genuine faith. Activities are intended to be carried out in the spare time that you have from your work and family. In contrast, if on the premise that SGI-USA is your home, no one is allowed outside, or people are dissuaded from attending to their work or study, no family can be created. Noble families are so called because they have sent many capable people into society.

In the harsh reality of society, competition and tension cannot be avoided. You may also sometimes experience clashes of ego. But once you return to the home of SGI-USA, you can let go of your tension, relax and smile; this is where you can obtain "nutrition" for your life, thereby feeling refreshed and filled with energy to undertake the next

day's challenge. As leaders, it is your duty to make SGI-USA such an organization.

There may be some members who work at night or have irregular working hours, and others who are extremely busy with work or study for examinations. Such people might find it difficult to attend meetings. But they are also challenging their individual problems and trying hard to show actual proof of faith. I want you to become considerate leaders who can understand others' situations.

I hope that you will make all meetings held throughout the country joyful, interesting and significant, and filled with smiles. All Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe will watch over such harmonious gatherings of the Buddha's children.

### All Are Children of the Buddha

All members of a family are equal. In terms of the organization, the father corresponds to the men's division, the mother to the women's division, the brothers and sisters to the youth division, and there are others who belong to the guidance division or who are students.

Although each member of the SGI-USA family has a different situation, they are all the Buddha's children who enjoy equal rights. In fact, the higher one's position, the heavier the responsibility one assumes. Try to imagine, for example, a family where the father alone eats good food and the children cry in hunger. This is not a home. Parents want their children to eat, even if they themselves can have nothing.

Nichiren Daishonin warmly encouraged a female disciple in "The Supremacy of the Law" saying: "If anything at all happens, please come over here. I will welcome you. Let us die of starvation together among the mountains." (WND, 616). What compassion the Daishonin shows!

The family is a unit where all joys and sorrows are shared among mem-

bers. As a result, the sadness is more than halved and the happiness more than doubled.

Neither orders, authority nor threats can unite a family. It is love, harmony and consideration that bind its members to one another. In a family, there is no particular need for a hero. What is needed is a strong father who can protect everyone and a mother who is impartial, fair and kind.

In a family, if one person is unhappy, then so is the entire family. Therefore, in SGI-USA, I would like you to sincerely pray for and protect one another so that there are no people who are unfortunate and unhappy, or who will abandon their faith, and that every person will become happy. These are the kinds of humanistic bonds among fellow members that give birth to true unity. Coercion or force stemming from power and authority is ineffective at critical moments.

The point is that Buddhism exists for the sake of each person's happiness. The same can be said of the organization for kosen-rufu. The organization exists for the sake of the people, not the other way around. To embrace and protect all individuals, leading them to happiness and attaining Buddhahood—this is why the SGI-USA organization exists.

### **A Shelter for the Spiritually Homeless**

In America, the problem of the homeless has become a serious social dilemma. Homeless people are said to number in the millions. But I fear that the number of spiritually homeless people is even greater. These people go about searching for a comfortable place, their house of the soul, or spiritual home. The power of Buddhism provides people with a place of essential tranquility, a sweet home of life.

Nichiren Daishonin states in "Reply

to the Lay Priest of Ko": "No place is secure. Be convinced that Buddhahood is the final abode" (WND, 491).

From the outset America has been a country to which people from around the world have flocked, leaving their homelands for one reason or another. They came to this country searching for a new home. It is the task of the kosen-rufu movement to breathe life into America's purpose of building a new home for these people. Society will become a genuine home to all only when it provides each person with absolute peace and compassionate protection.

Nichiren Daishonin states, "I, Nichiren, humble person though I am, have received Lord Shakyamuni's royal command and come to this country of Japan" (WND, 331). As a disciple of the Daishonin, each one of you is an irreplaceable person who was born in this country with a unique mission that you yourself originally chose. By opening your eyes of faith, you can without fail understand your precious role.

### **Companions of Kosen-rufu From Time Without Beginning**

We are family not only in this lifetime. Rather, we have been brothers and sisters from time without beginning. To view our relationship only in terms of this single lifetime is extremely shallow; it is to assume the view of pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, both of which held that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India.

To see our relationship as that of companions spanning the three existences of past, present and future is to accept the point of view of time without beginning that is expounded in the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In other words, together, we are carrying out an ongoing struggle, from now into the future, to advance kosen-rufu, to promote peace

and culture for the sake of humanity.

I would like you to build an enviable, endearing SGI-USA family, of which those around you will say: "Those people seem truly happy. How warm the light from the window of that SGI-USA house looks!" Steadily infusing society with smiling faces and hope, please construct, with the Mystic Law as your foundation, an eternal family of peace and a happy and beautiful America.

### **Live Each Day Filled With Value and Happiness**

*Youth Training Session held on February 26 at the Malibu Training Center.*

I hope that each of you makes further effort to become a master of faith, practice and study who has absolute conviction and outstanding ability in practice and study.

Youth is the time of continual worries. Your heart is swayed in all matters—your future direction, personality, the opposite sex, society and life. You may often feel irresolute and restless. Some will be puzzled by the gap between ideals and reality, and others will succumb to self-hatred and behave in a neurotic fashion.

Youth is a season of unrest and agony. This is true of young people anywhere in the world. In a sense, it may be all for the best. You certainly are not suffering on your own; and since young people are all experiencing change and growth, such feelings cannot be helped.

Therefore, you should not be hasty. It is unreasonable to suppose that you can become both spiritually and socially stable at one fell swoop. An airplane will have an accident if it tries to take off without first building up speed. Even if a plane takes off successfully, without sufficient fuel and complete preparation, it will not keep flying or it may even crash.

Life is like a marathon, as is faith.

Though you may lose the lead in the midst of the race, victory or defeat is decided at the finish line. Your training during your youth is for the purpose of enabling you to win ultimate and true victory. Therefore, now is the time when you must study as much as you can, and chant abundant daimoku so that you can greatly increase your life force.

Please steadily advance along the fundamental path which accords with the principle that “faith manifests itself in daily life,” living in the way that best suits you. Just as the sun rises every day, if you persistently advance based on the Mystic Law, the absolute Law of the universe, you will definitely be able to lead a life in which all desires are fulfilled. Please be convinced that you are now leading the most certain and valuable youth.

### Buddhism Is the Mirror That Perfectly Reflects Our Lives

*First SGI-USA women’s division training session, Soka University of America at Calabasas, February 27.*

**W**hat is the purpose of life? It is happiness. But there are two kinds of happiness: relative and absolute. Relative happiness comes in a wide variety of forms. The purpose of Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood. In modern terms, this could be explained as realizing absolute happiness — a state of happiness that can never be destroyed or defeated.

Nichiren Daishonin states, “There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo” (WND, 681). So long as you maintain strong faith, resolutely chant-

ing daimoku to the Gohonzon no matter what happens, then you will without fail lead a life of complete fulfillment. This is in accordance with the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment.

True happiness lies only in establishing such a supreme state of life. By so doing, you are able to change all sufferings into causes for joy and con-



Mirror Lake, Yosemite, California

JAN SIBERT

tentment and to live with composure and jubilation.

Our organization for kosen-rufu exists so that each member can attain absolute happiness. Let me make it perfectly clear that the objective of this organization is your happiness.

Society and daily life are the “great earth” for our faith and practice of the True Law. The steady development of kosen-rufu can be ensured only when, based on faith, we carefully attend to the

affairs of society, our daily lives and our families. “Faith manifests itself in daily life”—this is our eternal guideline.



A Japanese proverb has it that the mirror is a woman’s soul. It is said that, just as warriors will never part with their swords, women will never part with their mirrors. There would seem to be some truth to this saying, in that mirrors are prized by women the world over.

In Buddhism, the mirror is used to explain various doctrines. In one place, Nichiren Daishonin states, “There are profound teachings transmitted secretly with regard to mirrors” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 724).

### Buddhism Is the Mirror That Perfectly Reflects Our Lives

**A**nother writing states: “A bronze mirror may reflect the body but not the mind. The mirror of the Lotus Sutra reflects not only our physical form but our inner being as well. Furthermore, the sutra mirrors, with complete clarity, one’s past karma and its future effect” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1521).

Mirrors reflect our outward form. The mirror of Buddhism, however, reveals the intangible aspect of our lives. Mirrors, which function by virtue of the laws of light and reflection, are a product of human wisdom. On the other hand, the Gohonzon, based on the Law of the universe and life itself, is the culmination of the Buddha’s wisdom and makes it possible for us to attain Buddhahood by providing us with a means of perceiving the true aspect of our life.

Just as a mirror is indispensable for putting your face and hair in order, you need a mirror that reveals the depths of

your life if you are to lead a happier and more beautiful existence.

Incidentally, as indicated in the Daishonin's reference to a bronze mirror in the above Gosho passage, mirrors in ancient times were made of polished metal alloys such as bronze, nickel and steel.



### Polish the Mirror of Your Life

**B**ronze mirrors not only reflected poorly but also tarnished very quickly. Therefore, unless they were polished regularly, they became unusable. This kind of mirror was popular in the Kamakura era during which the Daishonin lived.

In "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "This is similar to a tarnished mirror will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena and the true aspect of reality" (WND, 4). In this well-known passage, the Daishonin draws parallels between the tradition of mirror-polishing and the process of attaining Buddhahood.

Originally, every person's life is a brilliantly shining mirror. Differences arise depending on whether or not one polishes this mirror. A polished mirror is the Buddha's life, whereas a tarnished mirror is that of a common mortal. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is what polishes our life. Not only do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that the mirror of their lives shines brightly, too. Thus, it can be said that we are masters of the art of polishing the mirror of life.

Even though people may make up their faces, they tend to neglect to pol-

ish their lives. While they quickly wash off a stain from their face, they remain unconcerned about stains in their lives.

### Perceive the Buddha Nature Inherent in Your Life

**J**ust as you look into a mirror when you make up your face, to beautify "the face of the soul," you need a mirror that reflects the depths of your life. This mirror is none other than the Gohonzon of "observing one's mind," or more precisely, observing one's life. Nichiren Daishonin explains what it means to observe one's life in "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind," "Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs" (WND, 356).

Similarly, observing one's life means to perceive that one's life contains the Ten Worlds, and in particular, the world of Buddhahood. It was to enable people to do this that Nichiren Daishonin bestowed the Gohonzon of "observing one's mind" upon all mankind. In his exegesis on "The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind," Nichikan Shonin, the twenty-sixth high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, states, "The object of devotion can be compared to a wonderful mirror."

Nichiren Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," "The five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo mirror all things without a single exception." The Gohonzon is the clearest of all mirrors which reflects the entire universe exactly as it is. When you chant to the Gohonzon, you perceive the true entity of your life and tap the inexhaustible life force of Buddhahood.



The Gohonzon is a clear mirror. It perfectly reveals our state of faith and projects this out into the universe. This demonstrates the principle of *ichinen*

*sanzen*, that a single life-moment pervades the three thousand realms.

In a letter to his disciple Abutsubo on Sado Island, Nichiren Daishonin wrote: "You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself" (WND, 299). Worshipping the Gohonzon graces and glorifies the treasure tower of your own life.

When people worship the Gohonzon, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the entire universe immediately respond to their prayers by lending their protection. If they slander the Gohonzon, the response will be exactly the opposite.

### One's Mind of Faith Is Most Important

**F**or this reason, one's mind of faith is extremely important. The mind of faith has a subtle and far-reaching influence.

There may be times, for instance, when you feel reluctant to do gongyo or take part in activities for kosen-rufu. That state of mind is reflected exactly on the entire universe, as if on the surface of a clear mirror. The heavenly deities will then also feel reluctant to play their part, and they will naturally fail to exert their full power of protection.

On the other hand, when you joyfully do gongyo and carry out activities with the determination to accumulate more good fortune in your life, the heavenly deities will be delighted and will valiantly perform their duty. If you must take some action anyway, it is to your advantage that you do so spontaneously and with a feeling of joy.

If you practice reluctantly with a sense that it's a waste of time, disbelief and complaints will erode your good fortune. If you continue to practice in this way, you will not experience remarkable benefits, and this will only serve to further convince you that your

practice is in vain. This is a vicious circle.

If you practice faith while doubting its effects, you will get results that are, at best, unsatisfactory. This is the reflection of your own weak faith on the mirror of the cosmos. On the other hand, when you stand up with strong confidence, you will accrue limitless blessings.

While controlling your mind, which is at once both extremely subtle and solemnly profound, you should strive to elevate your faith with freshness and vigor.

When you do so, both your life and your surroundings will open wide before you, and every action you take will become a source of benefit. Understanding the subtle workings of one's mind is the key to faith and to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

There is a Russian proverb which says, "It is no use to blame the looking glass if your face is awry." Likewise, your happiness or unhappiness is entirely the reflection of the balance of good and bad causes accumulated in your life. You cannot blame others for your misfortunes. In the world of faith, it is necessary to realize this all the more clearly.



### The Spirit of Propagation

Human relations also function as a kind of mirror. Nichiren Daishonin states in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings": "When Bodhisattva Never Disparaging bowed in reverence to the four categories of people, the Buddha nature inherent in the lives of these arrogant people bowed back to him. This is the same as how, when one bows facing a mirror, the reflected image bows back" (GZ, 769).

Here, the Daishonin reveals the fundamental spirit that we should have in propagating the Mystic Law. Propagation is an act to be conducted with the utmost respect for other people and out of sincere reverence for the

Buddha nature inherent in their lives. Therefore, we should strictly observe courtesy and good common sense.

With the thought that we are addressing that person's Buddha nature, we should politely and calmly carry out a dialogue — sometimes, depending on the situation, mercifully correcting that person with fatherly strictness. In the course of such human interaction, the Buddha nature in that person, reflecting our own sincerity, will bow to us in return.

When we cherish another with the same profound reverence as we would the Buddha, the Buddha nature in that person's life functions to protect us. On the other hand, if we belittle or regard someone with contempt, as though gazing into our own image reflected in a mirror, we will be disparaged in return.

In the inner realm of life, cause and effect occur simultaneously. With the passage of time, this causal relationship becomes manifest in the phenomenal world of daily life.

### Mutual Respect

In general, the people around us reflect our state of life. Our personal preferences, for example, are mirrored in their attitudes. This is especially clear from the viewpoint of Buddhism, which elucidates the workings of cause and effect as if in a spotless mirror.

To the extent that you praise, respect, protect and care for SGI-USA members, who are all children of the Buddha, you will in turn be protected by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and all heavenly deities. If, on the other hand, you are arrogant or condescending toward members, you will be scolded by the Buddhas and others in like measure. Leaders, in particular, should be clear on this point and take it deeply to heart.

We are a gathering of the Buddha's children. Therefore, if we respect one another, our good fortune will multiply

infinitely, like an image reflected back and forth among mirrors. A person who practices alone cannot experience this tremendous multiplication of benefit.

In short, the environment that you find yourself in, whether favorable or not, is the product of your own life. Most people, however, fail to understand this, and tend to blame others for their troubles.

The Daishonin states in "Reply to Ysaburo": "These people, failing to recognize their own rudeness, seem to think that I am rude. They are like a jealous woman with furious eyes who, unaware that when she glares at a courtesan her own expression is disagreeable, instead complains that the courtesan's gaze is frightening" (WND, 828).

Nichiren Daishonin explains human psychology in such a clear and easy-to-understand manner. There are people who, out of malice, have criticized and sought to oppress us who are the Daishonin's disciples. But, reflected in the mirror of the world of the True Law, such people see only their own faults, ambitions and greed, and therefore slander their own reflections.

To a person who is possessed by the lust for power, even the most selfless, benevolent actions of others will appear as cunning moves undertaken to gain power.

Similarly, to a person who has a strong desire for fame, actions based on conviction and consideration will be seen as publicity stunts. Those who have become slaves of money simply cannot believe that there are people in the world who are strangers to the desire for wealth.

### Build a Strong and Cheerful SGI-USA Women's Division

In contrast, an unusually kind and good-natured person will tend to believe that all others are the same. To a greater or lesser extent, all people tend to see their own reflection in others.

In SGI-USA there are a great number of people who are full of good will and intentions. In a sense, some might be even too good-natured and trusting, to the extent that I fear they could be deceived by deceitful people.

In *Le Pere Goriot*, the French author Balzac writes, “Whatever evil you hear of society, believe it....” So full of evil was the world that he perceived. He adds: “And then you will find out what the world is, a gathering of dupes and rogues. Be of neither party.”

We must gain decisive victory over the harsh realities of society and lead a correct and vibrant life. This is the purpose of our faith. We have to become wise and strong.

## Be People of Magnanimity and Tenacity

*Training session for divisional representatives at Malibu Training Center, February 28.*

People tend to congregate where there is joy, while they quickly leave places that are imbued with an oppressive atmosphere. Again, joining a gathering of pure and sincere people enables one to summon forth a sincere seeking spirit. On the other hand, earnest people will not follow leaders who are not seriously challenging themselves.

In the course of developing, both a person and an organization will have to face various difficulties. This is reasonable and accords with the principles of Buddhism. Having now reached the thirtieth anniversary of its founding, I believe that the SGI-USA has completed one stage in its growth. By all means, please continue to advance filled with hope and confidence.

I once had a discussion with a friend about the probable causes for the rise of Christianity as a world religion. My companion, who is studying

Christianity, said, “Apart from questions of doctrine and religious conviction, Christianity’s rise can be attributed to the fact that those who propagated it were magnanimous and extremely tenacious. Also, they were always gentlemen, conducting themselves in a polite and courteous manner. This was the main reason for the worldwide spread of Christianity.”

To be sure, what he said was historically accurate and no doubt played an important role in the religion’s spread. Of course, we, as Buddhists, must be strict in distinguishing the higher religions from the lower and the profound from the shallow, but at the same time we must learn from human history, drawing important lessons to fuel our further progress and improvement.

Therefore, I sincerely hope that SGI-USA members will always conduct themselves as people of magnanimity, tenacity and gentleness in their respective communities and in society.

Above all, I hope that the SGI-USA will be pervaded by warm bonds of trust and friendship. An organization that is filled with trust and friendship is strong; it will develop, and its members are happy. Where individuals are on bad terms with one another, there is conflict and suffering. In all certainty, such an organization will at some point self-destruct.

A world that is filled with affection and warmth is beautiful. An elegant flower garden is produced when the flowers bloom in harmony with one another. If the flowers are broken, twisted, turned in disorder or bloom at all different times, the flower garden will not be so impressive.

Being on good terms with one another means to live in a world of harmony. By way of analogy, we maintain our health and are able to conduct vigorous activities when our internal organs and bodily systems are all work-



ing in harmony. If this internal physical harmony is lost, diseases result, possibly even leading to one’s death.

Therefore, it is my heartfelt desire that you, the members of SGI-USA, basing yourselves on faith in the Gohonzon, always live as a harmonious family of the Mystic Law, embodying the spirit of itai doshin. No matter what happens, I hope that you will continue to advance, directing your hearts toward unity and friendship.

The Law is the foundation of Buddhism. The foundation for advancing kosen-rufu is always the Gohonzon. In one sense, the person is the one responsible for managing an organization, seeing to it that it correctly upholds and spread the True Law.

In essence, the most important point regarding central figures is that they base themselves on faith in the Gohonzon. If the central figure forgets this vital point and tries to skillfully control and direct the members by exerting authority, there results a very dangerous situation. Such a person could even destroy the beautiful world of the True Law. Therefore, we must always watch that central figures base themselves on and cherish the Law above all else. □

# DIALOGUE

## ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

### **The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra— A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century**

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#### **True Health Lies in Bodhisattva Practice**

*This is the forty-sixth installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and Vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the November 1998 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.*

*Health is one of people's greatest concerns today. The discussion this time focuses on Bodhisattva Medicine King, who appears in the "Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" (twenty-third) chapter of the Lotus Sutra and who symbolizes health. What is true health? What does it mean to say that those who embrace the Mystic Law will enjoy perpetual youth and eternal life? Participants investigate these questions in light of the guidance of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, and the experience of Spain's first young women's division chief, who dedicated herself to kosen-rufu.*

**T**his sutra can save all living beings. This sutra can cause all living beings to free themselves from suffering and anguish. This sutra can bring great benefits to all living beings and fulfill their desires, as a clear cool pond can satisfy all those who are thirsty. It is like. . . a child finding its mother, someone finding a ship in which to cross the water, a sick man finding a doctor, someone in darkness finding a lamp. . . . Such is this Lotus Sutra. It can cause living beings to cast off all distress, all sickness and pain. It can unloose all the bonds of birth and death. (LS23, 286)<sup>1</sup>

This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa. If a person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra, then his illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age or death. (LS23, 288)

**DAISAKU IKEDA:** What is the purpose of faith? It is to transform one's state of life.

There are those who, upon seeing a flower, can immediately compose a poem. The great Japanese *haiku* artist Matsuo Basho (1644–94) was one such person. At a juncture in his travels, he once wrote:

The wild violets —  
somehow strangely appealing  
on the mountain track.<sup>2</sup>

Others, though they may not go as far as composing a poem, are filled with joy at the sight of a beautiful flower.

We may see a single flower and think how lonely it appears. It may remind us of someone, causing us to wonder, “How is so-and-so doing? Is he or she in good health?” and inspire us to give that person a call. This is a reflection of the Bodhisattva state of life.

There are also those, however, in whom the sight of a flower or the moon stirs no reaction at all. They must have hearts of stone!

When Beethoven composed his Symphony no. 6 (*Pastorale*), he was already fairly hard of hearing. But in his heart he could hear birds singing in the countryside and the murmur of a meandering brook. He could hear the joyous voices of country folk, the clamor of a fierce storm and smell of the freshness in the air that follows — all of this was in his heart. And he communicated the great expanse of nature filling his heart to humankind through music. Such was his incredible state of life, even without the ability to hear or without knowledge of Buddhism.

It is impossible, therefore, that we who practice the Mystic Law should be unable to expand the universe of our heart. Mystic, or *myo*, has the meaning “to open.” We practice faith in order to open the vast treasures in our heart, to establish a state of life where we can enjoy all that life brings.

Shakyamuni says, “Let us live most happily, free from disease in the midst of the diseased; let us remain free from disease in the midst of diseased people”<sup>3</sup> Being free of suffering means transforming earthly desires or illusions into enlightenment. It means changing them into joy and fulfillment; into a profound sense of happiness that transcends all suffering.

The passage continues, “Let us live most happily, free from restlessness in the midst of the restless; let us remain free from restlessness in the midst of restlessness.”<sup>4</sup> Suffering is born of greed. Shakyamuni is encouraging us to joyfully strive to accumulate the

treasures of the heart.

He also says, “Freedom from sickness is a holy gift; / Contentment is opulence. / [Indulgence] the finest friend, / And nirvana the finest bliss.”<sup>5</sup>

**TAKANORI ENDO:** Nirvana is enlightenment.

**IKEDA:** This is referring to the principle that “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana,” and it is what Shakyamuni means when he talks about achieving an “immortal” state of life. He is talking about the world of Buddhahood.

**KATSUJI SAITO:** It is said that when Shakyamuni began preaching at the request of the god Brahma after he had attained enlightenment, his first words were, “I have opened the gate of immortality!”

**HARUO SUDA:** And when he first expounded the Law for others, he called out to the five practitioners, “Lend me your ears. I have attained immortality!”

**IKEDA:** He had awakened to the Law transcending the “suffering of death,” the Mystic Law. Nichiren Daishonin says, “*Myo* is the elixir of immortality” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 831).

**SAITO:** The “Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King” (twenty-third) chapter contains these famous words: “This sutra provides good medicine for the ills of the people of Jambudvīpa. If a person who has an illness is able to hear this sutra, then his illness will be wiped out and he will know neither old age or death” (LS23, 288). Eternal youth and immortality are the benefits of the Lotus Sutra.

**ENDO:** In other words, the Lotus Sutra elucidates the “immortal state” to which Shakyamuni had awakened.

**IKEDA:** The Lotus Sutra is the true purpose of Shakyamuni's advent; it is the final conclusion to his life of preaching.

**SUDA:** To say that we “will know neither old age or death” actually sounds impossible!

**IKEDA:** This of course does not imply that we won't grow old and die. If that were the case, then the already serious problem of over-population would be completely out of control!

What it means is that we will not experience suffering because of aging and death. True to Shakyamuni's words “Let us live with great joy,” we can develop our lives to the extent that, as we overcome various hardships, we will

live each day, each moment, savoring the joy of being alive. This is true “health.”

**SUDA:** In a passage cited earlier, Shakyamuni says that “freedom from sickness is a holy gift.” In other words, health is the supreme benefit.

**ENDO:** And that “contentment is opulence”—satisfaction is the supreme treasure.

**IKEDA:** This is health in both body and mind. To be healthy in body and mind is to live vigorously, dedicated wholeheartedly to accomplishing one’s mission in this existence. It means that, as long as we are alive, even should illness overtake us, we will continue chanting daimoku and telling others about the Mystic Law. It means living fully for our mission throughout eternity. To have such faith is to possess a state of life free from aging and death.

This is the teaching of the “Bodhisattva Medicine King” chapter. Bodhisattva Medicine King demonstrates this with his own life. Let’s examine this chapter.

## Bodhisattvas of the Essential and Theoretical Teachings

**SUDA:** The section of the Lotus Sutra where the “ceremony of transmission” takes place concludes with the prior “Entrustment” (twenty-second) chapter. So in a sense it could be said that this previous chapter completes the Lotus Sutra.

But there are in fact six more chapters. These are the “Medicine King,” “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound,” “Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds,” “Dharani,” “Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment” and “Encouragements of the



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“The section of the Lotus Sutra where the ‘ceremony of transmission’ takes place concludes with the prior ‘Entrustment’ (twenty-second) chapter. In a sense, therefore, it could be said that this previous section completes the Lotus Sutra. But there are in fact six more chapters.... Why is this? The Daishonin compares the preaching in these last six chapters of the sutra to a post-harvest ‘gleaning’ of the fields (GZ, 252). ‘Gleaning’ means collecting the fallen grain left by reapers. After harvesting a crop, people would pick up the grain that remained.”

Bodhisattva Universal Worthy” chapters. Why is this? The Daishonin compares the preaching in these last six chapters of the sutra to a post-harvest “gleaning” of the fields (GZ, 252).

**ENDO:** “Gleaning” means collecting the fallen grain left by reapers. After harvesting a crop, people would pick up the grain that remained.

The ceremony for transferring responsibility to carry on the work of leading humankind to enlightenment after Shakyamuni’s death concludes with the essential transmission to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth (in the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” [twenty-first] chapter) and the general transmission to all bodhisattvas (in the “Entrustment” [twenty-second] chapter).

To ensure that the Law is transmitted, Shakyamuni then emphasizes the role of the bodhisattvas of the the-



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“The term ‘theoretical’ (in ‘bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching’) implies an image or reflection of the truth. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China compares ‘essential’ (as in ‘essential teaching’) to the actual moon in the sky and ‘theoretical’ to the moon in the pond (i.e., the moon’s reflected image).”

oretical teachings and those from other worlds and entrusts them with propagating the Lotus Sutra. I think we could say that these six chapters provide “added insurance,” as it were.

**IKEDA:** Pervading these six chapters is Shakyamuni’s spirit to show all people without exception the way to enlightenment and to accomplish the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, no matter what difficulties that task might entail. In terms of format, they resemble an addendum; and in fact, research on the history of the Lotus Sutra’s origins strongly suggests that these chapters were added to the text at a later date.

**SAITO:** Certainly, each of these chapters stands largely on its own, like a series of independent sutras, and the connections between them are also very tenuous. The “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” chapter is actually sometimes called the “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound Sutra,” and historically people have placed their faith in this text as an independent sutra.

**IKEDA:** Even so, these six chapters are not simply an addendum. In terms of the “three assemblies in two places,” the second assembly at Eagle Peak (which suc-

ceeds the first assembly at Eagle Peak [first through eleventh chapters] and the Ceremony in the Air [eleventh through twenty-second chapters]) takes place in these six chapters. This section elucidates the important role of bodhisattvas in returning to actual society with the eternal Mystic Law revealed during the Ceremony in the Air engraved deeply in their hearts.

**SUDA:** This signifies moving from the world of Buddhahood, or the “effect” of enlightenment, to the nine worlds, or the “cause” of enlightenment.

**IKEDA:** The bodhisattvas, believing in and accepting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo contained in the depths of the “Life Span” (sixteenth) chapter, show actual proof of the Mystic Law in their respective field of endeavor. They each test and prove and then propagate the Mystic Law. That is probably why the bodhisattvas appearing in these six chapters are extraordinarily varied in their appearances and activities.

**ENDO:** Bodhisattvas Medicine King, Wonderful Sound, Perceiver of the World’s Sounds, Brave Donor (who appears in the “Dharani” [twenty-sixth] chapter), Medicine Superior (who appears in the “King

Wonderful Adornment” [twenty-seventh] chapter), and Universal Worthy are indeed each very different.

**SAITO:** They are certainly highly individual.

**IKEDA:** This is just an example, but, as you know, when light passes through a standard triangular prism, it breaks into the seven colors of the spectrum. Light is the totality, and the seven colors are its constituent parts. Similarly, the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching who appear in the latter assembly at Eagle Peak, while each carrying in their heart the light of Buddhahood, richly exhibit the hues of their individual mission.

**SAITO:** The term theoretical (in “bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching”) implies an image or reflection of the truth. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China compares essential (of “essential teaching”) to the actual moon in the sky and theoretical to the moon in the pond (i.e., the moon’s reflected image).

**ENDO:** While there is only one moon in the sky, its reflections are countless given the countless number of ponds in existence.

**SUDA:** The bodhisattvas of the essential teaching (i.e., the Bodhisattvas of the Earth) are rather unassuming in comparison to those of the theoretical teaching; they are straightforward and unadorned.

From their names alone, we see that the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices and Firmly Established Practices—are completely different from the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching.

**IKEDA:** That’s right. They are on a different level. The names of the four bodhisattvas represent functions of the Mystic Law itself, and they are compared to the “moon in the sky.” Their mission is simply the propagation of the Mystic Law. This is as the Daishonin indicates when he says, “The action carried out by the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching is [to propagate] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (GZ, 751).

**ENDO:** In other words, the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching are in the first place bodhisattvas instructed by provisional Buddhas (Buddhas who do not reveal their true identity but assume transient identities to lead people to enlightenment). By contrast, the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching are the direct disciples of the true Buddha who are at one with the true Buddha.

**IKEDA:** Yes. The two groups could not be more different.

**ENDO:** The protagonists of kosen-rufu after Shakyamuni’s passing are none other than the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching play a supporting or assisting role.

One can reason that it is in the six chapters making up the second assembly at Eagle Peak where the function of these bodhisattvas to assist the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in accomplishing their mission is made clear. This, at least, is the surface meaning.

**SUDA:** Throughout the world today there are many people who, while not practicing Buddhism themselves, agree with, support and praise the movement to spread the ideals of Buddhism. Perhaps they can be thought of as representing a function of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching.

**IKEDA:** I think we could say that.

Of course, what we are talking about here are activities or functions to support kosen-rufu, and not physical attributes.

## Actual Proof Through Multifaceted Activities

**ENDO:** On a deeper level, it seems that “bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching” actually signify activities carried out in a wide range of areas based on the world of Buddhahood, as in the prism metaphor mentioned earlier.

**SAITO:** That makes it easy to understand.

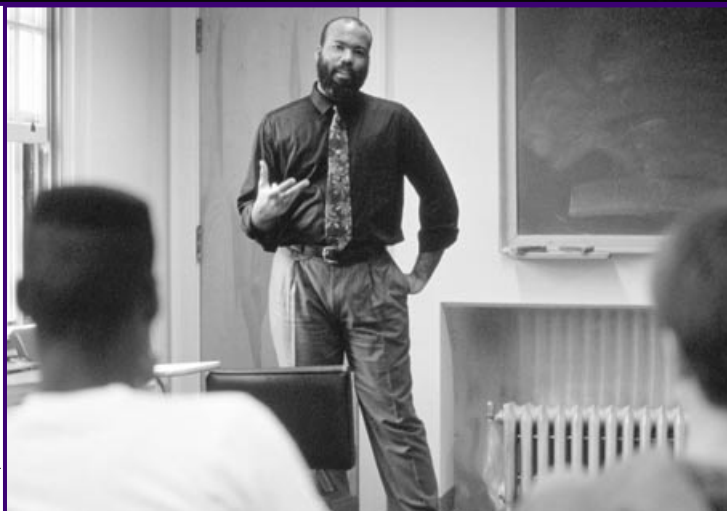
**ENDO:** For example, Bodhisattva Medicine King is active in the area of medicine, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound in the area of music and other arts, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy in the area of scholarship. Their activities are fundamentally reflected images of the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching. This refers to our respective roles in society as bodhisattvas of the essential teaching.

**IKEDA:** Yes that is the conclusion. Through our SGI activities we are advancing the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law as bodhisattvas of the essential teaching. But we each have different jobs, roles and positions in society, in the family and the community.

Based on faith, it is important that we fulfill our respective responsibilities in a way that people can really appreciate. This itself is showing proof of faith and of the Mystic Law. Through observing SGI members in action, people



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“Bodhisattva Medicine King is active in the area of medicine, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound in the area of music and other arts, Bodhisattva Universal Worthy in the area of scholarship. Their activities are fundamentally reflected images of the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching. In other words, this is referring to our respective roles in society as bodhisattvas of the essential teaching.”

can sense the “sun” that burns brightly in their hearts.

It’s impossible that someone practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism correctly should be living irresponsibly. Such a person is not a true practitioner of faith; in fact, they are degrading the Law.

As bodhisattvas of the essential teaching, we need to fully reveal in society and our daily lives the life force of the world of Buddhahood that we develop through our efforts to practice for ourselves and for others. By continually doing so, we further deepen our faith and strengthen our true potential.

It is a two-way process. Through this cycle of practicing

faith and taking action in society, we can realize boundless growth in our lives and limitlessly advance kosen-rufu. I think this is the practical standpoint of the six chapters that make up the second assembly at Eagle Peak.

**SUDA:** I understand more clearly the role of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. Until now I viewed them as something completely unrelated to us. Perhaps I even looked down on them!

**IKEDA:** Faith is what matters. A person who is active in society yet forgets about faith is neither a bodhisattva of the essential teaching nor of the theoretical teaching.

Such people will inevitably succumb to the desire for fame and fortune representative of the worlds of Hunger and Animality. This is because, in forgetting about faith, they are concealing the life-state of Buddhahood. Ultimately, they will fall into the state of Hell. Actually, given the reality of the simultaneity of cause and effect, the moment we lose faith, we are in the state of Hell.

**SAITO:** I can really see why the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching are so varied in their appearance. The reason Wonderful Sound has “thirty-four forms” and Perceiver of the World’s Sounds has “thirty-three forms” is so that they can assume a multitude of guises in order to help people become happy, to demonstrate the validity of the Mystic Law and to promote kosen-rufu.

**IKEDA:** They are splendid, and free of all impediments. The SGI’s fundamental path of promoting peace, culture and education based on Buddhism has its origin in the principle of this second assembly at Eagle Peak. We are advancing just as the Lotus Sutra teaches.

## “I Must Repay My Debt to My Mentor!”

**SUDA:** In a word, the “Bodhisattva Medicine King” chapter is a tale about Medicine King’s efforts to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor. A bodhisattva named Constellation King Flower asks Shakyamuni why Bodhisattva Medicine King engages in difficult and arduous practices in the *saha* world, adding that everyone wishes to understand this (cf. LS23, 280).

Shakyamuni replies that in the past there was a Buddha named Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue Thus Come One who expounded the Lotus Sutra to a bodhisattva named Gladly Seen by All Living Beings. The bodhisattva practiced the sutra single-mindedly for 12,000 years. As a result, he attained the “*samadhi* in which one can manifest all physical forms” (cf. LS23, 281).

**ENDO:** This is the state of life where one can freely display the forms of all living beings in the Ten Worlds. This is what is meant by “thirty-four forms” or “thirty-three forms.”

**SUDA:** Realizing he was able to attain this state thanks to the Lotus Sutra and Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue Buddha, the bodhisattva makes a vow to repay his debt, saying, “I must now make an offering to the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue and to the Lotus Sutra!”

(LS23, 281). Reasoning that the greatest offering would be his own life, he drinks various perfumes and fragrant oils, pours fragrant oil over his body, and sets fire to himself, making an offering of the light given off by this flame. This flame burns continuously for a period of 1,200 years, illuminating the entire world. All Buddhas praise this offering as the “foremost donation of all” and as a “true Dharma offering” (LS23, 282).

**IKEDA:** The sincerity of his efforts to repay his debt of gratitude illuminates the world. We, too, have become happy thanks to the Gohonzon. And thanks to the SGI, which has taught us about the Gohonzon, we have learned the correct path in life.

If we cherish the spirit to repay this debt of gratitude in the depths of our hearts, then our good fortune will increase by leaps and bounds. No matter how much action someone might seem to be taking outwardly, if they lack the spirit to repay their debt of gratitude, their arrogance will destroy their good fortune. Consequently, they will be unable to genuinely transform their state of life. A subtle difference in our spirit, or *ichinen*, produces diametrically different results.

Even those who have high positions in the organization or are successful in society, if they forget to work to repay their debts of gratitude, then, even though others may not notice their decline, in their hearts they will become destitute.

**ENDO:** The desire of Gladly Seen by All Living Beings to repay his debt of gratitude does not subside even after he has burned his body for 1,200 years. After the flame burns out and his life comes to an end, he is born again in the land of Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue Buddha and the household of the king Pure Virtue. He goes back to Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue intending to make offerings to repay his debt of gratitude.

**IKEDA:** His spirit to repay his debt of gratitude transcends life and death. He is resolved that after his death he will come back again to be with his mentor and continue the struggle. Since he has attained the state of being in which he is able to manifest all physical forms, he can choose to be born exactly where he wishes. Those who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to faith in the Mystic Law are completely free.

**SAITO:** The Buddha then tells Gladly Seen by All Living Beings that he is about to die, and he transfers the Law to this disciple who has again returned to his service. Not only that, he also entrusts him with all of his other

disciples and all of his treasures.

**IKEDA:** He leaves everything to this disciple who is foremost in repaying his debt of gratitude.

**SUDA:** Gladly Seen by All Living Beings proceeds to build 84,000 stupas as offerings to house the remains of Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue Thus Come One. But he is still not satisfied. So, standing before the 84,000 stupas, he burns his arms as an offering of light. And he continues doing this for 72,000 years.

At this time, seeing his disciples saddened that he has lost his arms, Gladly Seen by All Living Beings declares, “I have cast away both my arms. [But] I am certain to attain the golden body of a Buddha. If this is true and not false, then may my two arms become as they were before!” (LS23, 285). His arms are then restored, just as he said.

**IKEDA:** When we make offerings with utmost confidence, we are certain to receive even greater good fortune and benefit in return. An offering made reluctantly and with skepticism is not genuine. The heart is all-important.

**SUDA:** After relating these events from the past, Shakyamuni explains that Bodhisattva Gladly Seen by All Living Beings was Bodhisattva Medicine King in a previous existence.

## “President Makiguchi’s Selflessness Is Comparable to the Offering of Bodhisattva Medicine King”

**IKEDA:** To give one’s life for the sake of the Law is the ultimate act of repaying one’s debt of gratitude.

The “Medicine King” chapter came to have a great deal of influence in later generations. In China and Japan, there were even some who literally burned their arms or their bodies to make an offering to the Buddha.

There is today of course no need to go to such extremes! The fire referred to in this chapter is the fire of wisdom. When we burn the “body” of earthly desires with the “fire” of wisdom, the “light” of the world of Buddhahood shines forth. And the supreme wisdom is faith; it is chanting daimoku. Also, in burning incense and candles as offerings to the Gohonzon, we are demonstrating faith that can illuminate the entire universe.

The “Medicine King” chapter essentially teaches the faith to “dedicate one’s life to the Law.” I recall that my mentor and second Soka Gakkai President Toda always used to describe Mr. Makiguchi’s death in prison as the

“offering of Bodhisattva Medicine King.”

[Mr. Toda said: “Why was a person of such exalted virtue made to die in prison? If he had not been a votary of the Lotus Sutra, he could never have had such a destiny.

“He gave his life for the sake of the Lotus Sutra; he is a model of dedicating one’s life to the Lotus Sutra by facing persecution. His death was the offering of Bodhisattva Medicine King. President Makiguchi is qualified to be praised by the words (used in the sutra to describe Medicine King’s offering of self-immolation) “Among all donations, this is the most highly prized” (LS23, 282).

“President Makiguchi, who continually cited the words of the Daishonin that for a person of wisdom to be praised by fools is a disgrace, was in the end hailed as a person of the foremost wisdom.

“The ‘Bodhisattva Medicine King’ chapter says: ‘After the Bodhisattva Gladly Seen by All Living Beings had made this Dharma offering and his life had come to an end, he was reborn in the land of the Buddha Sun Moon Pure Bright Virtue, in the household of the king Pure Virtue. Sitting in cross-legged position, he was suddenly born by transformation’ (LS23, 282).

“Nichiren Daishonin teaches that the Lotus Sutra is a mirror reflecting all phenomena. The Daishonin does not lie—he always speaks the truth. Therefore, believing in the Daishonin’s words and looking into this clear mirror, I am firmly confident that Mr. Makiguchi will be reborn as a prince in a land where the Lotus Sutra has spread and into the home of a royal family of pure virtue. His happiness in his next life must be thousands, tens of thousands of times greater than our own.”<sup>6]</sup>

President Toda was always earnest when he spoke about Mr. Makiguchi. His heart was filled with memories of his mentor, praise for his mentor and thoughts of his mentor. When his many years of hard struggles had finally caught up with him, Mr. Toda would often remark, “I am lonely without President Makiguchi. I would like to return to my mentor’s side.”

Mr. Toda lived longer so that he could devote himself completely to kosen-rufu. The two years he spent in prison during the war had seriously undermined his health. Once when he was weary with fatigue, but deep in thought, he remarked to me as I gave him a back rub, “No matter how many centuries it might take, we absolutely have to accomplish kosen-rufu. Encountering persecution and criticism goes hand in hand with waging a revolution. No matter what happens, we must not be afraid.

If we stake our lives on this, we will have nothing to fear.”

He spoke these words as though his life depended on it. President Toda also made the “offering of Bodhisattva Medicine King.” Burning with the desire for kosen-rufu, he alone protected the flame of the True Law, causing it to shine brightly.

## Bodhisattvas of the Earth Enjoy Protection

**SAITO:** The “Medicine King” chapter contains the famous line that directly refers to kosen-rufu:

After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils’ people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas or kumbhanda demons to seize the advantage! (LS23, 288)

“Don’t allow devils in!” it implores. This is the Buddha’s will. We must not allow the flow of worldwide kosen-rufu to be obstructed. We must continue passing the teachings from mentor to disciple, and from one generation to the next, illuminating our lives like a lighthouse for the sake of others with the spirit to practice even at the cost of our lives.

**ENDO:** The bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching also exert themselves in this fashion. Nichiren Daishonin says that T’ien-t’ai is the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Medicine King. Repeatedly he says things like, “Bodhisattva Medicine King is T’ien-t’ai, leader of the Middle Day of the Law” (GZ, 857). T’ien-t’ai steadfastly protected the flame of the True Law during the Middle Day.

**SUDA:** The Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan, born two hundred years after T’ien-t’ai, is said to have been his reincarnation.

**ENDO:** The Daishonin designates the Buddhism of T’ien-t’ai as a prelude to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law that is called for in the depths of the Lotus Sutra. Until the arrival of the time for the widespread propagation by the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching, the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching protect the Lotus Sutra.

Also, we may speculate that in the Latter Day of the Law it is their mission to venerate and support the Bodhisattvas of the Earth of the essential teaching who directly work for kosen-rufu.

**IKEDA:** Sometimes it is actual people who offer protection, and sometimes protection comes from forces we cannot see. Either way, the principle that “when the Buddha nature manifests itself from within, it will receive protection from without” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 848) is true. Because the Bodhisattvas of the Earth practice the Mystic Law in the depths of their lives and manifest the world of Buddhahood, they enjoy protection from external forces.

Everything depends on our faith. No matter how tumultuous the times, those who struggle to the end to open a path of hope for the sake of kosen-rufu will be protected by all Buddhas and heavenly deities.

In the “Medicine King” chapter, Shakyamuni describes the benefit of those who spread the Mystic Law saying:

The good fortune you gain thereby is immeasurable and boundless. It cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water. Your benefits are such that a thousand Buddhas speaking all together could never finish describing them. Now you have been able to destroy all devils and thieves, to annihilate the army of birth and death, and all others who bore you enmity or malice have likewise been wiped out.

Good man, a hundred, a thousand Buddhas will employ their transcendental powers to join in guarding and protecting you. (LS23, 287–88)

In other words, the good fortune and benefit of those who carry out the practice of propagation cannot be destroyed by the fires of suffering, or washed away by the waves of misfortune. This passage also states that the benefit of such a person is so great that even a thousand Buddhas speaking all together could not fully describe it. The person has destroyed all devils, broken the forces of the sufferings of birth and death, and vanquished all enemies. And a thousand Buddhas will protect that person using their transcendental powers.

Buddhism is victory or defeat. It is a struggle between the Buddha and the devil. Therefore, we have to win. Only by realizing victory through faith can we become truly happy and accomplish kosen-rufu. “Triumphant One” is another name for the Buddha.

## Medicine King Prepares the Groundwork for Kosen-rufu

**IKEDA:** The Buddha is also called the “King of Physicians” and the “Great King of Physicians.” The Buddha is like a skilled doctor who cures the “illness of the sufferings of birth and death.” In that sense, the name Medicine King suggests a high-ranking bodhisattva whose state of life is close to that of the Buddha.

If we say that the Buddha is a physician, the Law is medicine, and the practitioners are nurses, then we can think of Medicine King—given that his name indicates he is the king of the medicine that cures suffering—as representing all bodhisattvas.

**SAITO:** In the Lotus Sutra, Bodhisattva Medicine King indeed represents the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching. He appears as early as the “Introduction” (first) chapter, and the preaching of the “Teacher of the Law” (tenth) chapter is addressed to him.

**ENDO:** The transmission section<sup>7</sup> of the first half or theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra begins with the “Teacher of the Law” chapter. The recipients of the preaching are initially voice-hearers, but from this chapter on they become bodhisattvas. And Medicine King is named from the very outset.

**SAITO:** In the next chapter, “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (eleventh), Shakyamuni calls on those in the assembly to spread the sutra after his passing; and in the “Encouraging Devotion” (thirteenth) chapter the innumerable bodhisattvas vow to uphold the Mystic Law in an evil age. Medicine King is the central figure among these bodhisattvas. I think he could have been considered the principal player in the propagation of the Law after the Buddha’s death.

**SUDA:** But afterwards the Bodhisattvas of the Earth appear and it is established that they will be the main proponents of the propagation of the Mystic Law in the Latter Day of the Law.

**IKEDA:** So, what about Bodhisattva Medicine King? The answer seems to lie in the “Medicine King” chapter.

**SAITO:** Yes. The bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, as represented by Medicine King, have the mission to prepare the groundwork for kosen-rufu until the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching appear, and then to thoroughly protect and support them.

## The Power of the “Medicine King” Is in Our Own Lives

**IKEDA:** Now that we understand the concept of Medicine King from the doctrinal standpoint of the Lotus Sutra, let’s consider what is meant by “Bodhisattva Medicine King in one’s own heart” or by Medicine King appearing as we observe our mind.

In its entirety, the Lotus Sutra is a ceremony that takes place in our heart. If we view the sutra as merely a text that is separate from ourselves, we will fail to understand its essence. As the term suggests, Bodhisattva Medicine King in our own life could be thought of as the function that cures physical and spiritual ills and restores good health. It originates from nowhere other than the Mystic Law and the world of Buddhahood. The great life force of Buddhahood that functions to cure life’s sufferings is named “Medicine King.” Therefore, when we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon we activate Bodhisattva Medicine King in our own life.

President Toda said: “When you go to a doctor, even if he is incompetent, because Medicine King is functioning in your own life, the doctor naturally cannot help but provide a cure.”<sup>8</sup>

This is not to say that we should not look for a good doctor. The point, rather, is that ultimately we have to cure ourselves. Above all, our own life force and natural healing powers are fundamental powers to curing illness. A physician merely assists that process.

**SUDA:** This is what is meant by the saying, “A doctor stitches the wound, but the gods make it heal.”

**ENDO:** I have also heard: “The gods heal the illness, but the doctor takes the money!”

**SAITO:** The underlying source of this healing power is the world of Buddhahood. Buddhahood is the “great life force that knows neither aging nor death.”

## Appreciation and Confidence Activate the Life of Medicine King

**IKEDA:** President Toda had incredible confidence. In question-and-answer sessions there would frequently be inquiries concerning illness. Often he would reply: “You mustn’t ask, ‘Will I get better?’ You will recover without fail as long as you continue practicing in earnest.”

“If, on the other hand, you have doubts as to whether you will get better,” he would say, “then your prayers will not be answered.”

“People’s bodies are susceptible to such ailments as those of the stomach, including stomach cancer, and lung disease. Because our bodies have the ability to become ill, they also possess the power to fix themselves. It’s similar to how a person who has climbed a hill can also descend the hill. This is my own personal outlook on life, and I am able to say these things based on a correct life philosophy.”<sup>9</sup>

**SAITO:** I understand that he would often reprimand people who would start out with a complaint, saying something like, “I’m not better yet even though I’ve been chanting for some time . . .”

**IKEDA:** When he heard someone speak of their illness, President Toda would empathize with them to such an extent that he would often dream about them that night.

That’s why he would strictly correct the attitude in faith of those who craved only benefit while not practicing sincerely, or who would complain that they were not completely cured even though they had seen some improvement.

“It’s not a matter of form,” he would say. “We need to pour our life into praying to the Gohonzon; we need to engrave the Gohonzon in our life. When we chant daimoku with true determination as though offering up our very life, we cannot fail to overcome any illness.”

“It is completely brazen to think that you can cure an illness that even doctors at the best of hospitals cannot cure without giving yourself completely to the Gohonzon. The Buddha is not obligated to provide a cure! How many hundreds of people have you introduced to this Buddhism? How much have you helped your chapter flourish? You should reflect on this. If you turn over a new leaf and are able to truly dedicate yourself to kosen-rufu, staking your very life on it, then I can say with confidence that you will be cured without fail.”<sup>10</sup>

“If your condition improves even a little, you should feel appreciation from the depths of your heart. If, on the other hand, instead of feeling appreciation, you are disappointed because you have not improved more and treat the Gohonzon as though it owes you a debt — that will not do.

“If you take action, yet forget your debt of gratitude, then even those areas that have improved will get worse. You must practice faith with abundant gratitude, deeply appreciative of even the slightest improvement! If you have the attitude ‘Please cure me quickly,’ just making demands without really devoting yourself, then the

Gohonzon will be deaf to your prayers.”<sup>11</sup>

This is how President Toda taught the faith of repaying one’s debt of gratitude that is exemplified by Bodhisattva Medicine King. When we base ourselves on this faith, the spirit of Bodhisattva Medicine King in our heart springs into vigorous activity on our behalf. We need to pray with such determination as to cause all the cells in our body to renew themselves; we need to spur all sixty trillion of them into action.

Although as a youth I was told that I would only live to about the age of 30, I have thoroughly exerted myself for kosen-rufu, and have as a result extended my life. I lived the line in the “Life Span” chapter “Let us live out our lives!” (LS16, 228), and for this I feel immense appreciation. “Life span” has the meaning of longevity. Simply put, the “Life Span” chapter expounds the underlying life force needed to extend our lives and live to the fullest. From one standpoint, therefore, it could be said that Buddhism pursues the question of what constitutes true health.

**SUDA:** Would you elaborate on this?

## The Precepts Are Rules of Health

**IKEDA:** Overcoming the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death is not just a matter of theory. We mustn’t move away from the issues of how we can lead healthy, fulfilling and long lives, and how we can die without suffering. Buddhism teaches the wisdom that enables us to do this.

For example, the Hinayana teachings include the “eight precepts” that lay followers were supposed to observe on specific days. One of these stipulates that a practitioner should not eat food after the noon hour. These seem to be practices for prolonging one’s life.

**SAITO:** In other words, this is an admonition against overeating.

**IKEDA:** Other precepts also aim to control desires and harmonize the body and mind. Buddhist practice could be described as a “health regimen” for regulating the body and mind.

**ENDO:** Precepts certainly do cover the key points for “maintaining a pure life.” And this is not limited to the Hinayana teachings. On the whole, by purifying ourselves through Buddhist practice, the original functions of our life become more highly activated. For example, the practice established by T’ien-t’ai entails twenty-five



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“Birth and death are aspects of change of the universal life. They are expressions of the life of the Buddha. Therefore, to loathe the birth and death is to loathe the life of the Buddha. Also, someone who is drowning in the sufferings of birth and death cannot be said to enjoy a state of freedom at one with the great life of the Buddha.”

preparatory exercises; one of these, “regulating the five matters,” seems to be on one level concerned with maintaining good health as it prescribes proper regulation of eating, sleeping, posture, breathing and the mind.

**IKEDA:** Through regulating the body and mind, we establish a foundation for the practice of “observing the mind”; that is to say, for observing that one’s own life is an entity of three thousand realms in a single moment. Good health is a necessary condition for awakening to the eternity of life. Only then can we perceive the life of the universe in our own being. Illness, in essence, throws the “venue” of our life into disarray.

Therefore, we can think of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana teachings as progressively seeking to create balance and harmony in life, with the Lotus Sutra finally revealing the great life force that is free of aging and death.

Health is a most precious treasure. An acquaintance

who had suffered from illness for many years once remarked, “Some people complain about being busy and exhausted, but I can only imagine how wonderful it would be to be busy and exhausted!”

It is to our advantage to accumulate as much good fortune and wisdom as we can while we are healthy. Buddhism is wisdom. Health is wisdom.

“Not begrudging one’s life” does not mean pushing oneself unreasonably. We cannot continue if we run ourselves into the ground. Buddhism is reason; and unless we live wisely based on reason and in accord with the principle of faith manifesting itself in daily life, our efforts will produce only “anti-value.” Our organization could not then be called a society for “value-creation.”

Based on reason, we need to maintain, develop and control our own life force in accord with our age and circumstances. We have to become a physician of

our own life, a Medicine King.

To think that no harm can come to you just because you are practicing or because you are a leader in the organization is arrogance.

In general, it could be said that the period of life through the forties is a time of “training,” and that from the forties on we enter a period of “preservation.” It is important, therefore, that we exercise wisdom and are careful not to overextend ourselves.

**SUDA:** Getting enough sleep is probably the best way to prevent exhaustion.

**IKEDA:** That’s right. Sleep is a kind of “minor death.” It is an activity in which our body and mind temporarily merge with the sea of the universal life. Through this rest, our life force is recharged and we gain power to take action the next day.

In the same way, death also serves the purpose of helping us recharge our life force. For someone whose body is old and sick, to return to the “sea of revitalization of the universal life” and then be reborn with a body full of new vitality may be the best thing. So much of course depends on the individual’s karma and the condition of their faith.

What can be said with certainty, however, is that a person who maintains the “faith of Bodhisattva Medicine King” will enjoy still more good fortune in their next existence and be reborn in exactly the circumstances that they desire.

**SAITO:** In the sutra’s account of the previous existences of Bodhisattva Medicine King, Bodhisattva Joyfully Seen by All Living Beings is reborn in the house of a king.

**IKEDA:** The key point is which of the Ten Worlds in the universe our life melts into at the moment of death. Someone whose life merges with the world of Buddhahood can be said to have attained “eternal life” regardless of their age at the time of death. This is a person who has read the “Life Span” chapter with his or her life and has developed the state of life described by the line “he will know neither old age or death” (LS23, 288).

On the other hand, even if people live to a ripe old age, if in the end they enter the three evil paths or the four evil paths, then their lives will ultimately have been vain and fruitless. From the standpoint of the eternity of life, the difference between fifty years and seventy years hardly amounts to an instant.

Shakyamuni says, “Better than a hundred years not seeing one’s own immortality is one single day of life if

one sees one’s own immortality.”<sup>12</sup> Taking into account the concept of life over the three existences of past, present and future, everything depends on the extent to which we are able to establish the “state of immortality,” that is to say, the world of Buddhahood and faith, in our lives in this existence. I think we can say that this is the true measure of “longevity.”

**ENDO:** That makes sense to me. For even if someone should have a short life, as long as they have faith, they will be reborn immediately.

## The “Golden Youth” of Spain’s First Young Women’s Division Chief

**IKEDA:** Spain’s first young women’s division chief was a woman by the name of Junko Kobayashi. She lived a fresh and vibrant youth and passed away as though galloping ahead to the next life. But her golden achievements still shine brilliantly.

*Ms. Kobayashi was born in Tokyo’s Shibuya Ward in 1949. She joined the Soka Gakkai in 1966, three months after both her parents took faith. At the time she was sixteen, and a freshman at Hibiya High School.*

Cherishing the dream of contributing to worldwide kosen-rufu as a member of the high school division, Ms. Kobayashi applied herself to studying foreign languages. She was an outstanding student, and set her sights on entering the prestigious University of Tokyo.

When she was twenty, she met an unexpected ordeal. Her mother died of cancer, and her father, as though following her, fell ill and also passed away shortly thereafter. In an instant, Ms. Kobayashi found herself completely alone in the world. At that point, she was no longer in a position to think of pursuing her studies.

I met Ms. Kobayashi one year later. It was during a summer training course. After hearing her talk about the death of her parents, I told her: “For someone your age, the death of a parent is something that you would expect to experience twice in the future. So really all that has happened is you have experienced this somewhat earlier than others. But because you have the Gohonzon, everything will be all right!”

She may have been hoping for words of consolation. But I wanted to talk to her candidly about the true essence of life, about the “eternally unchanging



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“What is health? It is the life of the bodhisattva. I think that true health is the spirit to continue struggling for the sake of others. To just eat ‘health food’ and think only about oneself, aiming to lead a peaceful and secure existence—this is not the image of health.”

entity of life.” Death is inevitable. To try to avoid this reality is not Buddhism.

The Daishonin goes so far as to declare incomplete the passage of the “Medicine King” chapter that says of the Lotus Sutra, “It can cause living beings to cast off all distress, all sickness and pain. It can unloose all the bonds of birth and death” (LS23, 286).

**SAITO:** The Daishonin suggests that the terms “cast off” and “unloose” go against the spirit of the Lotus Sutra’s teaching of “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.” Therefore, he says, “we should interpret the words ‘cast off’ as meaning ‘become enlightened to.’ When we see with eyes of wisdom opened by the essential teaching of the ‘Life Span’ chapter, we realize that sickness, pain and distress are, and have always been, an innate part of life” (GZ, 773). “Realize” here means “to perceive clearly.” He is imploring us to clearly recognize that life and death are “innate sufferings,” that they are part of the eternal

cycle of birth and death.

**IKEDA:** That’s right. Birth and death are aspects of change of the universal life. They are expressions of the life of the Buddha. Therefore, to loathe birth and death is to loathe the life of the Buddha. Also, someone who is drowning in the sufferings of birth and death cannot be said to enjoy a state of freedom at one with the great life of the Buddha. We need to use the sufferings of life and death as nutrition to help us strengthen our faith. Only then do they become nirvana.

Even so, Junko, given her young age, must have been deeply pained by the loss of her parents. I frequently offered her encouragement. I fondly recall joining members of the Miyahara group, a young women’s division’s training group to which she belonged, on a trip to a farm where we enjoyed watermelon and corn-on-the-cob.

In her job and in young women’s division activities she produced striking results with her inherent cheerfulness and tenacity. And precisely ten years after she joined the Soka Gakkai, she was able to realize the dream she had cherished since her high school days of studying abroad in Spain.

*Two weeks after she arrived in Spain, when she had just completed chanting ten million daimoku, the first chapter of Spain was organized and she was appointed the leader of the newly-formed young women’s division in Spain.*

Ms. Kobayashi struggled hard. In the pioneering days of the movement in Spain, she continuously chanted daimoku with the determination to “imbue this land of Catholicism with daimoku.” She would often travel ten hours by car to attend a discussion meeting. And when she returned from a meeting, she would stay up till dawn translating passages of the Daishonin or materials from the *Daibyakurenge*.

She once said: “What I’m doing cannot be called trying work. My efforts turn to joy whenever I see one person stand up. Rather than it being an ordeal, having known only the solid Soka Gakkai in Japan, I am elated to be able to experience the struggles of a pioneer.”

After exerting herself selflessly in this way for two years, she was again beset by a major obstacle. She developed a node in her left knee. When she returned to Japan to have it examined, it turned out to be a malignant tumor. She was told that to save her life she would have to have her left leg amputated at the hip. In her state of shock at hearing this, she felt as though time had stopped.

At that moment, the image of her mother's face came before her eyes. She thought of her mother, who looked so lovely in her state of Buddhahood when she died that neighbors who saw her were all moved, and heard her say: "Don't you have the Gohonzon, Junko? I have prayed to the Gohonzon for everything for you, so you don't have anything at all to worry about."

"That's right," she thought. "It was for just these circumstances that my mother gave her all in order to teach me about faith!"

She made up her mind to have surgery in Japan. While she was able to avoid having her leg amputated, she had to have a major operation that required fifty stitches to close. And her principal physician told her she would never walk again.

But she determined, "I will definitely walk again for the sake of my fellow members in Spain!" With that spirit, she fought the devil of illness.

*Although her left leg was completely stiff, several weeks after surgery her big toe twitched, and the muscle around the knee that was removed in the operation began to grow back little by little. She worked hard at her regimen of physical therapy, and seven months after the operation she walked out of the hospital. The doctors were astounded by her recovery.*

It was a terrific struggle. Economically, too, she was driven right to the brink. Still, she continued to burn with passion for kosen-rufu. And she again stood up in Spain on her own two feet. This was in April 1979, the month that I announced my intention to step down as third Soka Gakkai president. She fought with the determination to win in her struggle and to prove that what I had been striving for was correct. I will never forget her spirit.

Due to physical infirmity and poor finances, she had to return to Japan. Whenever she heard of people doing shakubuku somewhere, she would fly there and relate her experience. If she heard about a member who was suffering, she would go to the person and offer encouragement.

She also exerted herself as a member of the translation group of the international division. She personally brought more than ten people to join the Soka Gakkai. She also encouraged a young girl who was suffering from a leg tumor similar to her own. The girl was deeply impressed, and went on to attend Soka University.

**SUDA:** Your account has reminded me once again that we must never practice faith halfheartedly.

## "What a Lovely Face!"

**IKEDA:** Junko continued working tirelessly with the determination: "I don't know when I will die, so I will continue to fight so that no matter when I go I will have no regrets."

I saw her again at the Kanagawa Culture Center (on December 14, 1980), where she sang "Prayer of the Moon" with other members of the translation group.

*As soon as the song was finished, Junko presented President Ikeda with a poem she had composed: "Defeating the devil of illness / I will exert myself for kosen-rufu, / engraving in my heart / today's gathering / together with my mentor." At that time, President Ikeda encouraged her to become healthy and live a long life.*

She was also at the Paris Community Center when I visited there. We all took a commemorative photo together (on June 14, 1981).

She passed away one year later (on June 26, 1982).

The cancer had metastasized to her lungs. As a side effect of the medications she was taking, she became visibly emaciated. Even so, Junko continued chanting daimoku, praying for her fellow members in Japan and in Spain.

*Even in the terminal stages of the illness, she continued chanting daimoku, though she could only manage a single syllable with each labored breath. It took her five years from the time she first went to Spain to realize her goal of a second ten million daimoku.*

Even the nurses were moved by her ardent spirit, her passion to live. People who came to encourage her in the hospital left feeling like they were the ones who had been encouraged. She turned herself into a flame and shed light on others. After an eight-month battle in the hospital, she went on to her next existence. She was thirty-two at the time.

People who saw her countenance after she died were amazed. "She was incredibly beautiful," one person remarked. "I never saw Junko looking that beautiful when she was alive." One woman commented that Junko looked so lovely that she did not even need any make-up, and that she found herself even feeling envious. Someone else commented that her hands were soft and warm, and her face serene.

With a gentle smile on her face and her eyes and mouth partly opened, she was the very image of the description of Buddhahood found in the Daishonin's

writings. Her funeral was attended by several hundred people from throughout the country, causing those in the neighborhood to wonder just who had died.

The Daishonin says that when people have attained Buddhahood “they will be received into the hands of a thousand Buddhas who will free them from all fear and keep them from falling into the evil paths of existence” (WND, 216). I think that her having so many people mourn her death and chant daimoku for her repose is one manifestation of this. To the extent that we sincerely look after many others, we ourselves will be eternally protected over the three existences.

Moreover, Junko’s friends were confident that she was truly happy. One commented: “Even though she had been orphaned and she died from illness, no one who knew Junko thought of her as someone to be pitied. Rather, they thought of her as an outstanding person, as someone who had won in every respect. Therefore, we’re not the least saddened by her death. I think that Junko is probably already back in Spain. I think she was probably reborn there to continue the fight for kosen-rufu.”

**SAITO:** This is the meaning of the “Bodhisattva Medicine King” chapter. While we may speak of experiencing “neither old age or death,” this does not refer simply to the length of one’s life.

## Pursuing a Mission Transcending Life and Death

**IKEDA:** Although Ms. Kobayashi’s body was ailing, her heart shone bright as the sun. Her “life” itself was her “health.”

When I visited Spain the following year (in 1983), I praised her valiant efforts and awarded her the posthumous title of honorary European young women’s division leader.

What is health? In conclusion, it is the life of the bodhisattva. I think that true health is the spirit to continue struggling for the sake of others. To just eat health food, aiming to lead a peaceful and secure existence while thinking only about oneself—this is not the image of health.

Bodhisattva Medicine King, who symbolizes health, gave his life for his convictions. A life of struggle is a healthy life.

Dr. René Dubos (1901–82), a world renowned physician whom I had the privilege of meeting, remarked, “While it may be comforting to imagine a life free of stresses and strains in a carefree world, this will remain an idle dream.”

*He continued: “The earth is not a resting place. Man has*

*elected to fight, not necessarily for himself, but for a process of emotional, intellectual, and ethical growth that goes on forever. To grow in the midst of dangers is the fate of the human race, because it is the law of the spirit.”*<sup>13</sup>

Turning stress and worries into life force—this is the principle of changing poison into medicine. We need to realize a state of life that allows us to “live with great joy.” Toward that end, struggle is required.

Buddhism urges us, “Over life and death, accomplish what you must accomplish!” With such a sense of mission, there is neither birth nor death. In the face of such commitment, even the pain of death turns into strength to advance.

The Daishonin teaches that the transmission section of the latter half of the sutra, or the essential teaching, explains the method of practicing the “Life Span” and “Expedient Means” chapters (cf. WND, 91–92). I think that the “Medicine King” chapter truly calls out: “Champions of kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law! Make your life burn like Bodhisattva Medicine King!”

When many youth possessing such spirit appear, the SGI will truly become eternal. It will become a body that “will know neither old age or death,” sending out the “healing light” to all humankind over the eternal future.

### Footnotes

1. Editor’s note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
2. *From The Journey of 1684*, cited in *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology*, ed. Helen Craig McCullough (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 520.
3. *The Dhammapada: Sayings of Buddha*, trans. Thomas Cleary (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), p. 69.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
5. *The Tibetan Dhammapada Sayings of the Buddha: A translation of the Tibetan version of the Udanavarga*, trans. Gareth Sparham (London: Wisdom Publications, 1986), p. 130.
6. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1981), vol. 1, p. 319–20.
7. Transmission section: One of the three divisions of a sutra, together with preparation and revelation. The preparation section explains the reason a sutra is being expounded. The revelation section constitutes the main body of the teaching. And the transmission section is the concluding part where the benefit of the sutra is set forth and its transmission to future generations is urged.
8. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1986), vol. 6, p. 601.
9. *Ibid.*, (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1982), vol. 2, p. 375.
10. Cf. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, p. 353–54.
11. Cf. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, p. 365–66.
12. *Budda no Shinri no Kotoba, Kankyo no Kotoba* (The Buddha’s Words of Truth and Inspiration), trans. Hajime Nakamura (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko 1994), p. 26. Cf. The Dhammapada: Sayings of Buddha, trans. Thomas Cleary (New York: Bantam Books, 1994), p. 41.
13. René Dubos, *Mirage of Health: Utopias, Progress, and Biological Change* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 230.

# Decade of Inter-faith Dialogue Culminates in Trip to Third Parliament of the World's Religions

BY AL ALBERGATE, SGI-USA DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

When one travels to the ends of the earth, it helps to have a great purpose.

Arriving last November 29th in Cape Town, that sun-drenched city on the dramatic southern tip of the African continent where the Indian and Atlantic oceans converge, I carried within me a mixture of excitement, anticipation, a sense of progress and fulfillment.

On behalf of the SGI-USA, I would be attending the third (since 1893) Parliament of the World's Religions, an international interfaith gathering of some 7,000 people from 138 countries, December 1–8.

It would be a stretch to compare my emotions with those likely felt by the first sailors from Europe to lay eyes on the Cape of Good Hope in the fifteenth century. Yet I could justify my excitement with the knowledge that the participation of the SGI-USA in the Parliament of the World's Religions culminated almost a decade of pioneering efforts in the field of interfaith relations.

When I joined the staff of our national headquarters in 1989, we were involved in no interfaith work to speak of. SGI-USA, then called NSA, was about to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary—three decades of sometimes spectacular growth in membership resulting in thousands of chanting Buddhists and dozens

of community centers established across the United States.

Understandably, as a new religious organization in this country, much of our work had gone into building our own foundation. Attempts to reach out to the community, other than for propagation purposes, were sporadic and of limited duration, and often connected with large-scale events such as our culture festivals.

As the decade of the nineties dawned, certainly many more Americans had become aware of the SGI's presence. Unfortunately, understanding and tolerance do not necessarily accompany awareness, especially when it comes to religion. That same period, 1960–90, also had witnessed the rise in popularity of various other new religious groups, a few of which produced disastrous, even fatal, results. The news media also began to take notice of the SGI, and some of the articles and stories were misleading and inaccurate.

The visit to the United States in 1990 of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda heralded the beginning of necessary changes in the religious organization. Along with these developments came the recognition that relationships in the community, based on friendship and trust, were very important building blocks toward a more peaceful society.

In terms of our image in the com-

munity and the mass media, it became apparent that a large part of the problem was that little was known about us, even among other religions and those who teach about religion. And much of what they did know was either inaccurate or outdated. The message was clear: either become socially engaged or remain misunderstood.

While in Cape Town for the third parliament, my mind occasionally flashed back to that day more than six years ago in Chicago when I first walked into the Palmer House Hotel late in the summer of 1993 to attend the second Parliament of the World's Religions. I was still a relative neophyte in interfaith relationships.

The halls of the hotel were jam packed with people representing every conceivable religion and spiritual tradition. From morning until late at night, the hotel's meeting rooms teemed with a bewildering variety of seminars, lectures and panel discussions, many of them going on simultaneously. The task of deciding where to go reminded me of being a freshman at a large university trying to work out a class schedule. There were a number of interesting speakers; I remember specifically Louis Farrakhan and the Dalai Lama. We had at least three official representatives from the SGI-USA in attendance, but we were there mainly to observe and make friends.

In the years between Chicago and Cape Town, SGI-USA representatives gradually began to look into local, national and international interfaith organizations and, where appropriate, became involved. This outreach led to our co-sponsoring the international meeting of the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies in 1996 in Chicago; offering a presentation on Nam-myoho-rence-kyo at the national Buddhist-Catholic Retreat/Dialogue in 1998 in Malibu, California; and participation in the United Religions Initiative's Third Global Summit in 1998 at Stanford University, just to mention a few.

In a related effort, representatives of both the SGI-USA and the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century founded by President Ikeda have become fixtures at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion, a gathering of thousands of professors of religion.

In this same period the SGI internationally gave formal recognition to the importance of interfaith work with the issuance of the SGI Charter. The seventh of its ten points says:

"SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity."

That language is strikingly similar to the goals expressed by Jim Kenney, a key organizer of the 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town. His greeting statement reads: "We have joined with one another in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation, seeking to discover new ways to rise to the challenges and the opportunities of life at the threshold of a new century."

For the SGI-USA, as I mentioned above, Cape Town represented the culmination of years of efforts in the

interfaith arena, and to my knowledge those efforts have been unmatched by any other SGI organization. But I believe the real significance of Cape Town lay in the international effort. For this was the first time that SGI leaders from Japan participated in an international interfaith event of this magnitude and stature.

**S**oka Gakkai vice presidents Tadashige Takamura and Toshinori Iwazumi, along with Rie Tsumura of SGI Public Relations, made the 30-hour trip from Tokyo. Sunday, December 5, their first full day in Cape Town, was just that, full. Dr. Takamura, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Soka University in Japan, kicked off the clear, bright morning at the Cape Technikon college campus with an address entitled, "Applying Buddhist Values in Conflict Resolution."

After taking some quick snapshots at the entrance to campus with that unique landmark, Table Mountain, in the background, we rushed to our waiting vehicles for the thirty-minute drive to a Cape Town suburb. There twenty or so local SGI members had gathered for the monthly World Peace Prayer Meeting at the pleasant home of Jane and Terry Volbrecht. This was approximately two-thirds of the membership of Cape Town, we were told, and a rare occasion to be able to host and hold a dialogue with SGI delegates from Japan.

**W**e all shared a pleasant buffet lunch in the verdant back yard before duty called once again. On the way back to the city we stopped off at the beautiful Ivy League-style campus of the University of Cape Town for a seminar where we knew we would find people whom the Japanese delegates wanted to meet, and who wanted to meet them.

By 4 p.m. we returned to the Cape Technikon campus. Vice President

Iwazumi delivered an address entitled "Applying Buddhist Values in Building a Culture of Peace," based largely on his family's experience in World War II and his role in editing "*Cries For Peace*," a 90-volume series of testimonials from atomic bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We topped off that very full day at the Good Hope Center, the largest indoor venue in Cape Town, where former South African President Nelson Mandela praised religions for providing education for the people of his country and later giving hope to those imprisoned, as he was, during the apartheid era.

The Good Hope Center also was temporary home to many information booths representing the various religions and spiritual paths attending the Parliament. And there, bordered by Muslim Youth on our right and Bio-democracy to the left, was our cheerful SGI information booth. Throughout the week, passersby chatted with SGI members, picked up literature, watched SGI videos or simply gazed at our colorful posters.

Our other consistent presence was a few blocks further downtown at the modern Cape Town Civic Center. With the support of the SGI in Tokyo, the SGI-USA had shipped its traveling exhibit, "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities," to South Africa. The exhibit was on display for eight days in an immense corridor where many local citizens, as well as visitors to the Parliament, had the opportunity to view it and pick up information on the SGI.

The exhibit never travels without SGI-USA headquarters staff members Gary Murie and Malina Moore, also in Cape Town courtesy of the SGI. Malina was called upon to do double duty, which meant participating in a panel discussion in which she

presented both the exhibit and the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Committee's "Victory Over Violence" campaign.

During the weeklong almost non-stop flow of seminars, speeches, exhibitions and musical presentations, I sat on a panel on the Earth Charter. I talked about the rationale for SGI's involvement based on Buddhist principles and SGI President Ikeda's peace proposals. Also, I described briefly the 36 informational meetings sponsored by the SGI-USA since August of 1997 to encourage dialogue on this important international movement towards building a peaceful, sustainable society.

Rounding out the seven team members from Japan and the United States was Nancy Simms, an SGI-USA staff member who had been invited by the Parliament organizers to assist in

the Media Center, where she worked in the mornings during the duration of our eleven-day visit. It seems Nancy was everywhere, helping both us and assisting the Parliament coordinators—sometimes supporting the evening plenary session preparations and also with consultations in preparation for the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, to be held at the United Nations from August 28–31, 2000.

The total effort of SGI—Japan, U.S., South Africa—was truly memorable, and I believe appreciated. I would be remiss to leave out the unplanned book donation at the University of the Western Cape, where SGI leaders presented more than fifty Buddhist volumes, including many works by President Ikeda.

And I can still see Mr. Iwazumi on stage at the Good Hope Center one evening, reciting one of President Ikeda's poems. And, finally on that same stage at the concluding session on December 8 sat Dr. Takamura along with other religious representatives, as the Dalai Lama exhorted us to do more than just pray to make the world a better place.

As the year 2000 quickly approached, I felt hopeful that a new era was opening in which SGI members around the world will create many more opportunities to, in the words of Mr. Ikeda,

"Plant in people's hearts the seeds of trust and friendship,

The seeds of philosophy and happiness,

The seeds of peace!" □

## Parliament of World Religions Held in Cape Town

BY ANTHONY GEORGE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA



*The following is a summary of a report by SGI-South Africa Young Men's Division Leader Anthony George, who assisted with the SGI's participation in the third Parliament of World Religions.*

The history of the Parliament of World Religions goes back to 1893 in Chicago when the organizers of World Columbian Exposition, an event making the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World, decided to sponsor a number of international congresses to complement the Exposition. Of these the World's Parliament of Religions generated the greatest public interest.

One hundred years later, the idea of an international gathering of

scholars and representatives of the world's religions was revived and in 1993 Chicago again played host to an even broader representation of the world's spiritual traditions. From the success of that event a determination was born to hold these gatherings more frequently. The choice was made for Cape Town as the venue for the third Parliament.

The program of the Parliament included an astounding number and variety of lectures, workshops, films, exhibits, symposia and cultural performances. Over 1,000 such activities were held over the eight days. This meant that attendants frequently had to select from among forty to fifty events at any given time.

A core part of the daily proceedings were the evening plenary sessions in the Good Hope Center—the main auditorium for the Parliament's activities—which gave religious leaders an opportunity to briefly address a wider audience and provided a more ceremonial context for inter-religious encounter. Here the themes of religious pluralism, tolerance, unity in diversity and the universality of core religious principles were repeatedly invoked.

For South Africans, the opportunity to host this event was another significant boost to the national morale of a country emerging again onto the world stage after years of enforced isolation and international ostracization.

This country, on the whole, seems an appropriate context for a structured attempt at inter-religious dialogue and co-operation towards addressing the reality of human suffering. One reason for this is the aura of moral integrity, which still seems to surround South Africa as a result of its recent liberation and its surprising transformation through the employment of the “soft-power” of tolerance and dialogue. In the popular imagination South Africa has come to hold a place as a symbol of the moral victory of good overcoming evil and of the possibilities of peaceful transition. Moreover, the relative success of this peaceful transition from violence and oppression to free, progressive democracy committed to social and economic equality, has made South Africa a symbol of the vested hopes of many who share that commitment to social transformation.

Another particularity relevant to Cape Town’s suitability as a venue is the glaring disparity in socio-economic well being of the population, which is still strikingly and painfully evident as a tangible reminder of the urgency for action. The powerful charge of the above sentiments therefore seemed to lend added impetus to many of the plenary and public sessions. On many occasions too, the moral weight of this recent history of struggle in South Africa—personified by the presence of former president Nelson Mandela at the fifth evening plenary session—seemed to help focus the rhetoric away from sentimental appeals to universality and onto the urgent need to seriously confront and address the reality of social and economic injustice. A strong injunctive in this regard was presented by Cape Town’s mayor, herself a veteran of South African struggle and a staunch

activist in the continuation of that struggle in the socio-economic arena. Addressing the opening session of the Parliament she vigorously urged the participants and the religious traditions in general to confront and address social injustice wherever it exists. The passion of her appeal, expressed in the context of her own struggles as a mayor, made it clear that the rhetoric of religious peace and universal love has no weight unless it is backed by concrete engagement with the reality of people’s lives and that this, ultimately, is the challenge of religion.

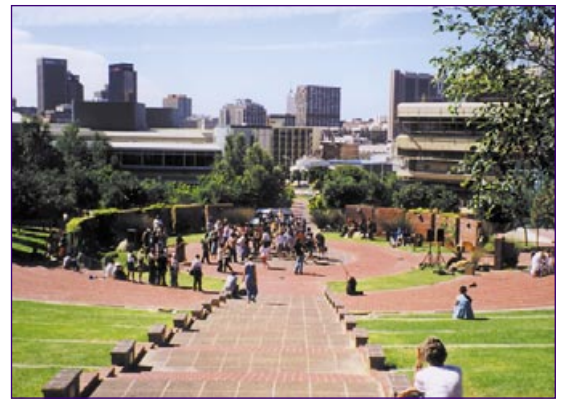
For his part, former president Nelson Mandela gave examples of how religious institutions had played this part in the history of the South African struggle: by providing schools and education to black people when the state refused to do so, by raising money for the support of the families of detained activists, by nurturing the flame of spiritual strength to continue struggling in the face of mounting oppression. Were it not for efforts of religious institutions, said Mandela, he would not be where he is today.

This theme of the social imperative of religion was strongly echoed in the addresses given by SGI Vice President Toshinori Iwazumi and Soka University Dean of Law, Mr. Tadashige Takamura. In his presentation entitled “Applying Buddhist Values in Building A Culture of Peace,” Mr. Iwazumi used his personal experience as a member of a family that was directly affected by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a context for discussing the value of humane education. Describing Buddhism as a movement of popular education awakening people to the true nature and value of their own lives, he related how this process of personal expansion, wherein one can

open up new perspectives on life and learn to take responsibility for the entirety of one’s life, enables one to take an active interest and responsibility towards the human future. As such it has the ability to create a powerful commitment to peace within the individual. He described how, in his own case, this process of “human revolution,” brought about by his practice of Buddhism, helped him transform the despair of his family history and become a person who could take concrete actions for peace.

Soka University Dean of Law, Mr. Tadashige Takamura’s presentation “Applying Buddhist Values In Conflict Resolution” analyzed the structural violence inherent in the socio-political trends which have grown in the vacuum created by the ending of the Cold War, and described how the principles and values of Buddhism provide concrete antidotes to these. He also described some of the activities that SGI has undertaken to put these principles into practice.

Another aspect of SGI’s participation at the parliament included an information booth on SGI set up by the SGI-USA delegates, which made Buddhist literature available to the public. Many of the SGI-South Africa members helped in the manning of this. A striking feature of the displays there was the strong emphasis on the social engagement of SGI activities around the world. This was an element noted by more than a few visitors to the booth. One example of such socially engaged activities is the Victory Over Violence Campaign initiated by the Youth members of SGI-USA which aims to raise people’s awareness of the roots of violence within our individual hearts and in the attitude individuals adopt towards themselves and others. Part of the campaign involves giving people the opportunity to sign a pledge



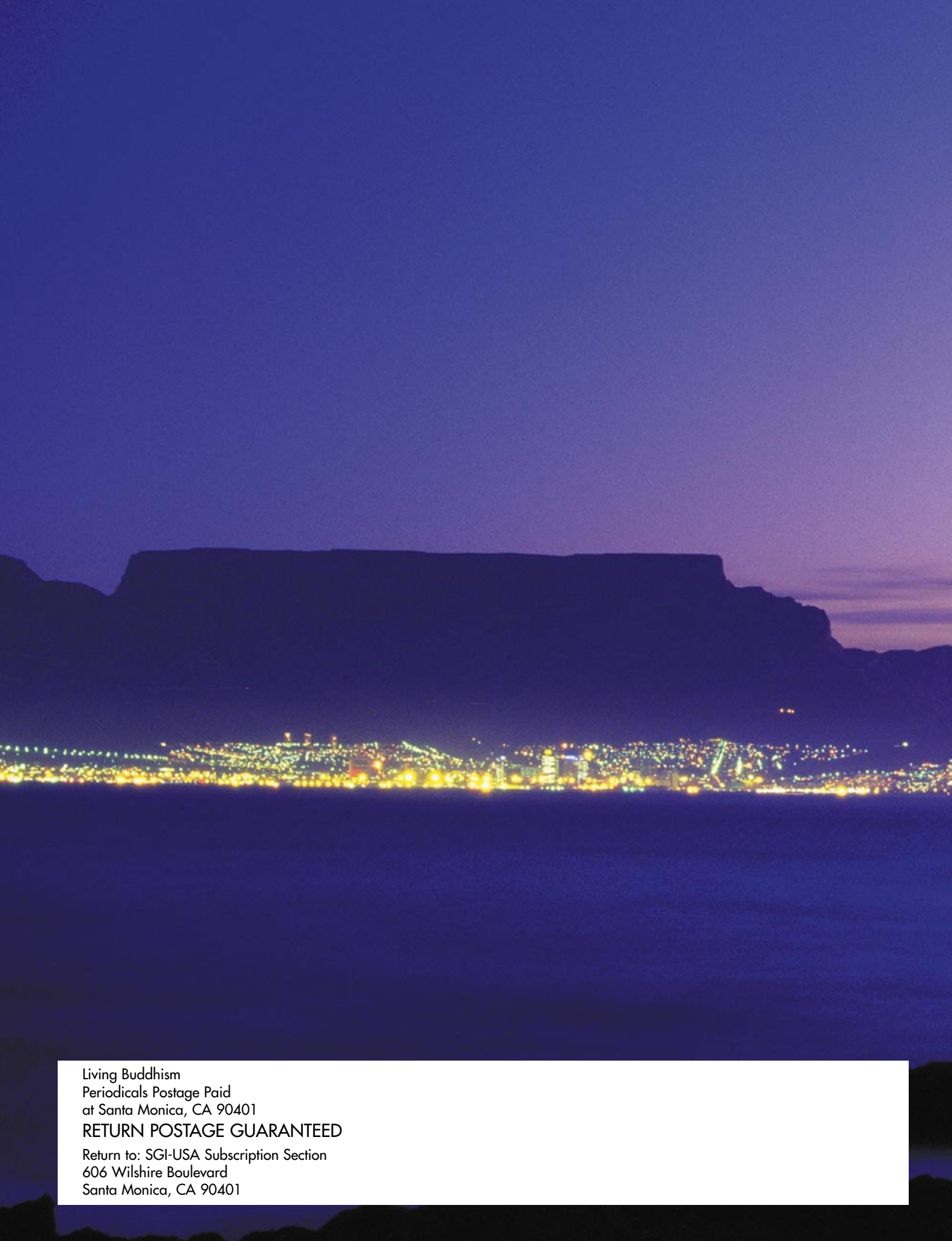
against violence and for respect of oneself and others. These pledges were available at the booth and attracted a lot of interest and enthusiasm.

Another display brought by the delegates of SGI-USA at the request of the Parliament's organizers was the Children's Rights Exhibit. This was exhibited in the Cape Town civic center, the venue for the meetings of the Assembly of the Parliament, where both members of the general public as well as

participants in the Parliament viewed it.

For many ordinary South Africans' who were able to experience the Parliament (many of whom were able to attend as volunteer helpers), the Parliament was a valuable and rare educational experience. This is because South Africa is a predominantly Christian country in which people have had very little exposure to other religious ideas and practices. Although a variety of religions are

practiced in South Africa, the legacy of separation within South African society has meant that there have been few opportunities for people to confront and overcome the prejudices, mistrust and fear which separation creates. One pity of the Parliament in this sense then was that the relatively high registration fee prevented many more people from benefiting from the positive effects of the exposure, which the Parliament provided. □



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## BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION FEBRUARY 2000

### **THE THIRD WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS**

Held in Cape Town, South Africa

### **A TENTH ANNIVERSARY REVIEW**

of President Ikeda's Historic Visit to  
United States in 1990

### **ESSAY BY SECOND PRESIDENT OF SOKA GAKKAI, JOSEI TODA**

Almsgiving of the Law

### **BUDDHIST CONCEPTS FOR TODAY'S LIVING**

Happiness in this World





An architect's drawing of renovations to the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium scheduled to be opened May 3, 2001.

## ***What is the SGI & Living Buddhism Magazine?***

*Living Buddhism* is the study journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. SGI-USA works in association with 75 other SGI organizations comprising members in more than half the world's countries. SGI-USA activities are driven by our understanding of the inseparable link between individual happiness and the peace and prosperity of our diverse communities. Our religious teachings place the highest emphasis on the sanctity of life.

Through their Buddhist faith and practice, our members aim to improve their lives by taking up the challenge to create value, to live without fear, to take responsibility for their circumstances, to care for their families and to live with compassion for others.

### ***What we believe...***

Our core philosophy is expressed in the concept of human revolution, a process of inner transformation that centers on the idea that the causes we make through our thoughts, words and actions have influence that extends beyond their immediate context to affect the vast and complex web of life. Through undergoing our individual human revolution, we awaken to the responsibility we each have for our own circumstances and for our environment. Our inner transformation will lead us to take the actions that bring about personal fulfillment and help us contribute to the harmony and healthy development of society. These ideals are based on the Buddhist worldview of dependent origination, a concept of interrelation where all things in the realms of humanity and nature are dependent upon each other for their existence and nothing can exist in isolation.

### ***The Buddhist tradition...***

The roots of the SGI-USA worldview can be traced to the teachings of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is modern-day Nepal. His enlightenment to eternal, universal reality was most succinctly articulated

in the Lotus Sutra. Following Shakyamuni's death, the Lotus Sutra spread through Central Asia into China and Japan.

In the 13th century, Nichiren Daishonin revealed the truth hidden in the Lotus Sutra. According to Nichiren Buddhism, the workings of the universe are an expression of a single principle or Law—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, the title and essence of the Lotus Sutra. By putting their lives in rhythm with this Law, individuals can unlock their hidden potential—the Buddha nature—and achieve creative harmony with the environment. Nichiren Buddhism is a vehicle of individual empowerment—that is, individuals have within themselves, the power to transform the inevitable sufferings of life into happiness and to be a positive influence in the community.

### ***The SGI Heritage...***

The SGI organization has its origin in the educational theory of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose quest to understand the deepest meaning of life eventually led to his encounter with Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Here he discovered a philosophy that recognized and sought to develop the wisdom inherent in all human beings. The term *soka gakkai* (value-creation society) was first used by Makiguchi in 1930 when he founded the lay organization. During World War II, Makiguchi and his disciple Josei Toda were imprisoned for their opposition to the war. Makiguchi died in prison within eighteen months at the age of 73. After the war, Toda rebuilt the organization and it achieved remarkable growth until his death in 1958. On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Under his leadership, the organization has grown to its present membership of 12 million in 128 countries.

Based on the humanistic principles of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, SGI President Ikeda has founded the Soka School System which includes universities in Japan and the United States. He is also the founder of the Toda Peace Institute, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the Fuji Art Museum, and more. He is the author of numerous books that have been translated into many languages and has received world-wide recognition for his peace efforts.