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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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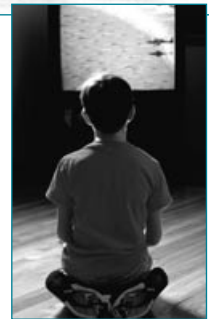
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COVER: Corbis. Head of the Genius of Death by Antonio Anova (circa 1790). The two gods in the title of Nichiren Daishonin's writing "The Gods Same Birth and Same Name" were thought to remain with a person throughout life and record that person's good and bad deeds. The Daishonin uses them to illustrate the law of causality. They are similar to attendant spirit Genius in Roman belief (page 8).

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Denmark's Folk High School

Thank you for publishing the article, "Denmark's Folk High School Looks to the Future" in the December issue. I attended Askov Folk High School in 1975–76, nine years before I learned about the SGI and began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

I grew up in a Danish immigrant community in rural Minnesota with strong ties to the folk school movement. As a child, my religious views were primarily shaped by the ideas of N.F.S. Grundtvig. While I had personally recognized the parallels between Grundtvig's philosophy of humanistic and socially responsible education and [first Soka Gakkai president] Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's value-creating philosophy of education, I was not aware that Makiguchi had actually been influenced by Grundtvig's writings.

Amy Wells, Natick, Massachusetts

Buddhism and Human Rights

I wish to commend the editorial staff for including "Buddhism and Human Rights: Points of Convergence" (January 2000) as well as the burgeoning number of articles demonstrating a high academic caliber.

As regards human rights, this current offering is a sobering account of both the historical failures of Buddhism in its complicity with and passivity towards authoritarianism and the failures of Western philosophy in its abstractionist idealization of the individual while ignoring social realities.

However, as Toru Shiotsu points out, through the emphasis on interdependence, i.e. dependent origination, as elucidated in Mahayana Buddhism, we can recognize that true autonomy and human dignity lies within the actualization of inherent, individualized potentialities and the subsequent creation of objective values which are realized for the benefit of self and others.

It becomes incumbent upon those who have taken the initiative and gained access to this self-unfoldment to foster "the realm of immanent possibilities" so that others may realize their full potential. The conventional moral argument is subsumed in the necessity and responsibility that self-awakened living entails.

While some may object to the complexity and the difficulties that comprehension of such an article impose, I believe it is important to bear in mind the function of cognitive understanding and its contributory role towards *kosen-rufu*.

All three presidents of the Soka Gakkai have aptly demonstrated themselves as scholars of the first rank and as disciples of Nichiren Daishonin who engaged in intense and protracted studies that today provide the foundation for an enduring human rights movement.

What is of greatest significance in this "Year of Youth"—youth who have the utmost at stake in their quest for freedom and the domain of "immanent possibilities"—will be those who tackle and grapple with these challenging articles and solidify an understanding that translates into the "rhythm of human revolution"—both seeking self-realization and guiding others—in order to perpetuate and secure true human dignity for all people for all time.

Steve Moon, North Hollywood, CA

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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.

“TRANSFORMING the LAND”

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

Greetings to the readers of Living Buddhism!

Recently, I was in Guam participating in events commemorating the 25th anniversary of the SGI. In celebration, the SGI, together with the University of Guam and Soka University of America, sponsored the First Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference with the participation of civic leaders and tribal chiefs from many Pacific Island states.

Twenty-five years ago, on January 26, 1975, President Ikeda met in Guam with representative members from fifty-one countries for the first conference of the International Buddhist League. This was the origin of the Soka Gakkai International. On that occasion, the international scope of our grass-roots movement for peace, which began with President Ikeda's first trip to the United States in 1960, entered a new phase. In my opinion, this event will be recognized as the time when Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism took its place as a world religion. From that first meeting with representatives from fifty-one countries, the seeds planted by President Ikeda have blossomed into an organization with 148 member countries.

While I was in Guam this past January, I found myself reflecting on the significance of President Ikeda's actions twenty-five years ago. Why did he establish the SGI? And why was Guam the site for such an auspicious event? After all, at that time Guam was not yet the popular tourist destination it is today and barely had the facilities to accommodate our conference.

President Ikeda's visit to Guam in 1975 was the last stop on a worldwide trip that included activities in China,

the Soviet Union and the United States. Prior to meeting with members in Guam, he had met with Zhou Enlai, the premiere of China; Alexei Kosygin of the Soviet Union; and in the United States with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. This was at the height of the Cold War, during the final days of the war in Vietnam, and a time when relations between the United States, the Soviet Union and Mainland China were at their worst. In fact, for anyone to travel among those three nations, much less confer with their political leaders, was unheard of. It is significant that President Ikeda did not meet with heads of state but rather with advisors critical to determining the policy of these three most powerful nations, the three nations that had kept the world in a state of conflict.

It was at the end of this trip that President Ikeda formally established our worldwide Buddhist organization. This stemmed from his conviction that peace could not be established through military force or economic power. Rather, what was essential was a network of common people, global citizens united by a profound philosophy of humanism and pacificism. That philosophy was Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

In 1975, those of us at that gathering did not necessarily understand its significance. But that small group of ordinary people were determined to dedicate their lives to creating peace in their communities and families. Their meeting went largely unnoticed by anyone outside of our organization. Nevertheless, on looking back it was clearly the starting point of a movement that is being affirmed, applauded and supported by leaders around the world, from all sectors of society, as evidenced by the Pacific Islands New Millennium Peace Conference.

Our grass-roots movement of spiritual rejuvenation is proving that, if the people take the lead, the leaders of the world will join us.

There is also deep significance in the fact that President Ikeda chose Guam, which many would view as a place of minor geopolitical importance, to begin a new substantial phase of our global movement for peace.

For centuries, this small island was a colony of Spain, Japan and the United States. During the Pacific War, Japan and the United States fought one of their most intense and bloody battles to gain possession of this island. Though in a remote location, this island has for more than three centuries had more than its share of conflict and suffering at the hands of world powers battling for power and influence at the expense of the native people.

The people of this island had the karma to suffer for generations because of interests and conflicts that had nothing to do with them. It is a principle of Buddhism that people who suffer the most have the right to become the happiest. Similarly, peace should begin from those places that have suffered the most from war. This is why the SGI was founded on Guam.

The same logic motivated President Ikeda to take his first step outside of Japan in Hawaii, where the Japanese military made its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. The place where the Japanese military sparked a global conflict became the place where the sun of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism first shed its light outside of Japan. In spiritual terms, we can say that the promulgation of war was transformed into the propagation of peace.

There is a concept we have learned from our study of the Lotus Sutra known as "the three transformations of the land." In preparation for the Ceremony in the Air, Shakyamuni takes a land that has been defiled and purifies it. The "three transformations of the land" refers to Shakyamuni's action to transform and purify the strife-ridden world three times.

This profound concept is discussed at length in the eighteenth installment of "Dialogues on the Lotus Sutra." (March 1997, *Living Buddhism*) Essentially, it expresses the function of Buddhism to purify our strife-ridden world, to go the place of war and conflict and make them Buddha lands from which peace and human prosperity emanate.

This is a principle we see at work again and again

...President Ikeda's spirit to go where people have suffered the most and there to sow seeds of peace for the eternal future. This action is an expression of tremendous care and compassion; such action is the fundamental spirit of our bodhisattva practice.

within the SGI. Each of us is dedicated to transforming the strife and conflict in our communities. Through our earnest practice of Buddhism — through consistent and compassionate effort — we aim to show positive proof of this principle of the three transformations.

In addition, President Ikeda began to write the novel *The Human Revolution* in Okinawa, where many innocent people lost their lives, sacrificed to the aims of Japanese militarism. I feel that we can regard these three events — the founding of the SGI in Guam, the first steps in the worldwide propagation of the Law in Hawaii, and the beginning of *The Human Revolution* in Okinawa — as illustrating the principle of "the three transformations of the land." More important, however, this exemplifies President Ikeda's spirit to go where people have suffered the most and there to sow seeds of peace for the eternal future. This action is an expression of tremendous care and compassion, and embodies the fundamental spirit of our bodhisattva practice.

On March 16, we celebrate Kosen-rufu Day, the day when the task of kosen-rufu was fully entrusted to the next generation, to the youth. I hope that the youth of the SGI-USA will use this opportunity to deepen their understanding of this heart of compassion at the origin of our movement for peace. Based on the actions of their predecessors, I hope they will spur themselves to more vigorous action to sow seeds of happiness and prosperity that will blossom throughout the next century.

Until next month, and until I have the opportunity to see you again in person, please take good care of yourselves.



Daniel K. Nagashima
SGI-USA General Director

THE THREE POWERFUL ENEMIES:

Corrupt Religious Authority and Mahayana Buddhism

As Mahayana Buddhism¹ was gaining popularity in India around the first century, there seems to have been a sense of urgency among Mahayana practitioners. The increasing corruption of the Buddhist clergy and their attack on the popular Mahayana movement was the cause of their concern. These practitioners felt responsible to protect what they believed to be Shakyamuni's central teaching, which is to recognize the Buddha nature in all people and help them manifest it through Buddhist practice.

Some Buddhist scriptures suggest that Shakyamuni's teaching in India, which was supposed to last one thousand years, would perish after five-hundred years.² The Mahayana practitioners around the first century were sensing the approach of the end of Shakyamuni's teachings. The various Mahayana sutras compiled around this time, including the Lotus Sutra, reflect this sense of urgency.

The concluding verse section of the "Encouraging Devotion" (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes the "three powerful enemies"—a concept later elaborated on by the eighth-century Chinese priest Miao-lo³. The Lotus Sutra speaks of those who will oppress the sutra's practitioners after the Buddha's death. The bodhisattvas who appear in the sutra pledge to the Buddha that they will spread their mentor's teaching after he is gone and describe the obstacles that they will face in the future. Of the first enemy they say: "There will be many ignorant people / who will curse and speak ill of us / and will attack us with swords and staves, / but we will endure all these things" (LS13, 193). They describe the second enemy as follows: "In that evil age there will be monks / with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked / who will suppose they have attained what they have not attained, / being proud and

boastful in heart" (LS13, 193). The sutra depicts the third and most powerful enemy as follows: "Or there will be forest-dwelling monks / wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement, / who will claim they are practicing the true way, / despising and looking down on all humankind" (LS13, 193).

The first enemy indicates those who out of ignorance verbally and physically abuse the Mahayana practitioners. To dampen their hostility, it is important to correct their misunderstanding and communicate the true message of Buddhism to them. In this sense, the Mahayana practitioners' real enemy is people's ignorance of Buddhism and its teachings of equality and respect for human life. The second enemy is defined as those monks or priests who possess a distorted understanding of Buddhism and therefore slander the sutra's votaries. In this instance, the real enemy is the arrogance of those clergy who assume that their understanding is superior while it is in fact deficient, and look down on genuine practitioners.

The third enemy is considered the most powerful because what they really are is so different from what they seem to be. They are therefore extremely hard to identify.

Dressed in the robes of humble priests, they inhabit temples in areas remote from the center of society. But in their hearts, they despise ordinary people and view them simply as objects to be exploited. The sutra explains: "Greedy for profit and support, / they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen / and will be respected and revered by the world / as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers" (LS13, 193–94). "White-robed laymen" here refers to wealthy, influential lay patrons. Such priests endeavor to pass themselves off as saints possessing supernatural

powers and thereby gain respect from the masses. To do this, they depend on the people remaining ignorant of Buddhism. Furthermore, they cleverly attack genuine Buddhist practitioners for preaching “non-Buddhist doctrines” and incite “the rulers” and “high ministers” to oppress the Buddha’s disciples (LS13, 194).

Hypocrisy is thus the true nature of the third of the three powerful enemies. In fact, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hypocrisy in a way that well describes their tendency: “The assuming of a false appearance of virtue or goodness, with dissimulation of real character or inclinations, esp. in respect of religious life or beliefs.”

The false nature of the appearance of this third enemy is difficult to identify precisely because it is that of a highly respected religious authority. The descriptions in the sutra, however, provide some clues to perceiving the third enemy’s true nature. For example, such saintly looking yet corrupt priests tend to live away from society perhaps to create a sense of longing among their followers. True Buddhist practitioners, however, practice among the people, striving to awaken them to their supreme potential of Buddhahood. Many early Buddhist scriptures record Shakyamuni constantly traveling to preach his Dharma to the people. He is said to have visited the city of Rajagriha more than 120 times and Shravasti more than nine hundred times. The same was true of Nichiren Daishonin; judging from many of his writings, he deeply cherished his encounters and interactions with ordinary people, paying careful attention to the circumstances and welfare of each of his followers.

Vasubandhu,⁴ an Indian Buddhist scholar from the fourth or fifth century, points out in his *Treaty of Analyses of the Law* (Skt *Abhidharma-kosha-shastra*) that the Buddhist Order may be destroyed not by nuns or lay followers, but by monks. The higher the status a religious practitioner possesses, the greater the temptation to abuse that religious authority for selfish gain. This is why Vasubandhu warned monks to be strict with themselves and encouraged the rest of the Buddhist community to remain vigilant. In this regard, the Lotus Sutra describes how those in religious authority succumb to their own devilish desire to seek selfish gain and oppress the Buddha’s real disciples: “Evil demons will take possession of others / and through them curse, revile and heap shame on us” (LS13, 194). The underlying nature of the third powerful enemy lies in the dark human desire to

To challenge this third powerful enemy, then, is to challenge this “devil” lurking not only in the lives of those in power and authority, but also in our own lives.

control and oppress others for one’s own pleasure and gain. Buddhism describes such an insidious aspect of human nature as “the devil king of the sixth heaven.” To challenge this third powerful enemy, then, is to challenge this “devil” lurking not only in the lives of those in power and authority, but also in our own lives.

Those who compiled the Mahayana sutras, including the Lotus, were deeply aware of the importance of overcoming obstacles stemming from ignorance, arrogance and selfishness, especially those brought on by corrupt religious authority. In the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter, the Buddha’s disciples pledge to their teacher: “We care nothing for our bodies or lives / but are anxious only for the unsurpassed way. In ages to come we will protect and uphold / what the Buddha has entrusted to us” (LS13, 194–95). The integrity of Buddhism hinges upon whether its practitioners challenge corruption within the Buddhist community. As the Mahayana practitioners at the beginning of the first millennium experienced, when Buddhism takes root in the lives of ordinary people, opposition arises. The lesson that those Mahayana bodhisattvas learned also applies to us as we launch our popular Buddhist movement into the third millennium. To ignore the obstacles presented by the three powerful enemies is to ignore “the Buddha’s orders” (LS13, 195) to protect the integrity of his teaching after his death.

By Shin Yatomi, associate editor, based on *Yasashii Kyogaku* (Easy Buddhist Study), published by the Seikyo Press in 1994.

1. Mahayana means a “greater vehicle” that enables all people to attain enlightenment. The Mahayana Buddhist movement started out essentially as a lay movement, and its practitioners were critical of monastic Buddhism for its insularity from the populace, calling it Hinayana or a “lesser vehicle.”

2. Hirakawa, Akira. *Daijō Bukkyō Nyūmon* (A Guide to Mahayana Buddhism). Tokyo: Daisanbunmeisha, 1998. p. 164.

3. Miao-lo (711-782): The sixth patriarch of the T’ien-t’ai school in China, counting from T’ien-t’ai. He is revered as the restorer of the school and wrote commentaries on T’ien-t’ai’s major works, contributing to a clarification of the school’s teachings.

4. Vasubandhu (n.d.): A Buddhist scholar in India thought to have lived around the fourth or fifth century. He is known as the author of *The Dharma Analysis Treasury*. He originally studied Hinayana but was later converted to Mahayana by his elder brother Asanga. He wrote numerous treatises designed to clarify the Mahayana teachings.

Study Material for April

“The Gods Same Birth and Same Name”

(*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 315-16)



Both of you were born as commoners and live in Kamakura, yet you believe in the Lotus Sutra without concern for the prying eyes of others or the danger it may pose to your lives. This is nothing short of extraordinary. Though I am only guessing, it is as if a jewel had been placed in muddy water, and the water had become clear. It is as if one who was taught something new by a wise person had believed his every word and thus grasped the truth. Could Shakyamuni Buddha and the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Medicine King, and Constellation King Flower be dwelling in your hearts? Surely this is what is meant in the passage of the Lotus Sutra that says that those in the land of Jambudvīpa who believe in this sutra do so because of the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy (WND, 315-16).

Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter in 1272, when Shijo Kingo came from Kamakura to visit him on Sado Island where he was living in exile. It was addressed to Kingo's wife, who remained behind in Kamakura looking over the family's affairs. The text of the letter also addresses another woman, the wife of a man named Toshiro, who is apparently a friend of Nichigen-nyo and a fellow practitioner.

Both Nichigen-nyo and Kingo had been united in their strong faith, and had persevered together in their practice of the Daishonin's teachings. While Shijo Kingo's journey to visit the Daishonin on Sado was long and difficult, Nichigen-nyo's remaining behind without her husband must have been equally trying. The harsh, male-dominated nature of 13th-century Japanese society would have made it difficult for a woman staying by herself. With animosity toward the Daishonin widespread, the danger of armed physical assault on his followers was not to be dismissed.

The Daishonin thus praises the recipients of this letter, calling their sincerity “deeper even than the earth” and “loftier even than the sky” and encouraging them that all heavenly and earthly gods must be aware of this and will protect them.

Shijo Kingo was a samurai vassal of the Ema branch of the Hojo Clan. The Hojos dominated the office of Regent to the Shogun in Kamakura. With the position of shogun rendered nominal at the time, they held political and military control in Japan.

One year before, Nichiren Daishonin had faced beheading on the beach at Tatsunokuchi, but that failed execution attempt became instead a sentence of exile.

Shijo Kingo and Nichigen-nyo had actively supported the Daishonin while he was in Kamakura, and they continued to do so while he was living in exile on Sado Island, off Japan's north-eastern coast. They frequently sent offerings of needed supplies such as money, rice and oil. On this occasion, Shijo Kingo had made the arduous trip to

visit the Daishonin on Sado. Upon his arrival, the Daishonin wrote this letter to Kingo's wife. It expresses the Daishonin's deep respect and concern not only for the person taking direct action to support Buddhism, but for those spouses and family members who sincerely work and support their efforts from behind the scenes.

Both of you were born as commoners and live in Kamakura, yet you believe in the Lotus Sutra without concern for the prying eyes of others or the danger it may pose to your lives. This is nothing short of extraordinary.

"Both of you" here refers to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of the Daishonin's well-known follower Shijo Kingo, and the wife of a believer named Toshiro. Little is known about either Toshiro or his wife, but Toshiro seems to have been a samurai colleague of Shijo Kingo. The Daishonin's reference to these two being "born as commoners" seems to imply that, while both were of the samurai class, which enjoyed a degree of status in medieval Japan, neither of their husbands was of a particularly high rank.

Because of their relatively low social status, they were vulnerable to sanctions or oppression from those with more power. In their feudal society, even a person with some social position often was completely beholden to someone of higher rank. Government officials of the highest rank were always vigilant for any potential threat to their power; whomever they deemed rebellious or defiant was severely punished.

The Daishonin mentions that the two women "live in Kamakura." This is significant because it was the high-ranking priests of Kamakura's Buddhist community who despised Nichiren Daishonin the most, and Kamakura was also headquarters for Japan's military government, whose leaders deeply respected and supported those priests. Kamakura was not an easy place for those practicing Buddhism as the Daishonin's followers. But this is exactly the position the two women were in.

"Without concern for the prying eyes of others" speaks of the women's courage. But it does not simply mean that Nichigen-nyo and her friend were unconcerned about others' opinions about them or about how their neighbors regarded them. In today's image-conscious society, people often preoccupy themselves with how others view them. It might therefore be considered courageous or bold to disregard the opinions of peers or neighbors and opt to do something that is more right than popular.

Believing in the Causality of Life Within: Who are Gods Same Birth and Same Name?

In this letter, "The Gods Same Birth and Same Name," Nichiren Daishonin praises Nichigen-nyo's sincere, unseen support for her husband's visit to Sado Island where the Daishonin was exiled. He concludes the letter by stating:

And yet, in such a turbulent world, and when you do not even have servants you can rely on, you have sent your husband here. This shows that your sincerity is deeper even than the earth, and the earthly gods must certainly realize it. It is loftier even than the sky, and the heavenly gods Brahma and Shakra must also be aware of it. The Buddha taught that one, from the very moment of one's birth, is accompanied by two messengers, Same Birth and Same Name, who are sent by heaven and who follow one as closely as one's own shadow, never parting from one even for an instant. These two take turns ascending to heaven to report one's offenses and good deeds, both great and small, without overlooking the slightest detail. Therefore, heaven too must know about this matter. How reassuring! How reassuring! (WND, 316)

The gods Same Birth and Same Name are alternately depicted in Buddhist scriptures as a god and goddess, or as one god. In either case, they are said record people's thoughts, words and deeds—good and bad—and remain with them at all times throughout life. The names of Same Birth and Same Name indicate that they come into existence at the time the person whom they accompany is born and carry the same name (i.e., identity) as that person. In other words, those deities are a metaphorical expression of the self.

The concept of the gods Same Birth and Same Name is almost analogous to the classical Western pagan belief in Genius, the tutelary god or attendant spirit assigned to all people at birth to govern their fortunes and determine their character, and finally to escort them out of the world.¹ Genius, which literally means "that which is just born,"² is sometimes depicted as two mutually opposed spirits—good and evil—whom every person is sup-

posed to be attended by throughout life. In one sense, genius represents people's inner qualities that shape their whole personalities and determine the course of their lives. The Western concept of genius, therefore, is not far from the notion of the self as its counterpart Same Birth and Same Name in the East.

As we cannot separate the part of our self that creates an action from the part of our self that experiences the effect of that action, metaphorically speaking, the gods Same Birth and Same Name are always with us, aware of our every thought, word and deed. From the standpoint of Buddhism, this illustrates that our every thought, word and deed are recorded, so to speak, within our lives as karma—the Sanskrit word for action. And Buddhism explains that one's karma continues as one's fundamental identity throughout the eternal cycle of birth and death. Karma, in other words, is what makes us who we are. In this sense, the gods Same Birth and Same Name also signify the law of causality in life at work throughout one's past, present and future existences. As the saying goes, "What goes around comes around." We are accountable for our past actions, and, at the same time, we can shape our future in any way we please through our present actions.

1. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd Ed.
2. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 3rd Ed.

However, by being open about their Buddhist practice, these two women risked much more than losing friends or being criticized. Their circumstances were such that letting others know of their association with the Daishonin would leave them open to the very real possibility of serious persecution. In fact, in years to follow, Nichigen-nyo and Shiji Kingo would face such difficulties as the confiscation of their lands and physical attack by some of Kingo's samurai colleagues. In spite of such dangers, the two women proudly let it be known that they were the Daishonin's disciples and openly exerted themselves in their Buddhist practice.

Among the Daishonin's followers, a number had already had their lands and holdings confiscated, while others had been imprisoned because of their faith. In some cases, they had to prepare for the possibility of being killed. This is why the Daishonin makes a point of recognizing the women's courage and openness in the face of such danger. In fact, a willingness to accept that danger was necessary for them to practice Buddhism.

In "Letter from Sado," written the month before this letter, the Daishonin says, "Since nothing is more precious than life itself, one who dedicates one's life to Buddhist practice is certain to attain Buddhahood. If one is prepared to offer one's life, why should one begrudge any other treasure for the sake of Buddhism? On the other hand, if one is loath to part with one's wealth, how can one possibly offer one's life, which is far more valuable?" (WND, 301).

For the Daishonin himself, this was not merely a philosophical observation. For more than a decade, he had repeatedly faced censure, attack and exile. Less than a year earlier, on September 12, 1271, he had sat before the executioner's sword, ready to face death.

The Daishonin records his encounter earlier that day with Hei no Saemon, the powerful deputy chief of the office of military and police affairs, and his troops who raided the Daishonin's dwelling, struck him and vandalized the sutra scrolls he kept there:

I, Nichiren, said in a loud voice, "How amusing! Look at Hei no Saemon gone mad! You gentlemen have just toppled the pillar of Japan!" Hearing this, the assembled troops were taken aback. When they saw me standing before the fierce arm of the law unafraid, they must have realized that they were in the wrong, for the color drained from their faces. (WND, 766)

The Daishonin's voice rang with the profound and absolute confidence that the teaching he was spreading with his very life was Japan's only hope in the face of impending ruin.

On the way to his own execution, the Daishonin told Shijo Kingo, who accompanied him:

Tonight I will be beheaded. This is something I have wished for many years. . . . Now is the time when I will offer my head to the Lotus Sutra and share the blessings therefrom with my deceased parents, and with my disciples and lay supporters, just as I have promised you. (WND, 767)

At the execution site, a brilliant object—later postulated to be a meteor—sliced across the pitch-black sky. Illuminating the serene face of the condemned man, it must have worked to convince the executioners, who were already in awe of the Daishonin's absolute confidence, of their own doubts. They withdrew and did not carry out the execution.

While the Daishonin's survival could certainly be attributed to the protective function of what Buddhism calls "benevolent deities"—we should be clear that these represent functions of the human life-condition. They are external responses to the inner workings of the human life force. When that life force manifests Buddhahood, they function powerfully in a supportive and protective manner. In that sense, we could say that it was the Daishonin's own absolute willingness to face death for the sake of Buddhism that saved his life. It enabled him to live on to fulfill his profound mission to save humankind from suffering and to prove the validity of that mission. He revealed his true identity as a Buddha.

A powerful aspect of the Daishonin's Buddhism is that it aims to enable all people to bring forth the same positive attributes of life as the true Buddha—as the founder, Nichiren Daishonin. The key is to chant to the Gohonzon, which embodies the Daishonin's enlightenment, with an enthusiastic willingness to face and win over any kind of challenge or difficulty that stands between us and our happiness, between things the way they are and how we envision them to be—between a world of war and suffering and a world of peace and harmony. When we do so, our own qualities as a "true Buddha of absolute happiness" naturally emerge.

None of us became a Buddhist because we were seeking persecution or abuse. In fact, few, if any of us, may ever face the degree of hardship and persecution the Daishonin or his followers did. Today, SGI President Ikeda has personally been the subject of the brunt of animosity and negativity directed at the Soka Gakkai in Japan. Here in the United States, however, few SGI members have encountered ongoing, direct opposition on account of their faith.

The truth is that we elected to practice this Buddhism to improve our lives, to enrich our families and to live with a greater sense fulfillment. And it is the experience of millions around the world that this is indeed the outcome of sincere and consistent faith and practice.

One important aspect of creating happiness, however, is challenging and overcoming the causes for unhappiness that exist in our lives and environment. While this is not easy, philosophers of all cultures and backgrounds have lauded the value of facing adversity for forging character.

Eighteenth-century American Poet William Cullen Bryant said, "Difficulty, my brethren, is the nurse of greatness—a harsh nurse, who roughly rocks her foster-children into strength and athletic proportion."¹

And Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and psycho-

logical theorist said, "Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health."²

Nichiren Daishonin showed his followers through his own actions and attitude how to regard adversity. He even attributed his ability to fulfill his mission and reveal his enlightenment to those who persecuted him most severely:

Devadatta was the foremost good friend to the Thus Come One Shakyamuni. In this age as well, it is not one's allies but one's powerful enemies who assist one's progress. . . . For me, Nichiren, my best allies in attaining Buddhahood are Kagenobu, the priests Ryokan, Doryu, and Doamidabutsu, and Hei no Saemon and the lord of Sagami. I am grateful when I think that without them I could not have proved myself to be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. (WND, 770)

From this perspective, we might say that through our Buddhist practice we aim to develop a lofty state of life that allows us to one day joyfully proclaim, for example, "Were it not for that nasty boss; my rebellious child; that illness I had to face and overcome; the ridiculous unfairness of that professor's tests; my long struggle with poverty; . . . I could never enjoy the great degree of wisdom, strength and satisfaction I do today. I am deeply grateful for the troubles I have faced and for those who challenged me the most in life!"

And it is not even so much the presence of severe problems, but the attitude in life to approach all problems with a sense of challenge, hope and optimism that creates a healthy and fulfilling way of life.

G.C. Lichtenberg, a German physicist and philosopher of the 18th century stated it quite clearly: "It is in the gift for employing all the vicissitudes of life to one's own advantage and to that of one's craft that a large part of genius consists."³

We might say that this "gift" he refers to is an important strength we aim to develop through our prayer and practice—it is an attribute of our innate enlightened nature.

And regarding the Daishonin's stance toward adversity, SGI President Ikeda said:

In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin says, "One should regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). You may wonder how encountering obstacles could be a source of peace and comfort. But the truth of the matter is that through struggling against and overcoming difficulties, we can transform our destiny and attain Buddhahood. Confronting

adversity, therefore, represents peace and comfort.
(Hachioji, Tokyo, January 27, 1996)

Today our Constitution guarantees the freedom of religious belief as a fundamental human right. The kind of persecutions experienced by the Daishonin and his followers in his time—in which those in power directly intervened in the activities and lives of practitioners—are therefore unlikely.

But the teaching of the Lotus Sutra—of the Daishonin's Buddhism—is a teaching of absolute equality. It confidently asserts that all people, regardless of social rank, income, or fame, are equally worthy of respect from the standpoint of their inherent potential for Buddhahood. As we spread this teaching and our movement grows, it is bound to evoke resentment from those who despise such equality. It may cause fear or jealousy in those who teach or adhere to narrow beliefs.

Any opposition we face in these times and in this democratic society will more likely take the form of defamation in the media (including, today, on the internet) with the intent of creating public antipathy and distrust. This in turn could lead to pressure on individual practitioners at work and in their communities. In fact, attacks by unscrupulous writers and the media have been the most common approach used by those bearing enmity toward the Gakkai in Japan to create antagonism toward it for decades. In attempting to undermine the Soka Gakkai in Japan, Nichiren Shoshu under its current high priest, Nikken, has worked with such media. And outside of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood under Nikken, such clear-cut opposition to our Buddhist movement has not occurred in the U.S.

For this reason, understanding the nature and motivations behind Nichiren Shoshu's attacks on the SGI will help us understand the dynamics behind any possible future opposition or persecution. A deep look will tell us that they are motivated by a fundamental disdain for the spirit of equality that the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin's teachings stand for.

Nichigen-nyo's spirit and practice can provide us with an inspiring example. She was proud to identify herself as a follower of the Daishonin, and we, too, can be proud to declare ourselves members of the SGI—the foremost gathering of people dedicated to the peace and happiness of humanity based on his teachings. And it is when we, like Nichigen-nyo, are determined to persevere strongly in the face of any opposition or difficulty, that we can derive true benefit from our Buddhist practice.

This was the spirit of the Soka Gakkai's founder,

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who went to prison and died there because he was unwilling to compromise his convictions concerning Buddhism. It was the way of life of his disciple, Josei Toda, who went to prison with his mentor and emerged to create an unprecedented popular Buddhist movement after World War II. And it has consistently been the example set by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Mr. Toda's disciple, who has persevered for more than fifty years to expand upon his mentor's dream. Working tirelessly to spread this Buddhism and an awareness for peace throughout the world, he has faced a continual storm of opposition, jealousy and slander from those within the Japanese religious and political establishment; and for the past decade, from the priests of Nichiren Shoshu, the very Buddhist clergy he had devoted great energies to helping prosper. Struggling for the happiness of the people to the extent that it invites opposition; enduring and surmounting that opposition; and continuing to work for the happiness of the people—this is precisely the spirit and tradition of the Soka Gakkai. It is the legacy of its successive presidents.

We might also bear in mind that Nichigen-nyo and her friend did not persevere in their faith simply to gain benefit, change their negative karma, and attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. Their actions were also intended to protect and support the Daishonin and to protect and spread Buddhism. They were actions that arose no doubt from a sense of selfless appreciation and devotion. In this sense, they were worthy of the highest respect.

And the role of women in today's SGI is no less worthy of respect. Regarding this, President Ikeda has said,

Obstacles and hardships are the material that let us forge genuine faith. We should actually be grateful when we have them.

The Soka Gakkai has advanced in accord with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, fighting against the three obstacles and four devils. This is proof that ours is an organization truly dedicated to carrying out the widespread propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Those who are persecuted by the forces that would destroy the correct teaching of Buddhism are the genuine article.

Whenever the Soka Gakkai has encountered persecution, it has been the courage of the women's division members that has stood out. Their sincerity, strong faith and true grit mirror those of the coura-

geous women who shine brightly in the pages of his writings. (Hachioji, Tokyo, October 22, 1998)

• **Though I am only guessing, it is as if a jewel had been placed in muddy water, and the water had become clear. ... Those in the land of Jambudvipa who believe in this sutra do so because of the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy.**

Neither Nichigen-nyo nor her friend had mastered any sophisticated Buddhist theory, nor had they undergone any specialized training.

Why, then, in spite of this, were they able to persist with strong faith, unafraid of persecution? To explain, the Daishonin makes two analogies. The first, that of a jewel placed in muddy water making the water clear, reflects a common belief of the time; it expresses the power of the pure life-condition of Buddhahood. The second, that of learning something new from a wise person, believing in it, and thus grasping the truth, indicates that when we believe in a teaching that embodies wisdom, we too naturally gain the wisdom to judge things correctly in accord with Buddhist principles.

Nichigen-nyo and her friend were as if in muddy water, being largely unversed in their knowledge of Buddhist principles. Nevertheless, they had encountered the Daishonin, who was equivalent to a “jewel” in terms of his state of life; he was most certainly a “wise person.” They learned from him and accepted his teaching, “believing every word,” and thus stood up with strong faith as wise people themselves who had “thus grasped the truth.”

“Shakyamuni Buddha and the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Medicine King, and Constellation King Flower” refer to figures appearing in various places throughout the Lotus Sutra, specifically the “Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter, the “Medicine King” (23rd) chapter, and the “Universal Worthy” (28th) chapter. These chapters address the question of to whom the task of spreading the teaching of the Sutra after the Buddha’s death will be entrusted. In the “Teacher of the Law” chapter, the Buddha tells Bodhisattva Medicine King, regarding propagation after the Buddha’s death:

Medicine King, you should know that after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, if there are those who can copy, uphold, read and recite this sutra, offer alms to it and expound it for others, then the Thus Come One will cover them with his robe, and they will

also be protected and kept in mind by the Buddhas who are now present in other regions. (LS10, 164-5)

Also, in the “Medicine King” chapter, the Buddha addresses Bodhisattva Constellation King Flower: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa and never allow it to be cut off” (LS23, 288).

Then, the “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy” chapter reads, “If when the Lotus Sutra is propagated throughout Jambudvipa there are those who accept and uphold it, they should think to themselves: This is all due to the authority and supernatural power of Universal Worthy!” (LS28, 321-22).

And “after the Thus Come One has entered extinction, I will cause it to be widely propagated throughout Jambudvipa and will see that it never comes to an end” (LS28, 322).

In other words, in the age after the Buddha’s passing known as the Latter Day of the Law, those who uphold and spread the Lotus sutra are carrying out the function of the Bodhisattvas Medicine King, Constellation King Flower and Universal Worthy, and will assuredly receive the praise of all Buddhas. Through this passage, the Daishonin himself is praising Nichigen-nyo and her friend for their persevering faith and practice.

The Daishonin invokes the metaphor of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dwelling in their heart, and in this way he is pointing to the conditions of Buddha and Bodhisattva within Nichigen-nyo’s and her friend’s life. These are the states of wisdom, strength and compassion that she had been able to well forth by learning the correct teaching from the Daishonin and purely and honestly believing in that teaching. It was the women’s sincerity and pure seeking spirit that the Daishonin alludes to when mentioning that Shakyamuni and these bodhisattvas are dwelling in their heart.

By this, the Daishonin is also implying that her life is expressing the functions of these Buddhas and bodhisattvas. And when one’s life is manifesting the function of a Buddha or a bodhisattva, it is natural that one can bring forth the powerful life-force to stand up to any challenge, difficulty or even persecution, and come out a winner. ◻

1. William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878), U.S. poet, editor. Speech, 15 Dec. 1851.

2. Carl Jung (1875–1961), Swiss psychiatrist. *The Transcendent Function* (1916).

3. G. C. Lichtenberg (1742–99), German physicist, philosopher. Aphorisms, “*Notebook K*,” aph. 48 (written 1765–99; tr. by R. J. Hollingdale, 1990).



MY STORY— MYOICHI

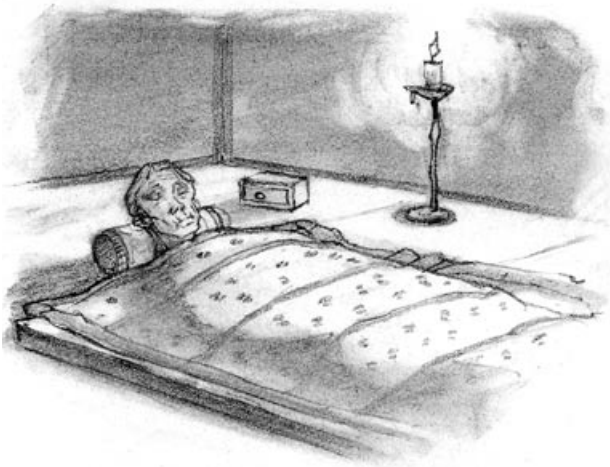
By Fay Hovey, Maui, Hawaii

The following story is a fictionalized first-person account of Myoichi and what it might have been like for her to live in thirteenth-century Japan as a follower of Nichiren Daishonin. Myoichi, who lived in Kamakura, was related to Nissho, one of the Daishonin's six senior priests. She was an educated woman who had lost her husband and was struggling with the difficulties of raising her children alone. Her husband was a strong believer who maintained his faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism even after his estate was confiscated by the government. Many of the Daishonin's disciples faltered in their beliefs under persecution. Her husband died worrying about the Daishonin who was then in exile, and about his wife, whose constitution was frail, and who would have to support their two children. In his letter titled "Winter Always Turns to Spring" the Daishonin assures Myoichi, "Those who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring. Never, from ancient times on, has anyone heard or seen of winter turning back to autumn. Nor have we ever heard of a believer in the Lotus Sutra who turned into an ordinary person. The sutra reads, 'If there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood'" (WND, 536).

Warriors returning to Kamakura would tell extraordinary tales of whole forests emptying of their creatures at the onset of battle. Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo, said that her husband had once seen hundreds of deer stumbling over one another to leave the region of a battlefield. It was as if the whole of Japan had wished to flee for over five years as we teetered on the edge of conflict with the Mongols who attempted invasion, fell back, and repeated their attempt with larger numbers of men. Each day brought more bad news as men were called away to help build ramparts at Kyushu and the heads of Mongolian emissaries were rolling.

Of all the disasters that could befall us, and believe me, we had our share of them, the most feared by all is foreign invasion. As is always the case, it is the women, the children, the old and the sick who suffer the most in war. It was with great relief that in 1281, another storm had repelled the warriors of Kublai Khan. Yet, it seemed like the calm before another storm.

To be ill a good part of the time is a harsh thing. For long periods I wasn't able to rise from my bed and often I wondered what the point of my life was. One sees the healthy going about their days in normal ways and I felt like giving up. The real challenge of sickness is that one cannot help feeling a rage deep within, an anger at one's



fate at being alive when preferring to die. So living can become a kind of shadow — alive, but not truly living. And what of my two children?

It was my practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism that gave me hope and spurred me on. Other people climb actual mountains, testing themselves against the wind and rain. I challenged the mountain of my illness from my bed, chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and reading the Daishonin's letters, using his guidance in my life. As my life-condition strengthened, I found myself reaching out to others, and all of my sufferings allowed me to understand their pain and sorrow.

Do you know what a few words of encouragement can mean to someone who is ill? The Daishonin's letters were beacons of hope during a dark time. They were delivered by his traveling disciple, moving between his secluded hut at Mount Minobu and the military capital of Kamakura. Without fanfare, he arrived: soft-footed, discreet of voice and manner, a few words of inquiry. He would patiently wait while I wrote a short note in return. Whatever we could find to send the Daishonin — a basket of dried persimmons, a container of rice wine or clothing to keep him warm — we would send.

When my husband was alive, he insisted that we would provide anything we could to the Daishonin, so important he was to us. We knew that he was entirely dependent upon his followers for necessities and we gave without reservation, risking all. Indeed, three poor peasants at Atsuhara had paid the ultimate price for their faith when they were beheaded by Hei no Saemon, who bore Nichiren Daishonin a deep abiding hatred that knew no bounds. For our part, our land holdings were confiscated — yet our faith held fast. Once the Daishonin wrote me, "Winter always turns to spring."

I believe I forged on because of that letter, so powerful was the conviction and reassurance of his words. He also said that if something happened to me, he would take care of my children — it was as if he was extending his entire life force.

It is not surprising that the Daishonin had so many women followers. I can think of no other religious figure of our time that cared as much about the fate of women and children. In war, we were unfortunately dispensable. In fact, there was a prevailing belief that women were almost not "as human" as men and therefore didn't have the same feelings and certainly not the same capacity for enlightenment. Women committed suicide rather than live without their husbands. We looked around at all of the madness and terror and were as trapped as rabbits in a snare.

The Daishonin had told us that we too could become enlightened in this lifetime and it was astonishing news! That he could see into our hearts and name our sufferings allowed us to see the hopeful horizon of life, and his recognition of our true selves and our prayers made us courageous. For years, we lived under the constant fear that we could all be savagely killed or enslaved by Mongol invaders, yet because of the Daishonin's letters, even I could stand strong against that fear.

What is the meaning of faith? It is an absolute trust that we are protected; an unswerving belief that no matter what, we will prevail. That life has meaning and we have a meaningful part to play in it, no matter our circumstances in life. I may be old. I may be sick, but I am as much as warrior as those who ride to battlefields dressed in bright armor on fine horses. I am Myoichi. A woman of Kamakura. Follower of Nichiren Daishonin. I have no doubt. I have nothing to fear. □



VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE 2000

DIALOGUE -
FOSTERING NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM IN YOUTH



The SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee (YPC) was formed in 1991 by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and charged with the mission of supporting the United Nations and fostering youth who will become leaders of the 21st Century. In August 1999 the YPC, together with the junior high and high school division of the SGI-USA, launched the "Victory over Violence" campaign. The objective is to spark dialogue and heighten awareness regarding nonviolent activism and to provide opportunities for youth to become nonviolent activists. The project package includes a video, information kit, nonviolence pledge, and Victory over Violence bookmarks and buttons.

The United Nations has named the year 2000 the year of a Culture of Peace, and the UN General Assembly has named the first ten years of this decade the International Decade of A Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for Children of the World. And SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's 2000 Peace Proposal is titled, "Peace Through Dialogue: A Time to Talk." Based on these themes, the YPC felt it was fitting to begin to dialogue with other organizations committed to the goals of nonviolence and fostering capable youth.

The participants in this dialogue all work with youth and all are active in the area of nonviolence. They are (from upper left) Jennifer Case and Rajmohan Ramanathapillai of the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence (Memphis, Tennessee), Hiro Sakurai of the Soka Gakkai International United Nations Office (New York), Janet Garfinkle of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance (Los Angeles), Carah Ong of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (Santa Barbara, California), Edward Feasel of Soka University (Aliso Viejo, California), and Yvette Y. Edmond of the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee, (Santa Monica, California).

Ed: I think the theme of today's dialogue, "Fostering Nonviolent Activism in Youth," is wonderful. We're seeing an increase in violence among youth and an increasing tendency to turn to violence to try to solve the difficulties, controversies and conflicts they face. We have to resist this trend and educate youth in different methods of solving conflicts. Any effort to increase the awareness of nonviolent means in solving conflicts is important.

Janet: I think two issues are important. One is early intervention. The earlier that we start working with youth, which obviously has an impact on the family, the better. The second is to model behavior we want youth to emulate. Youth today are bombarded with violent images by the media. It seems the motion pictures that make the most money are the ones that are the most violent.

If we are going to be responsible adults and good stewards of our children, we need to start modeling the behaviors that we want to see them carry forth, and I do not think that we are doing a good job of that.

Jenny: I think it is particularly important that we focus on youth because as they transform themselves, and as they take on positions of responsibility in society, they will transform others as well.

Raj: This is my sixth month in the United States, so my perception is quite different. I am still digesting and absorbing things. I come from Sri Lanka, which is a war zone where youth are viewed as capital for the war industry. Youth have become a target for the guerrilla and army forces. Youth are targets because the warring parties feel that they can capture and mold young minds to

hate and fight the enemy. When I came to this part of the world, I did not see that pattern. I did see a pattern of youth feeling alienated from the main social structure. They are not fully connected.

There is a lot of stress on parents and in many cases both parents work and can not play a major role in the development of their children. So, that feeling of alienation contributes to isolation and idleness, such that young people's minds become attracted to certain forms of violent entertainment, such as video games. I think this contributes to youth violence. I would like to suggest that we need to focus less on teaching or preaching to youth and more on being part of their lives.

Yvette: Of course, it would be wonderful if all children were raised in homes where nonviolence was modeled. However, since that is not the case, we need to reach children before they accept violence as a way of life. What do you feel is the crucial age to reach out to them?

Jenny: The author SuEllen Fried of the STOP Violence Coalition in Kansas City, Missouri, works with schoolchildren on the topic of bullying. She says both physical and verbal bullying behavior seem to emerge as early as third grade, thus this may be a crucial time in the lives of children.

Janet: Vivian Pauley is an author and teacher in Chicago, Illinois; she wrote a book titled, *You Can't Say You Can't Play*. She wanted her kindergarten students to be inclusive and tried to help them focus on this one rule, "You Can't Say You Can't Play." In this way everyone could play with each other without exclusion. The way she envisioned this working

is that when a child came up to a group of other children playing, the group couldn't tell that child to go away, that they couldn't play. This turned out to be an extraordinarily difficult thing to have children as young as five to six year old be open and receptive to other children. For whatever reasons, I don't think she really was ever able to determine exactly why children were very exclusive. Pauley thought that at that early age, they would be very inclusive, but there seems to be something about human beings that makes us want to stake out our territory.

I think that language plays a big part in violent behavior as well. One of the things we stress here in the Museum of Tolerance is that we have personal responsibility over the use of words. Acute cataclysmic events in human history like the Holocaust did start with the words that people chose to use. Therefore, I would say from birth we need to instill nonviolent behavior in our children. In very subtle ways language seems to influence human behavior. It seems to me that we need to create an environment where children are cherished and where it's OK for parents not to have all the material items that they think that they have to have. In this way, perhaps mom or dad could spend more time with the family or work out a schedule so adults have more time to do the modeling for their children. I truly believe that we need to work with children from birth to help them develop a respect for nonviolence. We definitely need to prioritize in terms of our children. If children are really our most important asset, which is, of course, what we keep saying, then we're going to have to allocate resources to enable parents to have the time to be with their children, to help parents

understand how to parent, to help them understand child development so that they know what ages and stages are appropriate and what expectations are appropriate for children. Obviously, we don't teach algebra to kids who are eight years old because it's an abstract concept. We teach it when they're 13 when their brains are ready to accept abstract ideas. That doesn't mean you can't start laying the framework for algebra much earlier. The same is true with nonviolence.

Ed: I agree, I think at different ages the approach could be different in terms of how we try to infuse this spirit of tolerance and understanding. I grew up in a very poor area in San Diego, and there was a lot of gang activity. It seems to me that from elementary school on up there was an increasing number of episodes of violence. While there was some violence in my elementary school, it was actually in junior high school when it peaked. This is when friends started breaking up into different cliques and often resorted to violence to solve conflicts. I agree we need to start right from the beginning just teaching simple things like having everyone participate in games, and not excluding others because of differences. As time goes on, we can get more sophisticated in the way we share with our youth how to resolve conflicts that might arise from differences.

Raj: At the Gandhi Institute we have



One idea for promoting nonviolent behavior in children might be alternative cartoons. Children have contact with TV before they have contact with other children, and that's their first impression of life. The media can be used to present less violent cartoons at the earliest stage of childhood as one alternative.

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a program called "Kindness is Contagious." We are working with 1200 children from three different elementary schools, and one of the successes of this program is that, compared to some workshops that they did with junior high school and high school students, they find that working with elementary school children, teaching them to be kind to each other, and helping them through that process is easier. The program has been quite successful. The schools have reported that in the five years since we have been providing this program, the com-

plaints regarding student violence have continued to decline. The earlier age is the best time to foster attitudes of nonviolence and help children develop behavior that is inclusive and builds relationships with other children and the community.

Yvette: It seems that a lot of responsibility is being placed upon the school system and yet some of the most recent youth violence has occurred within the school setting. What do you think this suggests about the education system in America?

Ed: I don't think we can blame the educational system. I think a lot of teachers are facing very difficult circumstances working with youth in schools. Our schools in many cases have become unsafe environments. I think the situation in our schools reflects society, as opposed to the problem being created in the school system. At the same time, I think education can do a lot to reverse this trend.

Janet: I would not blame the schools either. The word "kindness" came up, and I think that's a very important word. The younger the children you look at in school, the kinder you find the environment. In other words, if you go into a preschool or nursery school setting, that's probably where you're going to find the largest quantity of kindness. At that level school is usually a very loving environment. For some rea-

son we tend to lose that because there are so many demands on teachers' time. They have to meet standards. The kids must know X, Y and Z to meet the appropriate standards. I'm not saying standards are a bad thing. Somehow we should be able to incorporate achieving those goals along with maintaining that atmosphere of kindness. This goes back to modeling. If the kids don't see it done, we can talk all day about it, but without actually having non-violence and kindness modeled for them, they're not going to know how to do it, and how to replicate it in their own lives.

Yvette: So it sounds like it's everyone's responsibility to be a proper role model for youth. However, in today's society, youth spend a lot of time in school, and yet there are very few schools that really emphasize nonviolent activism or teach youth to live a nonviolent lifestyle. What would you hope to see in the future as far as the education system actually teaching nonviolence?

Raj: I hope that we aren't going to restrict education or the learning experience for children only to the schools. Gandhi often said that children learn from their environment. Therefore, we all have to educate children and not leave it solely to the school system. My feeling is that although none of the schools in the United States are teaching violence, most of them are not attempting to teach nonviolence. So, it's important that we formally introduce some sort of program to teach youth nonviolence and how to build healthy relationships.

Jenny: I do not think it is right to think of nonviolence as a lifestyle as if it were an alternative to other

lifestyles; but rather, I think of living nonviolently as living well in the moral sense. Everyone, regardless of lifestyle, ought to lead a moral life. Thus, if leading a moral life equals living nonviolently, schools should teach youth how to live well, that is, live nonviolently. Part of the role of schools should be teaching youth how to be good people and how to live well. SuEllen Fried has said that there are some things teachers can do to help students cope with forms of violent behavior that they experience among themselves. For example, she says teachers can encourage students not to keep quiet when they find themselves victims or witnesses to violence. Students should also be taught a distinction between tattling on somebody and reporting. As one student said, according to Fried, tattling is when you're trying to get someone in trouble and reporting is when you're trying to get someone out of trouble.

Another thing teachers can do is try to break alliances that sustain patterns of violence among students. Teachers can do that among young children by rearranging students' seats on a regular basis and also by asking certain students to become special friends to students who are typically the targets of violent behavior. Fried also advised teachers to invite school staff and other adults into their classrooms for interviews so that students will learn to see cafeteria workers and bus drivers, for example, as full-fledged people with regular lives. This makes students less likely to make trouble in the cafeteria or on the bus. Fried also urged teachers to share personal stories about their own lives with their students. I think the goal is to help students see the humanity of all people, adults and young people, in

their lives, which helps people live well, or nonviolently.

Ed: Someone once said that human beings are social animals that like to constantly interact with each other. If so, then war or resorting to violence is like a disease because it essentially breaks down our ability and desire to be sociable. I believe the key is dialogue, being able to discuss the issues that we may disagree on. In schools we should teach the art of dialogue, being able to discuss even controversial issues, to disagree with each other while still having respect for each other's opinions, and, in the end, coming away having learned something from each other. Instead of a unidirectional conveyance of knowledge, classes could be more of a dialogue setting where we don't shy away from heated issues. Often, students don't get to discuss these types of issues until college or late in high school. But there are a lot of issues that we need to be able to talk about early on, even in elementary school. In discussing these issues, youth can come to understand that they can have different opinions and still get along, and through dialogue, even learn from each other.

The founder of Soka University, Daisaku Ikeda, has said that Soka University of America will be a University of human rights. I think this concept of respecting, treasuring and defending human rights is a spirit that schools can also impart to our youth through various examples such as Gandhi, Rosa Parks, and so many others. When students understand the value of human rights and what people have sacrificed to gain those rights, they can start to treasure them and understand that they should defend them—not only their own, but others' rights as well.

name or by recognition during the class period. That means seventy percent of those children are going without some sort of recognition. They might as well be invisible. You can imagine if you were a student in that seventy percent and you went through your entire day without ever being recognized by another human being, what that does to you, particularly when that happens year after year. It's a sad thing to say that while we say we value our children and cherish them, we're not willing to put our money where our mouths are.

Yvette: One thing that the Victory over Violence campaign tries to focus on is the realities facing youth, in school, in society, and at home. I mentioned earlier that youth from the SGI-USA have making presentations on nonviolence. The goal is to create dialogues and relationships with their peers. Through this, other youth see that it is okay to be nonviolent and see their peers modeling this behavior. In addition, in these interactive presentations, the students get exposure to nonviolent methods of dealing with frustrations and conflicts. In light of today's society, what can we do in our work for nonviolence to foster this kind of activism in youth, to reawaken youth to their power to change our world?

Jenny: I have heard that there is an organization in Japan that is thinking about an alternative to CNN called PNN, which stands for the Peace News Network. They would focus on airing stories from around the world about acts of nonviolence, or kindness, or conflict mediation. This would be a way of getting out the word that there are alternatives to the kinds of violent behavior that we so often hear about. I think the

media is very powerful and really does a lot to change our understanding of ourselves and our world. That may be one way to start.

Carah: Well, one of the things that was brought up earlier was the issue of money and the media. It is vital to reach out to the media and show them the financial incentive to teach peace and to convey peace. Our focus for Abolition 2000 is directed towards communities and educational campaigns that reach children and their families directly. We have found that we must also empower youth with responsibility to themselves and others. Also, it is vital that we teach peace from the moment a child is born because it is to children that we will pass the torch, empowering them to make a difference. Here at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, we believe in the power of one to make a difference. The Foundation has prepared a "Student's Guide to Achieve a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World." Youth are encouraged to educate themselves and others about nuclear weapons and the human suffering and environmental degradation that have been the legacy of the Nuclear Age. Students are also encouraged to share the information they learn with their peers and family. Abolition 2000 also has an International Petition, with more than 13.5 million signatures to date that students can circulate on their campuses. We invite students to be creative and initiate their own form of participation, perhaps by starting an organization on their campus.

Yvette: What are some of the programs that you present to the media that make nonviolence attractive?

Carah: One of the things that I have

seen done in the past is alternative cartoons. Children have contact with TV before they have contact with other children, and that's their first impression of life. I believe that children today experience a numbing of the consciousness at a very young age. Certainly the media can be used to present less violent cartoons at the earliest stage of childhood as one alternative. We need to support this kind of media and we need to show that peace is profitable. Also, the media feeds off of consumerism. Youth must be given the power to understand the effects of buying into this type of thinking.

Raj: I believe that we cannot understand the concept of war and violence in a vacuum. Violence always has a context. That context is a political issue, or social injustice, or inequality, such as class, gender, race, and so forth. I think it is important to create awareness of the issues of class, race and gender, and examine how these injustices came about and their impact on society. This type of contextual teaching of nonviolence is one of the things that really interested me during the SGI-USA's Grand Youth Culture Festival. The festival had a holistic approach. It documented nonviolent activism in a historical context, using history and illustrating the struggle for equality and nonviolence in the context of race, class and gender. I think those are the kind of models that we should provide enabling youth to understand the issues that exist between justice and peace versus violence and war. If we could inspire youth to understand those notions, then passionate activism will naturally follow. We cannot do activism for its own sake. It has to evolve from some sort of a passion for an important issue.



JERRY W. MYERS/CORBIS

To be responsible adults and good stewards of our children, we need to start modeling the behaviors that we want to see them carry forth. If the kids don't see it done they're not going to know how to do it. In today's society, youth spend a lot of time in school, and yet there are very few schools that emphasize nonviolent activism or teach youth to live a nonviolent lifestyle.

Carah: Raj has brought up a good point. We need not only to teach children but also to learn from them. We need to view the issue from their perspective and find out what works for them. One of the things would be to find out what interests them and make peace exciting from their point of view. Keeping up with current technologies would be one way to approach this. Children are very smart; they're very perceptive about new technologies, especially with the Internet. Children spend quite a few hours a day on the computer, and so we must make nonviolence attractive in the media that appeals to youth. As a way of empowering youth, they must also be allowed to come up with their own projects. Many children are aware of the issues, they know what's going on in the world

around them, and we must let them think for themselves and offer suggestions to us, rather than us telling children what they should do.

Ed: That's a very good point. When we who are older come to youth, they can often sense that there's an agenda on our part. It's important for us to be role models and inspire others through our own action, which I think all of us are trying to do. Oftentimes, even the language we use is unappealing to youth. We have to let youth come up with their own language. You know, "activism," "peacemaker," sometimes these things just don't speak to this generation. Each generation has its own issues that they're dealing with, and we can't force youth to follow a path that we're setting. I think what Raj

mentioned is absolutely important; we should educate them about issues, then allow them to give expression to that issue in their own unique way.

Recently Daisaku Ikeda met with the president of Queens College of the City University of New York, Allen Lee Sessoms. They talked about the issue of youth and the malaise of the spirit of youth. President Sessoms mentioned that the youth of his generation had the Vietnam War, corrupt authority like the Nixon administration, and clear abuses of civil rights that they all rallied around to change. But he feels that today one of the difficulties is that the issues confronting youth do not provide a clear "enemy" to challenge. Issues such as class, race and gender are difficult for youth to get a



DAN LAMONT/CORBIS

Vivian Pauley is the author of *You Can't Say You Can't Play*. She wanted kindergarten students to be inclusive and tried to help them focus on this one rule, "You Can't Say You Can't Play." In this way everyone could play without the exclusion of anyone.

While walking through a housing project, he saw a young boy standing in front of the project. He had a conversation with this eight-year-old boy and began talking about Buddhism. The little boy began asking the following questions about Buddhism, "If I chant, can I kill somebody?" "If I chant, can I get crack cocaine?" and "If I chant, can I have sex?" My friend was shocked. He wanted to do something to help this boy and

handle on. Maybe what we can do is to bring these issues to youth, help educate them about these issues and be moderators of dialogues, where they can start to discuss among themselves and develop their own perspectives and courses of action to make a difference. We need to continue to inspire them and help them understand that they are the ones who are going to change this.

Yvette: In preparing for this dialogue I was reading a book called *Subverting Hatred*, published by the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. This book suggests that religions have been used to separate people and create wars while most of their teachings have a peaceful message and seek to bring people together. What role does religion and/or philosophy play in fostering either violence or peace?

Janet: I think we can clearly point to

the fact that more lives have been lost in the name of religion than for any other cause. This makes us ponder exactly what religion is asking us to do. I think it's a double message in terms of people being asked to take up the sword against a supposed enemy in the name of religion. But the message that also resonates is that if you look, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, at the Ten Commandments, you can find those same threads throughout every major religion. That is what we tend to want people to subscribe to and to practice in their daily lives. However, it seems to be very difficult to do.

Hiro: I think one of the roles of religion is to be engaged in social issues for the betterment of society. I would like to share the experience that a friend of mine had recently. It tells you how one individual can help change society. My friend is an SGI-USA member in New York.

help change this situation. He shared this experience with his friends and gained their support. Then he decided to hold a Victory over Violence meeting within the housing project. It turned out that eighty to 100 people participated and studied together the importance of non-violence. So it occurred to me from this example that peace is not something that can be achieved by one person, but yet it has to start with one person's determination. We must not turn away from the challenges youth present. We must educate and positively redirect them.

Raj: I come from a country where religion plays a major role in violence. One of the interesting things Gandhi said about religion is that "so long as we have proselytization, there will be no peace in the world." I think religious ideas have been a major cause of intolerance and violence. However, religion also has a history

of contributing to nonviolence and peace in society. When it comes to philosophy, we have heard from the Greek philosophers, such as Heraclitus, that war is useful to stir up society and remove the bad elements. Hegel said that war is inevitable. For Hegel, war was an ethical movement that allowed society to progress from one historical stage to another. Karl Marx said that violence is the midwife of social change or revolution. So we have these big-name philosophers preaching about war. We also have thinkers like Clausewitz teaching that war is an important extension of politics. I think that we need to teach youth about alternative philosophies, like Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others. Of course, both religion and philosophy can be used or abused for many reasons. We need to find the usefulness and goodness in religion and philosophy in order to promote nonviolence and peace.

Ed: We have seen in the course of history many atrocities committed in the name of religion. We have also seen some of the most peaceful people emerge because of the philosophy they practice. It really becomes a kind of compass for a person's life. Both religion and philosophy lead a person in a certain direction. It has been said that religion is about the sacred, and what people hold sacred, and so when religion teaches value for life and value for individuals, it is very powerful.

Over the years, we have seen that religion has been a major force to inspire people to live beyond just providing for themselves, but also to care for others. This is a very positive aspect of religion. But of course, when religion teaches people to look down on others, then we can see

detrimental results. So, clearly what we need is to have people understand the positive aspect of religion, its influence to inspire people to care for one another, and emphasize this part. Daisaku Ikeda said, "Education is the religion of the 21st Century." When I first heard these words I thought long and hard about their meaning. I really feel that religion has the power to inspire others to help create a better society. I think, similarly, education has the power to inspire people to tap their true potential to build a better society. So I think that's the positive aspect of religion that we need to emphasize and that people should embrace—that sacred part where we come to treasure all life.

Yvette: As we come to the close of our dialogue, please share with us what you think are the most important actions we can take to foster nonviolence in youth.

Janet: I think the bottom line is early intervention and creating a sense of community. Creating a place where everyone can belong is critically important, and more important than that is the behaviors that we model. The behaviors we model are the behaviors that we're going to get back from youth.

Carah: One of the key elements we use to foster youth activism is listening to children and really trying to understand where they're coming from, and then taking it to the further step of asking them to help us in our work and empowering them to do so. In addition to reaching out to schools through our Peace Education Project, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation also invites youth to come participate in activities spon-

sored by the Foundation. We also offer volunteer and internship programs for youth in our offices, working on the website, counting petitions and individual projects that are tailored to youth's specific interests.

Hiro: I think that violence is a common challenge for anyone, regardless of where they live, and I think that youth and children, and women too, are the most vulnerable to it. Since this year the United Nations is celebrating the International Year of a Culture of Peace, and the decade that will follow that, we would like to create activities which will promote and support this idea of peace and nonviolence for the 21st Century.

Jenny: I would like to affirm something that Janet said about the importance of helping children feel a sense of belonging by establishing communities for them to join. At the same time it is important that while creating communities we do not encourage children to see those who belong to other communities, or who don't belong to any communities, as alien. I also think it is important to help youth feel the urgency of the need for nonviolence in both proactive and reactive forms. Proactive forms of nonviolence have to do with living nonviolently, building constructive relationships, and speaking in ways that do not foster violent behavior. We engage in reactive nonviolence when, instead of tolerating injustices evident in our surroundings, we combat them directly yet without resorting to violence.

Raj: Gandhi often said that our body represents violence because in order to sustain our body we consciously or unconsciously commit violence. But then he also said that we have

the mind or soul part of our nature, and the soul represents nonviolence. What we need is to foster the Culture of Peace, the “culture of the soul,” which Gandhi says represents nonviolence. Sunanda Gandhi, co-founder of the Gandhi Institute, recently answered a question from a youth who was struggling to forgive another child who had been violent toward her. She asked Sunanda for help in dealing with this situation. Sunanda said it is important at this point in our culture to have a positive child-adult partnership. I think such partnerships could help students who are lost in conflict or who get angry or have fear. Such a partnership would allow us to create a Culture of Peace and a nonviolent culture in our communities. I think we need to start these partnerships.

Ed: As you know, we are currently in the process of creating a new university, and in fall 2001 we will open to our first class of 100 students. We are creating an environment here at Soka University of America that brings international perspectives and has an international community. The mission of the university is to foster global citizens who will go out and have an impact in society. Our aim is that our students will lead what Tsunesaburo Makiguchi called a “contributive life.” Mr. Makiguchi, a Japanese educator whose writings laid the foundation for Soka education, stressed that for a person to be happy, it wasn’t enough to develop a strong independent self, but that we needed to take that next step and contribute to society, contribute to others and create value. Not just value for oneself but value for society. So, we’re really excited about this opportunity to open the first new

university in the 21st Century, from which a new generation of leaders for peace will emerge.

Yvette: I want to thank each of you for participating in this dialogue. As we, the SGI-USA and the Youth Peace Committee, continue with our Victory over Violence campaign, we want to emphasize a philosophy that celebrates our uniqueness as individuals while cherishing our interconnectedness as human beings. We will continue to go out to schools and communities to dialogue about nonviolence and work to find solutions to the problems youth face. Thank you. □

The participants in alphabetical order:

Jennifer Case is the Executive Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Haverford College and a Master of Arts and Doctorate in Philosophy from Washington University.

Yvette Edmond is Co-Director of the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee and is a staff member of SGI-USA. She has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and a Master of Science in Industrial and Labor Relations from Loyola University of Chicago and a Juris Doctorate from Southern Illinois University School of Law.

Edward Feasel is Professor of Economics and Dean of Students at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Yale University and a Doctorate in Economics from University of California at Berkeley.

Janet Garfinkle has her undergraduate degree in history and experience as a public high school special education teacher. Since 1993, she has been the Coordinator of Museum Education in the Museum of Tolerance’s Multimedia Learning Center. Ms. Garfinkle directs all aspects of the Multimedia Learning Center operations. She is responsible for staff training, and she develops and implements new programs such as the Holocaust survivor outreach program, the Once Upon a World Storytelling program, and the Once Upon a World Book Award.

Carah Ong is the Coordinator of Abolition 2000 and the Renewable Energy Project for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and Global Peace and Security studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Carah has worked in Mexico, Guatemala, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Rajmohan Ramanathapillai is the Program Director and Developer for the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. He is a native of Sri Lanka where he was engaged in human rights until forced to flee the country. He has a Masters of Arts in Religious Studies and a Doctorate in Philosophy from McMasters University.

Hiro Sakurai is the Deputy Representative of the Soka Gakkai International United Nations Office and a bureau member of the Committee of religious NGO’s. He has a Bachelor of Arts, and a Master of Arts from Soka University of America. He previously worked for the Consulate General of Japan’s New York office.

Teaching “Human” Revolution on the Hill

By Chelsea Honderich, Washington, D.C.

For twenty years, Paula Hendry has taught science to middle and high school students in the Baltimore, Maryland vicinity. She has also served as instructional leader (department chair) for the science, health and technology education departments at Northeast High School in Pasadena, Maryland.

Currently, she is taking a one-year leave of absence to work as a Fellow in the office of Congressman Sherwood L. Boehlert (NY, District 23) in Washington, DC. During this time, she is responding to issues of importance to the people of central New York and learning about federal policy-making. In 1999, she also began working on her Ph.D. in education at the University of Maryland.

Ms. Hendry and her husband, Rob, have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism for more than twenty-six years. They both play an active role in SGI-USA activities in the Baltimore area and throughout the Washington, D.C. region. Paula is the newly appointed Region Culture Department Education Committee leader and has also been the woman’s leader of Glen Burnie District. In addition, she spearheaded the education subcommittee for the SGI-sponsored Linus Pauling Exhibition, which is currently showing in Washington, D.C. Through the efforts of this committee, many exciting activities have been held to educate people about the life and contributions of Linus Pauling. Rob, who is a photographer for the Anne Arundel Community College in Annapolis, Maryland, is currently the Baltimore Area Vice Men’s leader.



Paula Hendry

Everyone knows that education is key to the future of our nation and humanity as a whole. Most are aware, too, of the need to improve the quality of American education to ensure that our youth are prepared for success in the 21st Century. In practice, however, politicians often assign many other issues a higher priority than the proper education of our children; the result is a glacial pace for the implementation of positive changes in education. The brunt of the battle is left to a more grass-roots effort led by some very strong individuals with a passion for delivering quality education despite dwindling budgets and a bureaucratic policy structure.

Paula Hendry is one of those rare individuals who not only recognize this important problem, but are working actively for a solution. As a science teacher of twenty years, she says, “I love to learn, I love science and I care about kids. I feel very fortunate to be paid to do something that I can put my life into.” She often recalls SGI President Ikeda’s guidance, that it is the responsibility of adults to make sure that children create many wonderful memories. She sees schools as key venues for creating such character-forming memories.

Reflecting on her decision to become a teacher, Paula says, “The key thing I have gained from my Buddhist practice is the confidence that I can actually make a difference.” After she started practicing and began looking at her future, Paula knew she wanted a job that would require that she test her limits and expand her capacity. She wanted something that would challenge her to

achieve the inner-transformation her Buddhist friends called “human revolution.” She decided to become a science teacher. She was thoroughly aware that teenage students can be very challenging and that teaching requires lots of energy, creativity, and patience. In addition, she struggled with a lack of self-confidence. She had always listened to her five older brothers and sisters, and all of them discouraged her from going into education, expecting her instead to choose a higher-paying career. It was her Buddhist faith that enabled her to have just one thread of confidence that her own dreams and desires were the best guide for her.

For most of the last twenty years, Paula has waged a valiant daily struggle, waking up early, usually at 3:45 a.m., to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo at least one hour before starting to teach at 7:15. Her aim in doing so was always to interact with her students based on a high life-condition. Although she insists she is not artistically or musically talented, as a science teacher she has been able to develop her creativity by striving to make science fun and interesting for her students. She often felt that she could not relate easily to young people, but she wanted to give her students great memories.

Paula says, “As teachers, we often deal with difficult people—unhappy students who don’t want to be in school or their frustrated parents. But when you are intent on respecting each person and realize that you are going to grow from the encounter, you gain the wisdom, courage and compassion to develop relationships and to change situations for the better.” This, she says, is the main lesson she learned from the speech SGI President Ikeda delivered at Columbia University Teachers College in New York City on June 13, 1996, entitled “Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship.” In this speech, he said, “Buddhism teaches that both good and evil are potentialities that exist in all people. Compassion consists of the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in any person, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others” (August, 1996, *Seikyo Times*, p. 10)

That fall of 1996, she had an early-morning class that was filled with tired and complaining students. After studying this speech, Paula realized something. She explains: “When my students would say ‘I’m cold,’ or ‘I’m tired,’ they were not interested in learning how to name ionic compounds or balance equations. Their

reality was the cold or how upset they were at some argument they had with their parents or their boyfriend. If I could even acknowledge their physical or emotional needs, they would understand that I respected them. I began to really listen to them with my heart and I encouraged them to help each other. I began to feel that each student was so important, even those who were not academically oriented. We developed a very close feeling and we had such a wonderful semester together. At the same time, another class was very difficult and made me constantly challenge my tendency to be swayed by people.” While struggling to develop compassion for all of her students, Paula says she has no choice but to improve her own skills and capacity—to do human revolution.

After teaching science for thirteen years, Paula took on greater responsibility at Northeast High School and began serving as instructional leader (department chair) for the science department and two other small departments. At the same time, she continued to teach chemistry—her favorite subject—to tenth through twelfth grade students. The new position required her to help hire, train and evaluate teachers as well as to contribute to the governance of the school. When offered this position, Paula recalls, “I felt a total lack of confidence. When I would even think about becoming the department chair, I would double over with anxiety. The other people in the department were all men, they were almost all older than me and they had all been in the department longer than me.” Again, Paula earnestly chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and sought advice from her SGI leaders. She read President Ikeda’s guidance from his 1990 trip to the United States stating that a leader should be a servant of the people. She determined to take on the position with the spirit to truly appreciate each person in the department, to fully support them and to help bring out their strengths.

After serving in this position for five-and-a-half years, Paula became aware of an opportunity to learn more about education policy-making from an even broader perspective. She heard about a Fellowship program on Capitol Hill and wanted to apply, but the application process was long and tedious. Her lack of confidence resurfaced, and she became discouraged when she was halfway done. A culture department leader who had recently gone through a similar experience encouraged her that she was fully capable, saying, “You have to apply!” Inspired by her leader’s confidence, Paula refreshed her determination and finished the application. She ultimately was chosen as one of

twenty-five applicants to be interviewed.

She recalls with a sense of relief, “When I went to interview, I sat before a panel of eight people. It was very intimidating. However, because of my faith, I was able to speak from my heart about the inequalities in our schools, particularly the lack of educational opportunities in America’s large cities.” Despite this, she felt very discouraged after the interview as many of the other candidates for the fellowship had completed their Ph.D.’s, received book contracts or even climbed Mount Everest. Paula summoned up her determination in front of the Gohonzon. She recalls, “My deepest prayer was that if I can bring President Ikeda’s spirit to Capitol Hill, if I can bring the spirit of Buddhist humanism to the Hill, then I really want this fellowship.” In July 1999, she became one of four recipients, out of 133 applicants, to receive an Albert Einstein Fellowship to work on Capitol Hill.

Paula says that she now sees the value of taking herself out of her comfort zone and putting herself into a new and challenging environment. Through this experience, she has been able to see more clearly the kinds of changes she needs to make in her life to become a broad-minded, capable person. Although she realizes that the kind of change that can be made on the Hill in one year is incremental, she has learned a tremendous amount about education policy and the workings of the federal government.

As a Fellow, she has visited schools within her congressional district and met with school superintendents to talk about their programs and their relationship to the federal government. These visits have afforded her a completely different point of view about schools and how they operate and the impact of government policy on education. In addition, Paula writes letters to constituents in the congressional district, trying to respond to each person with clear and complete information.

For example, one of the school districts in the congressional district has the largest concentration of Bosnian refugees in the country. The federal government allocated money for job-training and housing assistance for Bosnian adults, but they did not put aside any money

for their children’s educational needs. The urban schools absorbed hundreds of Bosnian students who had been traumatized by the war and spoke no English. Most urban school systems struggle even without the additional burden of so many refugees. After visiting this district, Paula was determined to pray and find additional money for these students. “Strangely, when I returned to the office I carefully read a publication that I normally discarded without looking at. I found a large grant program that the district was eligible for just two weeks prior to the application deadline. In March, we’ll know if they received this grant. Through listening to the school superintendents and making lots of follow-up calls, I also found several hundred thousand dollars that many of the small districts were eligible to receive, but hadn’t applied for because of a misunderstanding.”

Paula attributes the courage that allowed her to start a career in teaching to her Buddhist practice. Her practice continued to help her push herself beyond the role of an instructor to one of managing a whole department. And she has grown from there, becoming involved in the process of establishing education policy in our nation’s capital. Now Paula is also bringing her life experience back to the SGI and contributing to its efforts to create awareness and dialogue in the community about peace through the SGI-USA sponsored Linus Pauling Exhibit. Because she experienced a lot of death in her family—her parents both passed away before she was fifteen—Paula says she became a teacher because she can feel some of the deep pain that children experience when they are abandoned, mistreated or neglected. “Because of my practice, I truly feel that I have truly been able to change poison into medicine. I have changed from a negative, miserable person into someone who can contribute to society. Because of the encouragement and support of President Ikeda and the SGI members, I have been able to respond to my parents’ expectations and hopes for me. I have replaced the devastating sense of loss in my life with joy and hope. I want to continue to expand my capacity to care for others and to create a truly humanistic environment.” □

“Buddhism teaches that both good and evil are potentialities that exist in all people. Compassion consists of the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in any person, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others.”

DIALOGUE

ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

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

47

**Cultural Activities Based on the Mystic Law Are
“Wonderful Sounds”**

This is the forty-seventh 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 December 1998 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

This installment examines the function of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, a being of magnificent light and sound who appears in the “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” (twenty-fourth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Participants this time discuss the significance of cultural activities based on Buddhism, introducing the brilliant musical culture that has historically developed around Buddhism and the inspiring dramas of the Soka Gakkai’s fife-and-drum corps.

DAISAKU IKEDA: I recently [November 8, 1998] saw the exhibition “The Lotus Sutra and Its World: Buddhist Manuscripts of the Great Silk Road.” The texts themselves seemed to radiate joy and light. They seemed to smile as though they were truly happy. There were Sanskrit texts [of the Lotus Sutra] dating back twelve or thirteen hundred years.

KATSUJI SAITO: The highlight of the exhibition was a text known as the Petrovsky manuscript. Dating from the 7th or 8th century, it was excavated at Khotan in western China and named after the Russian consul general of Kashgal, a major link along the ancient trade route known as the Silk Road.

TAKANORI ENDO: I, too, was impressed by the exhibition.

IKEDA: Dr. Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Oriental Studies related that the Petrovsky manuscript had been copied in Khotan in memory of the deceased relative of a person whose name appears at the end of the text. The manuscript is overflowing with prayers for “good circumstances in future existences” (LS5, 99).

Words are words, but they are also something more. They are imbued with spirit, with feeling.

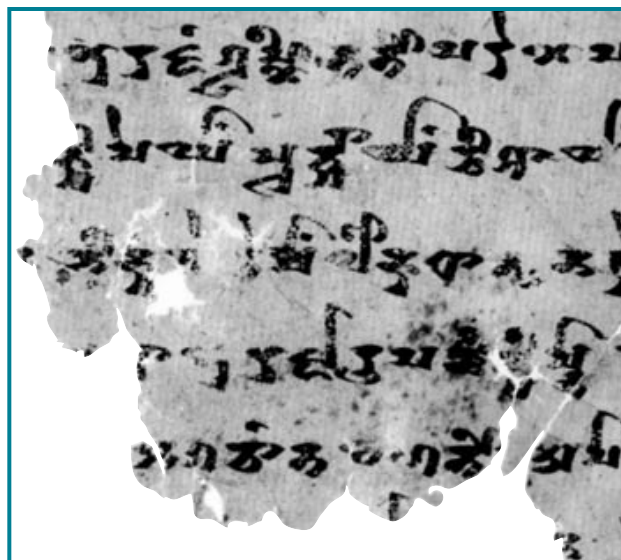
Nichiren Daishonin says, “Words are forms that manifest the minds of all living beings” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 380).

HARUO SUDA: Words are “physical phenomena” that express “spiritual phenomena” invisible to the eye. Whether or not we can perceive this depends on the depth of our awareness.

IKEDA: That’s all the more true in the case of the Lotus Sutra. The words of the Lotus Sutra are expressions that capture the rhythm of the great life force that is swirling and pulsing at the very marrow of the universe. When I commented on this, Dr. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya replied that coming into contact with the sutra manuscripts energized her.

Grasping the Heart of the People

IKEDA: Dr. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya is an outstanding scholar who has spent more than forty years painstakingly studying ancient texts, with a particular focus on the Lotus Sutra. Her husband, a scholar of linguistics



A fragment of the Sanskrit Lotus Sutra found in China nearly a century ago from *Sanskrit Lotus Sutra Fragments from the Lushun Museum Collection*.

who had had a promising future, died at the young age of twenty-eight. After his death, Dr. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya single-mindedly pursued her research while raising their son, who grew up splendidly and has himself earned a doctorate in chemistry. Her victory in life calls to mind the Daishonin’s words, “Winter always turns to spring” (WND, 536).

When we met this time, I was glad to find her in excellent spirits. I remarked to her: “The Lotus Sutra talks about a state of life in which one never ages and never dies. A life where one becomes increasingly youthful while growing older is a life that accords with the Lotus Sutra.”

Smiling brightly, she responded, “It would be nice if we could all come to understand this state free of aging and death through the power of the Buddha.”

I replied: “That is true world peace. The Lotus Sutra itself is a great wave of peace for humankind.”

The cellist Pablo Casals (1876–1973) said: “Work and interest in worthwhile things are the best medicine for age. Each day I am reborn. Each day I begin again.”¹

Dr. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, Dr. Yuri Petrosyan (vice chairperson of the St. Petersburg Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and Dr. Evgenij Kychanov (director of the Institute of East Asian Studies of the same academy), who came to Japan to attend the exhibition’s opening, have dedicated themselves in earnest to the study of culture for forty years — no, for nearly fifty years — without any concern for fame or

wealth. And in the process they have overcome indescribable hardships. What noble lives!

It was thanks to their efforts that this remarkable exhibition could be realized.

ENDO: This was the first public showing of many of these items abroad. Even in Russia, it would be very rare to have the opportunity to view so many cultural treasures all together in one exhibition.

The exhibition, which was cosponsored by the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, was the first public showing anywhere in the world of forty-seven extremely valuable hand-written copies and wood-block prints from the collection of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Study in St. Petersburg. President Ikeda founded the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in 1962 as a center for academic philosophical research.

SAITO: Specialists in the field were excited. The exhibition afforded them the opportunity to view in person items that previously they could only see in photographs.

Dr. Charles Le Blanc, former director of the Center of East Asian Studies at the University of Montreal, said that the opportunity to view for the first time so many translations of the Lotus Sutra was memorable. And he remarked that the fact that a Buddhist scripture had been translated into so many languages attests to the power of Buddhism to appeal to many different peoples.

IKEDA: The ancient Lotus Sutra is known to have versions in seven different languages. The exhibition included texts in five of them.

SUDA: These were Sanskrit, Old Uighur, Xixia (Tangut), Khotan Saka and Chinese.

ENDO: Dr. Kychanov, who is a specialist in Saka literature, explained that the Lotus Sutra was the first Buddhist text to be translated into Saka, a language that was formulated in the 11th century.

IKEDA: This shows how the Lotus Sutra has captured people's hearts. While there are of course a number of reasons for this, put simply, it is because the Lotus Sutra is so alive. It gives hope to all people without discrimination. It exudes the warmth and brightness of the sun.

Another reason is that it is written in such beautiful language. It is a work of art filled with the exquisiteness of a blossoming lotus flower emitting a lovely fragrance. It radiates joy that wins people's hearts. That is why people are naturally drawn to it.



Cellist Pablo Casals (1876–1973) said: “Work and interest in worthwhile things are the best medicine for age. Each day I am reborn. Each day I begin again.”

Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound Is Larger Than the Earth

If the form of a voice-hearer is what is needed to bring salvation, he [Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound] manifests himself in the form of a voice-hearer and proceeds to preach the Law. If the form of a *pratyekabuddha* will bring salvation, he manifests himself in the form of a *pratyekabuddha* and preaches the Law. If the form of a bodhisattva will bring salvation, he manifests a bodhisattva form and preaches the Law. If the form of a Buddha will bring salvation, he immediately manifests a Buddha form and preaches the Law. Thus he manifests himself in various different forms, depending upon what is appropriate for salvation. And if it is appropriate to enter extinction in order to bring salvation, he manifests himself as entering extinction. (LS24, 295–96)

SAITO: The Lotus Sutra indeed has an artistry capable of inspiring images and music in one's heart.

IKEDA: The “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” (twenty-fourth) chapter, which is the topic of our discussion this time, illustrates this nicely. A “wonderful sound” reverberates throughout the entire Lotus Sutra. It rings with music that stirs the spirit. In Japanese, the term “music” is written with characters that mean to “enjoy sound”; a joyous heavenly song imbues the sutra.

Not only is it full of music, but also images of light, colors and fragrance. The earth shakes; flowers rain from the sky. It is a spectacular drama of life. It is like an opera performed on the stage of the cosmos.

It has philosophy and testimonials of personal experience. There are stories of struggles against villains, and the advance of the people. There is dance. It would inspire prodigious creativity even in someone who is not an artist.

The Lotus Sutra itself is an expression of the value of beauty. What is the foundation of this beauty? What is the basis of all great cultures? The answer is none other than the dynamism of human life, the struggle to draw upon and manifest the innate rhythm of the universe expressed by the line “winter always turns to spring” (WND, 536). It is the vitality to endure all, no matter how difficult or painful, and realize victory in the end.

Doesn't this zest for life pulse at the core of all high art, even if it seems to depict suffering? I would suggest that the “Wonderful Sound” chapter has as its core this great life force of hope.

SAITO: Come to think of it, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound is described as being inordinately large in size. This had seemed peculiar to me before, but now it occurs to me that this may be intended to express the idea that he is overflowing with abundant life force, the wellspring of the universe.

ENDO: He is said to stand 42,000 *yojanas* tall. [A Sanskrit text gives his height as 4.2 million *yojanas*.] Since the Treasure Tower in the Ceremony in the Air has a height of five hundred *yojanas*, this makes Wonderful Sound eighty-four times the size of the Treasure Tower.

SUDA: One *yojana*, a unit of measurement used in ancient India, is defined as the distance that the royal army could march in a day. While there are other explanations, a *yojana* can be conservatively calculated as 7.3 kilometers (4.6 miles). This would give the Treas-

ure Tower the enormous size of one-fourth the diameter of the earth.

SAITO: And this bodhisattva is eighty-four times as tall!

ENDO: Let's see. That would be about twenty-four times the diameter of the earth!

SUDA: The arrival of such a gigantic bodhisattva would certainly cause quite a stir!

IKEDA: Indeed. This chapter, which is also called “The Coming and Going of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound,” describes Wonderful Sound making an appearance in the *saha* world and then taking his leave.

Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound is not only enormous in size, but as the sutra explains, “a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand moons put together could not surpass the perfection of his face” (LS24, 293). His body shines with a golden hue and is “adorned with immeasurable hundreds and thousands of blessings” (LS24, 291).

And the sutra says that the lands he passes on his way to the *saha* world quake and tremble, and that in all of them “seven-jeweled lotus flowers” rain down and “instruments of hundreds and thousands of heavenly musicians” resound (LS24, 293).

ENDO: It sounds like a spectacular parade.

IKEDA: He is a magnificent bodhisattva of light and sound. Just showing his splendid form to the people of the *saha* world is part of the purpose of his visit.

SAITO: A little earlier it was said that the words of the Lotus Sutra are expressions of the rhythm of the great life force that pulses at the very core of the universe. It seems to me that Wonderful Sound symbolizes the rhythm of this great life force.

IKEDA: The entire universe is playing a “wonderful sound.” The universe itself is a symphony of life, a chorale sung by all beings and phenomena—a serenade, a nocturnal, a ballad, an opera, a suite. The universe performs all “wonderful sounds.”

The foundation of this is the Mystic Law. It is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. Therefore, reciting the sutra is essentially a “wake-up song” that causes the sun to rise in our hearts, as well as a nocturnal, a “Moonlight Sonata,” that illuminates our hearts with the light of the moon.

Reciting the sutra is like reading a poem. And chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is like singing a musical masterpiece. Our daily practice is the most cultural of activities.



JOYCE HOWARD

Not only is the Lotus Sutra full of music, but it also has images of light, colors and fragrance. The earth shakes; flowers rain from the skies. It is a wonderful show, a drama of life. It is like an opera being performed on the stage of the cosmos.

Culture Is an Expression of People's State of Life

SUDA: Why does Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound come to the *saha* world? Let's consider the outline of the chapter.

Shakyamuni produces a light from between his eyebrows, which illuminates the worlds in the eastern direction. There, among the infinite number of Buddha lands, is a world called "Adorned with Pure Light" where dwells a Buddha named Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom. It is in this land that Wonderful Sound lives.

SAITO: The sutra says that he has "waited upon" and made offerings to infinite numbers of Buddhas, and attained all manner of *samadhis*, including the "Dharma flower *samadhi*" (LS24, 291).

IKEDA: The statement that he has waited upon the Buddha is very important. From our standpoint, this means steadfastly praying to the Gohonzon. On another level, it means serving and supporting the members of the SGI who are taking action for *kosen-rufu*, or simply meeting with other members. Through such actions we can increase our life force and expand our state of life.

ENDO: A *samadhi* is a state of intense concentration. There are such *samadhis* as the "*samadhi* that allows one to understand the words of all living beings" and the "wisdom-torch *samadhi*" (LS24, 291).

IKEDA: A *samadhi* is a state of life that is abundant in wisdom, a state of inner peace. It indicates a rock-solid condition that nothing can perturb. From this inner peace, the "great song of the spirit" capable of moving people's hearts surges forth.

Inner peace is not born of indolence. It is exactly the opposite. Just as a top appears unmoving when it is rotating at full speed, an immense life-state of composure is sustained by the earnestness of practicing at one's full capacity.

SUDA: When the light from Shakyamuni's forehead illuminates Wonderful Sound, Wonderful Sound says to the Buddha Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom, "World-Honored One, I must journey to the *saha* world to do obeisance, wait on, and offer alms to Shakyamuni Buddha, and to see . . . [various bodhisattvas]." The Thus Come One replies:

You must not look with contempt on that land or

come to think of it as mean and inferior. Good man, that *saha* world is uneven, high in places, low in others, and full of dirt, stones, mountains, foulness, and impurity. The Buddha is puny in stature and the numerous bodhisattvas are likewise small in form, whereas your body is forty-two thousand *yojanas* in height and mine is six million eight hundred thousand *yojanas*. . . . Therefore when you journey there, you must not look with contempt on that land or come to think of the Buddha and bodhisattvas or the land itself as mean or inferior! (LS24, 291–92)

ENDO: Certainly, nothing can compare with his enormous size!

SAITO: And the Buddha of this other world is even larger than Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound!

IKEDA: Still, he tells Wonderful Sound that he must respect the Buddha and the bodhisattvas of the *saha* world, saying in effect: “You must not look down on those who expound the Law and spread the teaching under the most difficult of circumstances! You mustn’t judge them by their appearance! You should treat them with utmost respect!” This is an important teaching.

Those who are fighting with all their might amid the harshest of conditions are most noble. Those, however, who receive benefit and earn the respect of others due to the power of Buddhism, but who then look down on and seek to distance themselves from such a place of struggle are guilty of the worst kind of arrogance.

SUDA: Through the inherent power of the Thus Come One, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, without moving an inch, causes 84,000 beautiful lotus flowers to appear on distant Eagle Peak.

ENDO: He does this through his supernatural powers. In modern terms, this would be comparable to a satellite transmission!

SUDA: The lotus flowers he causes to appear have golden stems, silver leaves, diamond stamens, and calyxes of ruby-like gems.

ENDO: And they appear next to where Shakyamuni is preaching at Eagle Peak.

IKEDA: They are “jewels of the spirit,” “jewels of good fortune and virtue” and “jewels of wisdom.” These are the jewels that exist eternally over the three existences of past, present and future.

SAITO: Yes, for no matter how many actual diamonds you accumulate in this lifetime, you cannot take them with you when you die.

SUDA: The people on Eagle Peak are stunned. Representing the assembly, Bodhisattva Manjushri asks Shakyamuni to explain the appearance of the lotus flowers.

When Shakyamuni replies that this is a sign that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound is going to pay them a visit, Manjushri expresses the wish to meet Wonderful Sound.

SAITO: In other words, he arouses a seeking spirit, longing to meet and learn from him.

SUDA: Then, with the assent of Many Treasures Thus Come One, who says, “Come, good man,” Wonderful Sound appears aboard a “dais made of seven treasures” (LS24, 293) accompanied by 84,000 bodhisattvas.

ENDO: This image reminds me of a brilliantly shining space ship.

SUDA: The scene of his arrival is just as we discussed earlier.

IKEDA: The sight would have caused everyone to gasp in amazement.

Through his august form and with his music, Wonderful Sound lets all present know of the incredible benefit of the Lotus Sutra. He expresses the invisible state of life he has attained in such a way that anyone can understand, in both a visible and an audible form.

It comes down to expression; unless we express ourselves clearly, others will not understand. Take love as but one example. If you keep your feelings to yourself, the other person will never know! It is only by conveying to others in some way the state of life we acquire through faith that they will receive our light.

Culture is a good example of this. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound represents cultural activity. I think we can say that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound’s actions symbolize the SGI’s movement for peace, culture and education. We are moving forward, giving rise to a brilliant heavenly song.

SAITO: I associate “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” with those engaged in our broad-ranging SGI cultural activities, especially those of the youth division five-and-drum corps and music corps, as well as those of the Min-On Concert Association.

IKEDA: We are advancing in perfect accord with the basic principles of the Lotus Sutra. Religion is like the

earth. But without flowers or trees, the earth would be barren. Conversely, culture that is not grounded in the “earth” of religion is rootless.

Using the analogy of the body, if religion is the skeleton, then culture would correspond to the muscles, skin and clothing. The value of beauty is born when the two complement and support each other.

The Best Fife-and-Drum Corps in the World

ENDO: In looking at the history of the fife-and-drum corps, it is clear that it was created by your own hands President Ikeda.

The corps was inaugurated on July 22, 1956, with a membership of just thirty-three young women. You used money out of your own pocket to present them with instruments. Shigetake Arishima, the leader of the brass band, which at that time was like an elder sibling to the corps, made every effort to round up instruments: he came up with forty fifes and ten drums. The drums were U.S. Army surplus, and were decorated with flashy red and blue lines.

Although they began practicing right away, the corps members did not even know the proper way to hold the drumsticks, nor had any of them ever before laid hands on a fife. After blowing on them for five minutes straight, they all became dizzy. But you took every opportunity to encourage them, urging them to become the foremost fife-and-drum corps in the world.

They performed for the first time at a young women’s division leaders meeting on September 3, 1956 [held at the Nakano Public Hall in Tokyo]. Although they had practiced daily, on the day of their debut nearly half the members could not produce any sound on their instruments. So they lined up with those who could play in front and those who could not in back. The program for the performance consisted of three popular songs. Because it was their first performance, their legs were quivering, their fingers would not move properly, and they could only produce the faintest of notes. The drums were placed flat on the stage floor, and they struck them from a kneeling posture.

At this peculiar scene, hushed giggles could be heard in the hall. But the earnestness of the corps members finally brought tears to people’s eyes. As one participant described it, by the time the performance



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“Bodhisattva Wonderful Sounds” is like the SGI with its broad-ranging cultural activities, especially those of the youth division fife-and-drum corps and brass band, as well as with the activities of the Min-On Concert Association.

was drawing to a close, the performers and the audience had become one.

Twenty days later, the corps performed at the third youth festival. Standing to the left side of the main reviewing stand, they performed on a make-shift stage of thin straw mats. Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda went to them and asked gently, “Are we going to hear some music today?” At these words, everyone gathered around him joyfully.

They were wearing cream-colored shirts with black ribbons and black skirts. On their feet they wore gym shoes they had coated with white chalk or toothpowder.



WTPRESS

Religion is like the earth. But without flowers or trees, the earth would be barren. Conversely, culture that is not grounded in the “earth” of religion is rootless.

This was their most festive attire. Someone told me that it had never even occurred to them to wear white socks, so meager were their means.

Afterwards, you gave each of the members a pair of white socks as a present. I understand that all were moved to tears by this gesture.

IKEDA: This brings back many fond memories. The fife-and-drum corps has now truly become the foremost body of its kind in the world. These “emissaries of peace” are today active across the globe.

Those who hear them perform are invariably moved, exclaiming “How bright!” and “How wonderful!” Since they are bringing people joy, they are bodhisattvas. They are expanding a spirit of friendship. They are creating waves of peace.

Music knows no boundaries. It directly bridges the gap between people’s hearts. By causing the innate rhythm of the universe to reverberate through a single fife or a single drum, the corps is causing a prayer for peace to ring out in the depths of the hearts of humankind.

SAITO: The heart is key. It’s about heart-to-heart communication.

IKEDA: Beethoven was fond of the expression “from heart to heart.” If I remember correctly, in the margin of the score for his resplendent “Mass in C Major,” he jotted down the words, “It [music] comes out of my heart. My wish is that it reaches the hearts of others.” It is culture and fundamentally religion that nourish the heart.

SUDA: One person who was moved by the spirit of the fife-and-drum corps was the late jazz great Art Blakey. On January 18, 1965, he performed in Tokyo. Even after the curtain came down following an intense two-hour concert, the audience remained electrified and showed no sign of leaving.

At that moment, several members of the fife-and-drum corps who were in the audience darted backstage with their drums in hand. In halting English, they explained that they were members of a fife-and-drum corps and entreated him to give them a lesson. So impressed was he by their spirit, that he began instructing them right then and there.

IKEDA: It’s hard to imagine that they did such a thing!

SUDA: While Mr. Blakey must have been quite surprised, he promised to give them a lesson on another day as well, perhaps because he was struck by their sincerity.

On January 26, a number of members of the brass band and fife-and-drum corps met with Mr. Blakey, who gave them a basic lesson in drumming rhythm. The youth played in earnest, prompting the jazz artist to take off his jacket, pick up some sticks and start drumming away ferociously. He told them, “Your playing shouldn’t be stiff and formal. You must play from your heart!”

So saying, without even wiping the sweat from his brow, he continued to move to the rhythm and beat the cymbals. He seemed the embodiment of a tremendous force.

This practice session, in which teacher and students became one, went on for about an hour. Even after they had gone beyond the time that he had promised for the lesson, he would not stop. Finally, dripping with sweat and tears, he told them, “I feel like I have glimpsed the true image of Japan. Japan is my home.” Then, going over to the edge of the stage, he tearfully embraced the manager.

Many capable people emerged from the corps through contact with such leading figures in the world of music and other fields.

“Wonderful Sound” — The Voice of Courage

IKEDA: We cannot become first-rate individuals without coming into contact with exemplary people ourselves. The point is not to start off familiarizing oneself with the amateurs of any given field, whether it be art, philosophy, religion or even life in general, but to aim straight for the top. By so doing, we begin to see clearly what is second and third-rate. If we only acquaint ourselves with mediocrity, we will not know what is truly great.

In any case, the fife-and-drum corps, brass band and chorus groups of the SGI have all developed splendidly. I am particularly proud to witness the growth of all those capable people who accomplished their human revolution through such musical training.

There are many artists about whom people say, “Their art is incredible, but their life is a failure.” Some even romanticize such tragedy. But I think that if an artist — as the “entity” of the art that he or she creates —

becomes spoiled and decadent, then that person’s art will also lack true brilliance.

While there are various explanations of the meaning of “wonderful sound,” I recall that one of these is to “stutter.”

SAITO: Yes. Wonderful sound is a translation of the Sanskrit *gadgada-svara*, which means to stammer, indicating a person whose voice is “hard on the ear.”

IKEDA: How did this come to mean a person of “wonderful sound”? Since there is no indication of this in the sutra, we can only use our imaginations. But I think it may have to do with the drama of one person’s human revolution.

When Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound appears in the

saha world, the scene is so fantastic that a bodhisattva named Flower Virtue asks, “what good roots has he planted, what benefits has he cultivated, that he possesses these supernatural powers?” (LS24, 294).

ENDO: That’s right. Shakyamuni then reveals details of Wonderful Sound’s previous existences. In the past, the Buddha explains, he made an offering to a Buddha called Cloud Thunder Sound King of a hundred thousand types of musical instruments and of 84,000 alms bowls made of the seven treasures. As a result, he was born as Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound and endowed with various supernatural powers and all manner of good fortune and benefit.

IKEDA: Nichiren Daishonin says that the number 84,000 stands for the “84,000 dust-like cares” (GZ, 775), meaning all manner of hardships and delusions. Life is an endless succession of struggles, struggles as innumerable as particles of dust. But when we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, he teaches, these toils all become the “84,000 teachings.”

Every difficulty we encounter becomes a lesson for our life, wisdom and the ability to help and guide others. Interpreted from the stand-

point of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound toiled repeatedly to overcome many sufferings, chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and carried out his human revolution. This is comparable to making an offering to the Buddha of “eighty-four thousand alms bowls made of the seven treasures.” We are no different. No matter how tough things may get, we chant and continue moving forward without giving up.

Though invisible to the eye, there are paths in the universe and currents in life. If we dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu, we will absolutely enter the current of a supreme life. We will enter the path of the “river of true happiness,” the “river of treasures.” Those who exert themselves for kosen-rufu enter the golden cur-



Bethmann/CORBIS

One person who has been moved by the spirit of the fife-and-drum corps is the late jazz great Art Blakey. On January 18, 1965, he performed in Tokyo, several members of the fife-and-drum corps who were in the audience darted backstage with their drums in hand. In halting English, they explained that they were members of a fife-and-drum corps and entreated him to give them a lesson. So impressed was he by their spirit, that he began instructing them right then and there.

rent of the Mystic Law. By working wholeheartedly on the supreme path of kosen-rufu, we ourselves, along with our family and relatives, will all become happy without fail.

Isn't it the case that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, while battling a painful destiny, in the end sings a song of victory? As he struggles and suffers, he warmly encourages those around him, singing a courageous tune. This is the image that comes to mind. A sincere voice encouraging a friend, words of conviction that move a person's heart, cries of justice to refute evil—these are truly “wonderful sounds.”

King Ashoka's “Culture Festivals”

“The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” states: Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound represents the living beings of the Ten Worlds. “Wonderful” means inscrutable and “Sound” (*on*) means the words and sounds uttered by all living beings. These are the voices of the Mystic Law, the wonderful sounds that exist eternally over the three existences of past, present and future. To take action for a person's happiness depending on the person's need is compassion; this is the work of a bodhisattva. It also says that “wonderful sound” means the wondrous voices of Nichiren and his followers chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo now in the Latter Day of the Law. (GZ, 774)

SUDA: The sutra says that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound makes musical offerings” (LS24, 294). This is a characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism.

It seems that music and dancing were prohibited by Hinayana clerical orders as obstacles to one's practice. Practitioners were not only forbidden from engaging in such activities themselves, but they were also not supposed to enjoy them.

ENDO: But when we come to Mahayana Buddhism, it's exactly the opposite.

IKEDA: The “Teacher of the Law” (tenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra includes a directive to make offerings of music to the Lotus Sutra (cf. LS10, 161). And King Ashoka of ancient India is said to have made “musical offerings.”

The third ruler of the Maurya dynasty in the third century B.C.E., Ashoka was a strong believer in Buddhism who implemented policies of welfare and peace. He ban-

ished corrupt monks, and prohibited the sacrificial offering of living things.

SAITO: This took the form of festivals that took place around stupas.

IKEDA: It's known that people would gather around stupas singing songs and playing various musical instruments. They acted out dramas, performed dances and read poetry. Merchants stood by, hawking their wares.

ENDO: Sounds like quite a party!

IKEDA: Children would sit watching acrobatics. Performances of juggling and magic brought enthusiastic applause. There were boxing, wrestling matches, and other competitions. Young women danced in brightly colored costumes, and young men sat enrapt, unable to take their eyes off them. Processions of torches filled the streets.

SAITO: What a brilliant display of culture and music!

IKEDA: It was an offering of music in praise of the Dharma. It was an offering of joy. When the people expressed their pure joy to live based on the Law with their entire being, song poured forth and their bodies sprang into action.

Those “waves of peace” spread out far and wide. Ashoka's offerings of music and dance could be thought of as the precursor to our great cultural movement.

ENDO: It's a brilliant image.

IKEDA: It's brightness and beauty. It is peace.

Peace and culture are like two sides of a coin. Without peace, there can be no culture. When culture flourishes, peace unfolds. I'm not talking about fleeting or hedonistic culture, but culture that brings out the most noble qualities in human beings; lofty culture created by people who believe in the innate goodness of humankind and strive together to approach something eternal.

Dr. Jutta Seifert (president of the European Youth Cultural Initiative for the Young Generation and former undersecretary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Sports) remarked to me that “Art is the expression of something sacred existing within us.”

SAITO: According to one source, when the Lotus Sutra was being compiled in its present form, the musical offerings of King Ashoka were common knowledge; and this is reflected in the make-up of the

“Wonderful Sound” chapter and the other chapters in the transmission section. Whether this explanation is true or not, it is clear that music is inseparable from the Lotus Sutra.

IKEDA: Come to think of it, the birthplace of the Buddhist scholar Kumarajiva (344–413) was famous for its music.

ENDO: He was born in what is known today as Kucha.

This is part of what is today China’s Sinkiang Uighur autonomous region. He was from a town in the southern foothills of the Tien-shan Mountains.

IKEDA: During the Han period, this was the largest kingdom in western China, with a population of more than eighty thousand.

It seems that Kucha music, which was noted for outstanding singing and the use of wind and string instruments, was very popular. In Chang-an, the capital of Tang China, people vied with one another to be able to hear such exotic melodies. The famous five-stringed *biwa* (Japanese balloon guitar) preserved at Shosoin³ is thought to originally derive from the Kucha lute. The music of Kucha also had a great influence on the music of Japan’s imperial court.

At the same time as it was a kingdom of music, Kucha was also a kingdom of Buddhism. When the Learned Teacher Hsuan-tsang (602–64) visited the area, he was surprised by the flourishing of Buddhism he found there.

SUDA: He was a great traveler who became the model for the “Learned Teacher” in *Journey to the West*, a sixteenth century Chinese epic by Wu Ch’eng-en.

SAITO: It is probably no coincidence that the Lotus

Sutra’s great translator was from this area.

IKEDA: Kumarajiva must have had quite an ear for music. Otherwise the text of the sutra surely would not have such exquisite rhythm.

Many different musical instruments are also mentioned in the Lotus Sutra.

ENDO: Yes. Starting with the wind instruments, there are the “horns,” “conch shells,” “pipes” and “flutes.”

IKEDA: What about stringed instruments? The balloon guitar is one that the Sutra mentions.

ENDO: Yes. In addition, there is the zither that is played with either a pick or the fingers, and the lute with many strings (cf. LS2, 40).

SAITO: There is the expression, “Like the harmony of zither and lute” (indicating conjugal harmony).

ENDO: The harp is also mentioned.

SUDA: As for percussion instruments, there are cymbals and gongs.

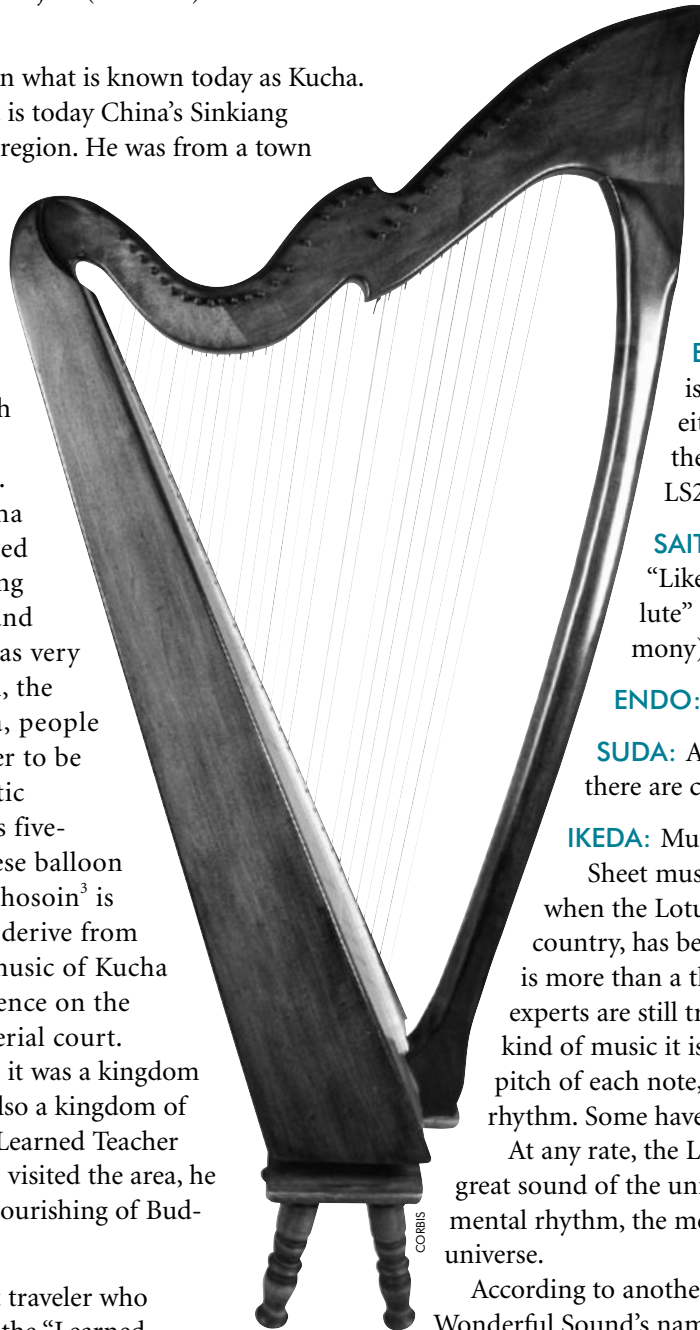
IKEDA: Music fills the Lotus Sutra.

Sheet music of Tang China, an age when the Lotus Sutra flourished in the country, has been excavated at Dunhuang. It is more than a thousand years old, and experts are still trying to determine just what kind of music it is. Not only does it indicate the pitch of each note, but it even indicates the rhythm. Some have even tried performing it.

At any rate, the Lotus Sutra encompasses the great sound of the universe. It contains the fundamental rhythm, the melody and the chords of the universe.

According to another explanation, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound’s name comes from a word meaning “thunder.” This is interesting.

SAITO: Yes. We earlier interpreted the Sanskrit term *gadgada-svara* as meaning a stuttering voice. But



there is an explanation which suggests that *gadgada* is a variant of *gargara*, which is the sound of the drum that precedes Shakra Devanam Indra (Jpn *Taishaku*) into battle.

SUDA: Since Shakra is originally the god of thunder, the sound of this drum could be thought of as the sound of thunder.

IKEDA: The term for thunder in Japanese, too, is said originally to indicate the “roar” or appearance of a god. It is the rumble of the heavens, the roar of the universe.

ENDO: I am reminded of an incident that took place in Cuba [on June 25, 1996] when you were awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Havana. I heard about this from a correspondent of the *Seikyo Shimbun* who accompanied you. On the day of the event, a rain fell, driving off the intense heat and soon turning into a heavy downpour. During the ceremony, just when you began to deliver your address, it became a thunderstorm. The sound of thunder rang through the auditorium. This made some of the Japanese present a little worried, concerned that it might interfere with your talk.

But you began your speech, remarking: “What marvelous thunder! It is the music of the heavens, the resounding drum, the resplendent symphony of the skies, congratulating the progress of humanity toward the victory of peace. And what wonderful rain! The skies are telling us that we must not allow ourselves to be defeated by trouble! We must advance courageously through the storm of adversity!”

I was told that with these words you captured the hearts of all those in attendance.

SAITO: I think that I, for one, would be hard-pressed to come up with such reassuring words on the spot!

IKEDA: The Buddha whom Wonderful Sound served in the past was called Cloud Thunder Sound King. In other words, he represents the sound of the universe, the voices of all beings.

All activities, from the movement of the planets to the motion of atoms and molecules, are governed by some kind of rhythm or “musical principles.” This is an important point. Why don’t we take it up when we discuss the “Dharani” (twenty-sixth) chapter?

It is up to us how much we can internalize this “universal music.” The sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) said that art is the reflection of nature in human



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Many different musical instruments are also mentioned in the Lotus Sutra. Starting with the wind instruments, there are the “horns,” “conch shells,” “pipes” and “flutes.” The harp also comes up.

beings. It is vital that we polish our inner mirror that reflects the natural world.

When we tune and practice the “instrument” of the self, we cause the wonderful sound of the universe to pulse in our life; we cause it to reverberate and ring out. Buddhist practice teaches us how to do this.

Historically, people have believed that musical training cultivates character. The ancient Greeks subscribed to this notion, as did the people of ancient China. Plato placed great importance on musical education. He believed that rhythm and harmony foster outstanding people. And Confucius’ emphasis on “manners and music” is also well known. He seems to have thought that balanced character could be cultivated through the study of music.

In early Buddhism, too, while there were prohibitions against singing and dancing, music was not com-

pletely out of the picture. Originally, the sutras themselves were recited in a musical fashion. And it was in this way that they first touched people's hearts. According to an early sutra, Shakyamuni described the benefits of using one's voice, saying that it prevented fatigue, improved the memory, rejuvenated one's spirits, and aided cognition.

A Movement of Wonderful Sound, Bringing Hope to Society

SAITO: I think that music has the power to infuse our lives with the harmony of the universe. It brings our lives into perfect balance.

IKEDA: Music liberates the heart. It eases the heart's stiffness.

The English word "play," in the sense of perform, also means to frolic or have fun. It implies a relaxing and liberating experience.

In Japanese, we also speak of "playing" wind and string instruments. Performing is play in the best sense of the term. Music makes our heart free.

SUDA: One of the *samadhis* that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound attained is the "*samadhi* of the sport of transcendental powers" (LS24, 291).

ENDO: It must be the aim of "music therapy" to clear the heart of obstruction.

IKEDA: Since music is soothing as well as liberating, wherever there is song, there is growth. President Toda used to say, "Wherever people have prospered throughout history, song could always be heard."

In the SGI, too, as long as we keep vigorously singing songs, our organization will continue to develop. The same is true of society. It could be said that a society in which the people hum beautiful songs has a rhythm of advance. On the other hand, the future of a society plagued by moans and cries must be bleak.

ENDO: Come to think of it—I believe this was shortly after the Great Kanto Earthquake (of 1923)—there was an author who argued that such an unprecedented natural disaster on the capital must have been somehow related to the desolation and arrogance of people's hearts.

IKEDA: That was in an essay by the Japanese writer and poet Rohan Koda (1867–1947).

When we tune and practice the "instrument" of the self, we cause the wonderful sound of the universe to pulse in our life; we cause it to reverberate and ring out. Buddhist practice teaches us how to do this.

ENDO: A song that was popular before the quake hit went, "I am the withered eulalia grass of the dried riverbed, and you, too, are the withered eulalia grass." In that essay, I recall Koda revealing that he had felt something ominous in the lines of that song.

SUDA: He must have heard it as a "melancholy sound."

IKEDA: Of course this cannot be proven empirically, nor can we apply this to every circumstance, but I think it can probably be said that culture and music and the tendency of the times mutually influence one another. As the saying goes, "Songs follow the times, and the times follow the songs."

SUDA: Are you referring to the difference between "melancholy sounds" and "wonderful sounds"?

IKEDA: "Melancholy sounds" does not refer strictly to sad tunes. I think they include any kind of melody, music or culture that causes people to have feelings of resignation. No matter how lively and spirited something may seem, music and culture that guide people toward nihilism, toward thinking, "There's nothing I can do to affect the outcome," are "melancholy sounds."

On the other hand, culture that, while perhaps unostentatious, appeals to beautiful human emotion and elevates the mind, qualifies as "wonderful sound." For it inspires trust and hope within people.

The SGI movement is a movement to bring hope to all, not only through music, but through all endeavors. In that sense, it can be described as a "wonderful sound movement." It is a movement to pluck the strings of goodness in people's hearts. Isn't this perhaps what is signified by the "thirty-four forms" of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound?

SAITO: Yes. Wonderful Sound, like Bodhisattva Medicine King and Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, has acquired the *samadhi* to manifest all physical forms. In this state of life one is able to assume any form in order to lead people to happiness.

ENDO: The sutra describes him appearing alternately as King Brahma (Bonten), Lord Shakra (Taishaku), the heavenly being Freedom, and so on. It reads:

This bodhisattva manifests himself in various different bodies and preaches this sutra for the sake of living beings in various different places. At times he appears as King Brahma, at times as the Lord Shakra, at times as the heavenly being Freedom, at times as the heavenly being Great Freedom, at times as a great general of heaven, at times as the heavenly king Vaishravana, at times as a wheel-turning sage king, at times as one of the petty kings, at times as a rich man, at times as a householder, at times as a chief minister, at times as a Brahman, at times as a monk, a nun, a layman believer, or a laywoman believer, at times as the wife of a rich man or a householder, at times as the wife of a chief minister, at times as the wife of a Brahman, at times as a young boy or a young girl, at times as a heavenly being, a dragon, a *yaksha*, *gandharva*, an *asura*, a *garuda*, a *kinmara*, a *mahoraga*, a human or a non-human being, and so preaches this sutra. The hell dwellers, hungry spirits, beasts, and the numerous others who are in difficult circumstances are thus all able to be saved. And for the sake of those who are in the women's quarters of the royal palace, he changes himself into a woman's form and preaches this sutra. (LS24, 295)



JOYCE HOWARD

SAITO: Nichiren Daishonin says, “To take action for a person’s happiness in accord with the person’s situation is compassion; this is the work of a bodhisattva” (GZ, 774).

IKEDA: Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound is completely free to adjust to the capacity of another person. This is total liberation. Buddhism is not a religion that tries to force people into a mold or to create a bunch of automatons. It emancipates the lives of those who have

been living robotically.

The thirty-four forms of Wonderful Sound are proof of the correctness of the multifaceted activities SGI members carry out in all sectors of society. While each of us may be exerting ourselves in a different area, we are all motivated by compassion and humanity. We should burn with a spirit and determination to become the foremost ally of those who are suffering! If we lack this spirit, we are not behaving like Bodhisattva Wondrous Sound.

SAITO: Dr. Alexander Yakovlev (a leading architect of

perestroika), once remarked with respect to your activities, President Ikeda: “When Dostoevsky says ‘beauty will save the world,’ by beauty he must mean humanity.”

He was referring to the importance of continuously working for society within society, always upholding a

spirit of compassion toward humankind.

IKEDA: This is what is meant by beauty, by “wonderful sound.” This is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. The approach of the SGI is correct.

SUDA: The other day, the documentary “Knight of the Rising Sun,” introducing your activities for peace, won the “Special Prize” at the Religion Today Film Festival in Bologna, Italy. Judges said they were impressed by its portrayal of religion contributing to society.

ENDO: For us as SGI members, this seems perfectly natural. But I guess that outside the SGI it strikes people as a novel concept.

SAITO: That’s because while there are many people who spout theories, there are very few who in fact take action while standing up to the pressures of life. With regard to the problem of degradation of the environment, I have heard someone lament, “Compared to the

number of people who speak out, how few are those who take any action!”

IKEDA: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, asserted that “religion must not exist for the sake of religion.” He argued that the existence of a religion had no significance if it did not create the values of beauty, gain and good. Herein lies the decisive difference between the SGI and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

President Makiguchi strongly asserted that religion must not remain confined within the world of religion, but must work to transform the present world into something of value. And he died a martyr to his beliefs. We need to change this world into a “land of beauty,” a “land of gain,” a “land of good.” And we need to create lives of beauty, gain and good. This is what it means to lead a life of value creation.

The Invisible Bridge of Cultural Exchange

SUDA: When Shakyamuni explains the thirty-four forms of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, the people listening all attain the *samadhi* enabling them to manifest all kinds of bodies.

Wonderful Sound then greets Shakyamuni and returns to his land. On the way back, the lands that he passes through quake and tremble, jeweled lotus flowers rain down, and hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of different kinds of music are played.

IKEDA: This scene concludes the “Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound” chapter. It describes his coming and going, which fills the universe with music. It is a “bridge of music” spanning the universe. Through this process, the lives of the beings at Eagle Peak open up to the vast universe. The 84,000 bodhisattvas who accompany Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound also attain the same great state of life (the *samadhi* to be able to manifest all kinds of forms).

Opening the finite self to the infinite—this is the purpose of faith. Through faith, the self embraced in the universe comes to encompass the universe. This is what happens when we perform the gongyo and daimoku of “wonderful sound.” Between the self and the universe we extend an invisible bridge. This is the function of wonderful sound. Broadly speaking, this is the power of art. This bridge of life also bridges the gaps between people.

ENDO: Dr. Petrosyan of Russia remarked that cultural exchange means building an invisible bridge between nations and people. Although other bridges (political or economic) are destroyed in a instant by war, he continued, the invisible bridge of culture will never crumble. And he said that you, President Ikeda, are the architect of such cultural bridges.

SAITO: I was very moved to hear these words. The unifying power of culture, transcending the divisive power of evil, is necessary.

Dr. Kychanov said that the world requires the “power of good.” And he expressed hope that SGI members will bring about the “victory of good.”

IKEDA: The United Nations has designated the year 2001 the “Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.” The SGI, which has consistently sought to promote intercivilizational dialogue, is truly leading the way into the 21st century.

The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China says of Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound: “With wonderful sounds, he roars in the ten directions, spreading this teaching. Therefore, he is called Wonderful Sound.”³

In Dharmaraksha’s Lotus Sutra of the Correct Law (Jpn *Sho-hokke-kyo*, a Chinese-language translation of the Lotus Sutra), the bodhisattva’s name is rendered “Wonderful Roar,” referring to the roar of the lion.

Right up to his death, President Toda maintained the spirit to fight on no matter what. His determination to expend every last ounce of energy was expressed in each word he spoke and in his appearance. Now, summoning all my thoughts into a single phrase, I would like to cry out just as he did: “Let’s fight with all our might!”

The Daishonin states:

“Even if you are not the Venerable Mahakashyapa, you should all perform a dance! Even if you are not Shariputra, you should leap up and dance! When Bodhisattva Superior Practices emerged from the earth, did he not emerge dancing?” (WND, 1119).

This is the vibrant spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

Let’s enjoy. Let’s advance cheerfully and with composure.

Let’s struggle with all our might, holding our heads high!

Footnotes:

1. *Song of the Birds: Sayings, stories and impressions of Pablo Casals*, ed. Julian Lloyd Webber (London: Robson Books, 1985), p. 117.
2. *Hokke Mongu (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra)*, vol. 10.
3. A storehouse at Todai-ji Temple in Nara, built in the 8th century to preserve national treasures.



Dr. Qian escorts SGI President Ikeda to an award ceremony at Shanghai University in May 1997.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY MEETINGS WITH LEADING WORLD FIGURES

By SGI President Daisaku Ikeda

[33] Qian Weichang — Chancellor of Shanghai University

A big country produces big people.

No one who hears the life story of Chancellor Qian Weichang of Shanghai University can fail to admire the man. Regarding such a wonderful life is like viewing an impressive work of architecture. Starting as a youth so poor that he could not afford to attend school regularly, he went on to become a physicist of world renown. When he returned from several years of study and work in Canada and the United States to devote himself to the development of his homeland, he was labeled a rightist and subsequently endured twenty-six years of insidious persecution. Only after the age of seventy was his good name finally restored, leaving him free again at last to pursue his research openly. He published one paper after another, producing original scholarship of the highest level. Today, at eighty-four, he never misses a day of either research or teaching. He travels frequently both inside and outside China, fulfilling his

duties in such crucial posts as vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and president of the China Overseas Exchanges Association.

On my visit to Shanghai in May of this year [1997] for the conferral of the title of honorary professor from the Chinese university which Dr. Qian heads, I asked him the secret of his remarkable energy. Each day during that short stay, I met with him and his wife, Madame Kong Xiangying—not only at Shanghai University, but also at the several official banquets I attended. Dr. Qian even accompanied me on a courtesy visit to the Shanghai Municipal Government Office.

“My secret to health,” he confided, “is to be without selfishness. As Confucius taught, ‘Exercise patience and forbearance. A great person is tolerant and accepting of others.’ I am an optimist. I have no self-interested desires, and I have no interest in living in a shrewd, self-serving way. I do what I believe is right.” Chancellor Qian’s wife,

Madame Kong, is a seventy-fifth-generation descendant of Confucius. She told me that both she and her husband are avid readers, and she agreed with her husband. "I have no personal ambitions, either. The more people desire, the unhappier they become. Some people in high positions forget their true mission and think only of making money. My husband and I have never done that. We live with peace of mind and have nothing on our conscience."

Both husband and wife spoke cheerfully and calmly, but their words resonated deeply—all the more so if one knew the story of their life together. The start of the persecution against Dr. Qian can be traced back to the summer of his forty-fourth year. It was eleven years since his hopeful return from abroad. He had submitted an educational reform proposal to the administration of Qinghua University, where he was then teaching. The repercussions were such that he was eventually relieved of all his official duties and prohibited from engaging in any professional activities.

"Students of the sciences," he had written, "will face many new problems and novel situations after graduation. Merely mastering the information that they are presented with in their university classes will not sufficiently equip them to solve those problems. We must, accordingly, place major emphasis on nurturing within them the ability to analyze and solve problems on their own. Their professors must not limit themselves to reading aloud from the textbooks. Unless the professors are actively engaged in progressing in their own research, the quality of education will not improve."

These words were a direct reflection of the lesson that Chancellor Qian's beloved mentor, Dr. Wu Youxun, had instilled in him. But true as these words were, they caused a great uproar at the university. One of the reasons was envy of Chancellor Qian's success. Just before he offered his proposal, he had participated in drafting Premier Zhou Enlai's "Twelve-Year Plan for the Development of the Natural Sciences in China." He also played a major role in the government's plan for automating Chinese industry, and he had been publicly praised for his efforts by Premier Zhou.

What should have been an educational issue became a political struggle. Chancellor Qian was classed a rightist—or, in the Chinese political terms of the time, a counterrevolutionary. The authorities canceled the publication of one of his books just before it was to go to press, and Dr. Qian was even forced to pay compensation to the

publisher for the financial loss incurred as a result of the cancellation! His eldest son had scored well on the university entrance examinations, but his college acceptance was revoked, robbing him of the chance of pursuing higher education. Later his eldest daughter was also refused university entrance and had to earn her living working in factories or in remote areas of the country.

After this came the Cultural Revolution, a storm that literally raged across the land, wreaking havoc and destruction on all in its path. Chancellor Qian's children were cursed as "dogs," his wife was interrogated repeatedly, and their home was searched time and time again. Chancellor Qian's head was shaved, he was forced to wear a sign around his neck branding him a criminal and he was beaten with a leather belt. He was made to perform manual labor, such as weeding, cleaning, building platforms for "criticism" sessions, sanding and straightening rusty nails and digging latrines.

Before he left the United States, people had warned him against returning to China. Though still a young man, he was one of the world's leading rocket scientists. In 1940, when he was only twenty-seven years old, he went to Canada to study on a scholarship from the Chinese government. He left his new wife and his just-born eldest son at home. Altogether, he spent six years in Canada and the United States, where he produced original and innovative work in applied mathematics that is still considered required reading in the field today.

He made great strides in rocket engineering at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology. He is considered to be one of those who built the basis for the Apollo space program. "Why return to China?" people would ask him. In the West he had the most advanced research facilities in the world at his disposal, and he worked with the best minds in his field. It was an ideal situation for a dedicated scientist. "But I had made up my mind," he relates. "I wanted to share the joys and sufferings of the Chinese people. No matter what I achieved in the West, it would be meaningless unless I could make a contribution to my own country." Personal fame and ambition meant nothing to him.

Why had he chosen to study science, after all? To save his homeland.

Shortly after he entered Qinghua University, the Manchurian Incident took place (in September 1931). Enraged at the arrogance of the invading Japanese, the young Dr. Qian changed his course from Humanities to Science, because he believed his country's most urgent requirement was scientific development. He was taking a



BOJAN BRECELJ/CORBIS

Shanghai at night. When he was 27, Chancellor of Shanghai University Qian Weichang studied in Canada and the United States. When asked why he returned to China, he said, "I wanted to share the joys and sufferings of the Chinese people. No matter what I achieved in the West, it would be meaningless unless I could make a contribution to my own country."

great risk changing his field of specialization mid-course, but his mentor Dr. Wu, no doubt moved by the young man's altruistic motivation, agreed to let him do so on the condition that he obtain a grade of more than seventy percent in each of his science subjects by the following year.

A person with such dedication to his country could never be satisfied with fame and fortune abroad. After several years in America, the passionate young Dr. Qian received a telegram announcing China's victory in the war against the Japanese. He knew it was the moment to return. His beleaguered homeland, torn apart by war, needed to be rebuilt. Now was the time for him to go back and make his contribution!

"It was just at that time," he remarked, "that the United States government began to involve itself in rocket engineering, with the aim of adapting the research for military purposes, and I was personally very much against this move. I have worked together with your friend Linus Pauling, who also opposed military use of our research. He was subjected to fierce per-

secution as a result, as was I."

On his return to China, Dr. Qian cried out in his heart: "I am back! I have given up everything. But material comfort is a fleeting and impermanent thing. My only wish is to offer my knowledge to my homeland and to benefit the Chinese people. This is where I belong—in this great land of China!"

But, as he was to learn to his despair, his homeland was eventually to veer far off the course of productive development.

"Qian Weichang! Come out in five minutes!" It was the Cultural Revolution, and a loudspeaker suddenly blared under his window. He was forced to dash immediately to a criticism session, where he was made to kneel on stage before a hostile audience for hours, enduring the vilest insults and attacks. It is incredible that such a "treasure of the nation," a world-renowned man of learning, should be so badly mistreated. But Chinese society during the Cultural Revolution was itself incredible, and in incredible times, people can no

longer distinguish good from evil.

The truly amazing thing about Dr. Qian is that he continued his research in spite of the deplorable circumstances he found himself in. After returning from his manual labor or criticism sessions, he would straighten up his room, turned upside down by constant searches, and begin his study. He pasted paper over his windows so that no light could be seen from the street. If the “revolutionaries” had seen a light burning in his window, they would have descended upon him, demanding to know what he was doing and threatening him with death.

Even in the wee hours of the night, the sound of bullets whizzing by, shots fired by rival military groups, rang out, and curses blaring from loudspeakers bounced over the rooftops. Yet Dr. Qian carried on, pushing his tired body to stay awake, and sat diligently at his desk. As a result, he produced mathematical research that earned him international acclaim.

When Chancellor Qian speaks to young people, his encouragement rings with the truth of his own life experience: “No matter what the circumstances, no matter what the situation I found myself in, I always worked my hardest. All people, no matter how naturally gifted they may be or what great achievements they have made so far, stop progressing the moment they stop making efforts. If you stop making efforts today, you will be left behind tomorrow; if you neglect making efforts for an extended period of time, you will be a failure.

“That is why for more than twenty years, and in spite of every kind of suffering conceivable, I have never stopped exerting myself. I have confidence that in my area of specialization I will always be able to remain at the cutting edge.

“I have never believed in genius. I believe that the only thing that extends our abilities is painful, hard

labor. Any genius that exists is the product of hard work.”

Chancellor Qian has always been determined to move forward, ever forward, to keep challenging new horizons, whether in his area of study or day-to-day existence. I see this as the creative spirit that has underpinned his entire life.

“When I was young, my family was poor,” says Dr. Qian. “I studied at four or five different elementary schools. I only attended junior high school for two years, and high school for just a short time.” When he graduated from elementary school, his mother and grandmother begged him to work to help support the family. It was a difficult request for them to make, but they believed it a necessity. He had little sisters and brothers who needed the money that he could bring in. The boy had dreams of continuing his studies, but he also knew how poor his family was. With tears of regret falling down his cheeks, he could do little but agree.

But his father would not hear of it. He insisted that his son continue his studies—an insistence that changed Dr. Qian’s life. An uncle was the principal of a secondary school in Suzhou, and agreed to look after the boy. This uncle, Qian Mu, was later to be recognized as a great master of the Chinese Classics.

On the day that the young Dr. Qian was to start at the school, a soft rain fell. He shared a broken umbrella with his father as he boarded the boat that would take him to Suzhou. His father’s health was very poor, and he spoke haltingly to the boy, striving to suppress his cough: “However hard our circumstances, whatever I

have to do, I want you to have the opportunity to study . . . Now you must do your best. Don’t waste your time . . . Only by weathering trials and hardships can you achieve anything of worth. Don’t forget that.” Though the young Dr. Qian was not aware of it at the time, these were to be his father’s last words to him. His father died at the



Shoppers buy fruit in a Shanghai street market.

DEAN CONGER/CORBIS



TOM NEBBIA/CORBIS

Chinese flat-bottomed ships called junks in Shanghai Harbor, China.

age of thirty-nine, and Dr. Qian's farewell to him that day was an eternal parting.

Madame Kong, who is a scholar of classical Chinese literature, told me that even though the Cultural Revolution had come to an end (around 1976) and most of the persecutions had stopped, it was not until 1983 that Dr. Qian was finally completely rehabilitated—twenty-six years after he had first been denounced.

“Over those years,” she said, “many around us in similar circumstances experienced great personal tragedies. There were suicides and divorces. Fortunately, we were both scholars, and we had studies which we could concentrate on and an intellectual realm in which we could find refuge. We were also lucky to have close and sustaining relationships as a couple and also with our children. No matter how harshly we were persecuted, we survived by encouraging and helping each other.” All of their children have in fact pursued their studies under difficult circumstances and now have excellent careers.

In Shanghai, Chancellor Qian and I talked of many things. About Premier Zhou Enlai's efforts to know and understand people's hearts. About the great Chinese writer Jin Yong. About mutual friends such as Norman Cousins. About Asian civilization. And about many topics of Chinese history, from ancient times to the pres-

ent. Time always seemed to run out before we even had time to warm to our subject. And the longer we spoke, the more I became aware of Dr. Qian's wide knowledge and profound spirit, deep as the sea.

“I don't want to hurt the feelings of the Japanese people,” he said with great force and fervor, “but I have to say this. The Japanese educational system must teach the youth of Japan the truth about history. China and Japan should join forces and cooperate to build a great and strong East Asia. The only obstacle to this is, unfortunately, Japanese nationalism.” He said this to me on the main campus of Shanghai University, a site that had been devastated by the Japanese army in the past.

Since becoming the chancellor, Dr. Qian has reformed the university with great success—in just the pioneering manner he proposed so many years ago. Today, China flourishes like a dragon ascending high into the sky. The new century that Dr. Qian has spent his life in quest of is now visible on the horizon. He is determined to continue to play his part in its arrival. “As long as I live, I will work day and night! Paltry as it might be, I want the sweat of my brow to be part of the great river of development that will carry my nation forward on its mighty flow!” A life that cannot be stopped, that conquers every obstacle in its path, is a great life.

Chancellor Qian titled a brief personal history, “*Galloping Advance*.” □

SGI-USA Community Activities

SGI-USA's Killeen Chapter, Texas, Marches in Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade

By Kumi and Martin Bonner

With only two days notice, the SGI-USA members of the Killeen Chapter, Texas had to move fast. They had just been given the opportunity to participate in the city's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade on January 17.

First thing they did was to set a goal of fifty participants. Then began the planning, running around for banners, flags, a truck etc. — and plenty of chanting for success.

The day of the parade, the residents of Killeen, many of whom did not know of the organization, watched curiously as this ethnically diverse group of fifty fellow citizens representing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism marched down Ave. D and College Street. The Boys and Girls Group and Youth Division held banners that announced, "Living the Dream," "Victory Over Violence" and "SGI-USA—Buddhist Organization for Peace, Culture and Education." The rest of the chapter marched with USA and SGI flags held high in the air. Everyone had beautiful bright smiles as they cheered:

"SGI-USA— We are here for MLK!"

Along the parade route, people took pictures and later approached the participants asking, "What is SGI-USA?" This initiated many animated conversations and the handing out of many brochures. The Buddhist group was even on the local CBS news on station KWTX.

Their overall feeling was "Killeen Chapter is very happy to bring SGI President Ikeda's dream to the forefront of our community!" In his New Year's Day Poem President Ikeda wrote:

Even the macroscopic ideal of peace

Is actualized only when it connects with the life of each individual.

Peace is not found in some distant place;

It lies close at hand, in the vibrant sense of fulfillment felt

By each person taking earnest action

For the welfare of their community, society and fellow citizens.

(January 2000, *Living Buddhism*, p. 4)



First Thai Town Opens in Los Angeles

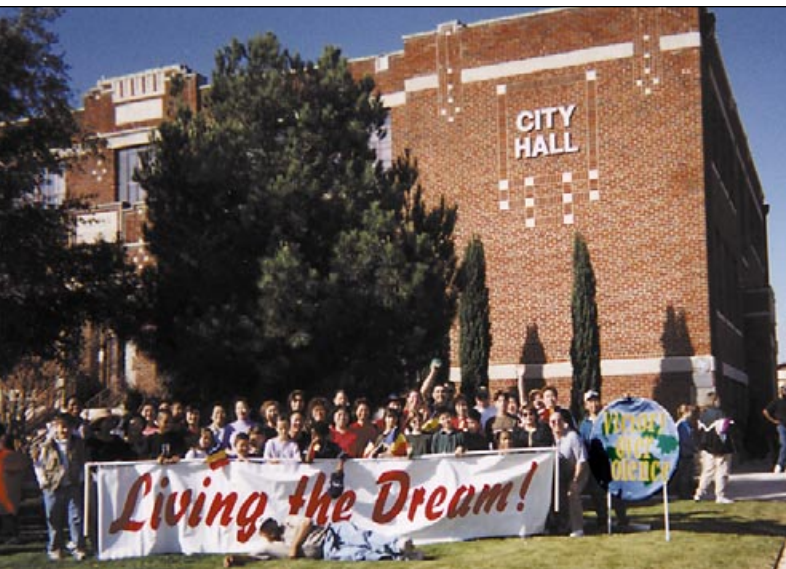


On January 29, performers from SGI-USA's Thai community helped open the world's first "Thai Town" outside Thailand in Los Angeles, near Hollywood. Southern California boasts the largest Thai population outside their native country.



GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI-USA members of Southern California's Asian community celebrated the Chinese New Year February 6 at Pasadena City College. Two thousand people enjoyed cultural performances from the Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Cambodian and Korean membership. In all, 750 performers and support groups participated.



MARTIN BONNER

Killeen Chapter participants in the Martin Luther King Day parade gather at City Hall.



DAVID BALDSCHUN

Besides the signs that will be posted on Hollywood Boulevard, there will also be signs on the Hollywood Freeway that say, "Thai Town, Next Exit." Thai Town joins other ethnic communities such as China Town, Korea Town, Little Tokyo, Little Saigon and Olivera Street.



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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.