



EXPERIENCE:
After developing self-reliance, Sean Izumi finds the love of his life.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

Moving Forward With Optimism and Courage

SGI President Ikeda says that 'this life, this existence, is precious. Let us strive together earnestly and win in all challenges' this year.

Happy New Year's to my beloved SGI members! With the magnificent success and development of our kosen-rufu movement, we usher in this new year marking the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding. I hope that you, my precious comrades in faith throughout the world, will join me in celebrating this brilliant, hope-filled occasion. I deeply appreciate all of your timeless efforts.

The year 2000, to my great

delight, marks the 100th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth. It is also the Year of Youth, in which we will raise the curtain on the 21st century. This year also signals the exuberant start of our momentous journey toward the third millennium.

As the SGI embarks on a new century, I humbly wish to convey that our membership has now spread from 128 countries to 148 countries around the world. Fellow Bodhisattvas

of the Earth are working valiantly and energetically for kosen-rufu in all corners of the globe. I am confident that Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, would be overjoyed at this unparalleled achievement in the history of Buddhism.

You have made this unprecedented achievement possible. Because of this, I am absolutely convinced that the good fortune you have accumulated as a result will shine brilliantly in your lives forever. It will become a boundless, immeasurable treasure, indestructible throughout the three existences of past, present and future, just as the Daishonin promises.

Celebrating a golden age of Buddhism surpassing that which flourished under the ancient Indian king Ashoka, let's keep striving cheerfully for kosen-rufu and courageously advance, like the lion king that roams the plains and the eagle that soars in the sky.

Throughout his life, the Soka Gakkai's founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, tenaciously fought against evil and injustice. He declared with powerful conviction, "Happiness and kosen-rufu are contingent on our

causing devilish functions to appear and eradicating them."

After Mr. Makiguchi died in prison for his beliefs, our mentor Josei Toda stood up with an indomitable resolve to carry on Mr. Makiguchi's work. He proclaimed that kosen-rufu could not be achieved without great courage and an invincible fighting spirit.

I, too, have fought for kosen-rufu for more than five decades, without deviating in the slightest from this noble Soka Gakkai spirit, and I have written an immortal history. In all that time, I have not rested a single day nor retreated a single step. Because the Soka Gakkai has forged ahead with solid unity of purpose, centering on the three successive presidents, it has achieved the phenomenal development it has today. As a result, it is hailed by leading intellectuals around the world as "a miracle of the 20th century."

There is no life more respectable than a life dedicated to kosen-rufu.

In giving guidance, Mr. Makiguchi often used to say, "Rest assured that persecution sends those of false faith into retreat, while it fosters genuine lions."

Armed with the pride and resolve of true victors that "no strategy is more powerful than

the strategy of the Lotus Sutra," I hope you will join me once again this year in advancing with confidence and light hearts along the great path of peace and culture.

Let us work together to create a Century of Life and a Century of Humanity that will go down in history—an age that humankind has been dreaming of and that will pave the way to lasting happiness for all people.

This life, this existence, is precious. Therefore, let us strive together earnestly and win in all challenges, moving forward intrepidly with optimism, courage and a progressive spirit in order to achieve victory in our lives.

All of you are extremely precious to me, and I am praying each day with all my heart for your good health and longevity. I am also praying fervently that each of you, without a single exception, will lead a life of great happiness and fulfillment.

I also look forward to your continued success and progress in your activities for the sake of kosen-rufu in the year ahead in your respective regions and countries.

Praying for the eternal development of the SGI, I conclude my New Year's message.

Daisaku Ikeda
January 1, 2000

Photos by JONATHAN WILSON

Photo by MIKE MULLEN



New Year's Day at the Ikeda Auditorium at the San Francisco Culture Center.

SGI Offers Relief Aid to Venezuela

On Dec. 20, 1999, the Soka Gakkai donated approximately \$30,000 to Charge d'Affaires Jose A. Clavijo of the Venezuelan Embassy in Tokyo as initial emergency relief aid for the victims of the floods and mudslides that became the worst natural disaster to hit Venezuela in the 20th century.

The death toll was feared to be as high as 10,000, with many people missing and more than 150,000 homeless. The region of Vargas, located just north of the cap-

ital Caracas, was the hardest hit, where many bodies remained buried under rubble and mud, amid a growing fear of epidemics. Much of the affected population was without potable water and basic necessities.

The SGI has also sent \$20,000 in emergency relief to its representatives in Venezuela to support the local relief effort. In addition, SGI Venezuela volunteers worked together with Amnesty International staff to transport medicine and clothes to the victims. **WT**



New Year's Day at the Philadelphia Community Center: (Clockwise) Mia Harvey and Kurt Smith sing with the Freedom Chorus; (l-r) Maria Dugger, Toshiko Johnson and Fujiko Lee enjoy the day's events; Vincent Hodge and drummers; members applaud the chorus.



JAN. 26: THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SGI'S FOUNDING

Making the Right Time

SIGNIFICANT DATES
ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI
By **STEPHANIE CELANO**
STAFF WRITER



"To wait for the right time. To make the right time.... The establishment of the SGI on Guam in 1975 was a watershed in the full-fledged spread of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the world" (Nov. 5, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 6). SGI President Ikeda wrote these words in his new series "A Record of My Life" of that memorable day—Jan. 26—when the first International Buddhist League World Peace Conference was held. It also marked President Ikeda's inauguration as the president of what would later be named the Soka Gakkai International.

On that significant date 25 years ago, 158 representatives from 51 countries gathered with the shared determination to create peace. What brought these people together, I believe, were a great hope and desire to make a cause toward creating a brighter future. In the form of a signed declaration of peace, their promise was documented.

The past century reeked of

the atrocities of war. Two world wars, Vietnam, Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo, the Persian Gulf and Chechnya...whether fought in the name of democracy, religion or ethnicity, these conflicts scarred millions. And Guam was no exception. Apart from Pearl Harbor, this American territory was the only other American soil to be touched directly by war in the 20th century. Symbolizing that a time to heal had come, that an effort to write a new history for the United States and Japan—indeed for the world—was desperately needed, Guam was chosen as the point of departure for the SGI's peace movement.

A generation later, we in the SGI—more than 12 million strong in 148 countries and territories—are dedicating our time and our lives for the future of peace on the planet. In his speech on that Jan. 26, President Ikeda spoke of "dedicating your whole lives to sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law for the sake of peace throughout the entire world. I shall do the same." Undeniably, this vow he has kept—evidenced by every one of his awards, honorary

doctorates, peace proposals, addresses and meetings with individuals from all walks of life.

And how are we creating this peace? One by one, we are fulfilling our individual lives based on the life-nurturing philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin. We turn to society with a vibrant sense of humanism and share with one person at a time not just this philosophy but our spirit, our unique creativity. Ours is a patient, steady process of transformation, a cultivation of peace within humanity itself.

Although the eyes of the world may have been somewhere else on Jan. 26, 1975, this year people will celebrate not only in Guam but around the world. How we as individuals celebrate is up to us, but I say we must celebrate this 25th anniversary of the SGI with all the renescent spirit that we started this third millennium with.

And let's not stop there! Let's continue to create history. A quarter of a century ago, looking toward the dawn of a century of peace, those present at the conference on Guam took a courageous first step in developing their lives. Now, as the next generation, what will be our legacy? Who will truly make this new millennium one of peace rather than war?

As we raise the curtain on the

Declaration of Peace

This is the declaration of peace adopted by the World Peace Conference participants on Jan. 26, 1975.

We, the delegates of the International Buddhist League, with the awareness that life is the inalienable right of every human being regardless of race, nationality, language or custom, and with the unwavering determination to uphold the sanctity of life throughout the world, do hereby resolve to unite in the common cause of securing lasting peace for all mankind.

Whereas the prime point for the establishment of peace rests in the absolute value of human life, we are determined to propagate a universal awareness in the hearts of men that life is irreplaceable and of the greatest value.

In order to secure global peace, we realize that our most urgent task is the strengthening the bonds between the hearts of individual human beings; rather than the establishment of economic or political ties between nations; and we will forever strive to build deep and heartfelt friendship among the people of every land.

In what manner can we contribute to peace among men? Because the happiness of human beings is necessary to lasting peace, we will exert our utmost efforts in contributing to a joy of life in order to ensure a survival of humanity itself. Furthermore, we will promote compassion among all people of the world as the credo of our age.

Having endured the horrors of two world wars in this century, we acknowledge our noble mission to make the forthcoming 21st century a Century of Life; a golden age of humanism and warmth in which all people will cherish the sanctity of life.

Therefore, we will strive, under the banner of the dignity of life, to bring forth a renaissance of humanism in the remaining 25 years of this century, and to create new waves of peace in the hearts of all men. We hereby affirm our resolution to further these ideals and to establish lasting peace throughout the world. **WT**

21st century, this Year of Youth is pregnant with promise. What happens in future generations will depend on how we nurture

the youth of today and tomorrow, what we pass on to them. Will we wait, hesitate? Or will we finally make now the right time? **WT**

Denver Open House Introduces Speakers Bureau

Violin music floated gently through the lobby of the SGI-USA Denver Culture Center, welcoming members and guests to an open house on peace, culture and education. The purpose was to introduce the Den-

ver Speakers Bureau to the Metro Denver community and initiate community dialogue on important issues.

SGI-USA Denver often gets requests to make presentations about the organization to other religious, educational and civic

groups. In response, the Denver Speakers Bureau was formed. Three speakers discussed the SGI-USA's mission and goals at the inaugural meeting. Throughout the evening, members answered guests' questions. More than

one member mentioned "how encouraging and uplifting it was to work together with so many different people and introduce SGI-USA to those who didn't know about it."

—IRLENE OWADA and CHRIS RISOM



Denver member Shelly Pfannenstiel (center) meets with guests at the Denver Culture Center open house. Two years of planning, discussion, effort and prayer led to the event.

Join the Class of 2001 at SUA, Calabasas

Now in its sixth year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education. Individuals seeking admission to the master's program must hold a baccalaureate or bachelor's degree with a minimum grade-point average of 2.7 (B-) on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not

English are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600. Applications for the 2000-01 academic year are due by April 30, 2000. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Hwy., Calabasas, CA 91302. Telephone: (818) 878-3717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu. **WT**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 2 SPEECH

The Year 2000 — An Exhilarating Struggle

‘Right from New Year’s Day, I have begun an exhilarating struggle!’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘It is my dearest wish that all of you join me in leading an exhilarating life and waging an exhilarating struggle!’

On Jan. 2, SGI President Ikeda attended a New Year’s gongyo meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji. Celebrating his 72nd birthday, he joined representatives from around Japan and overseas in chanting daimoku for the SGI’s successful endeavors in the year ahead. Warmly wishing the members a Happy New Year’s, he called, “Let’s strive hard together again this year!” To the youth, he said, “I’m praying and waiting for your growth.” He also delivered the following speech:

I have begun an exhilarating struggle! It is my dearest wish that all of you join me in leading an exhilarating life and waging an exhilarating struggle!

This year, too, lively SGI New Year’s gongyo meetings are being held throughout Japan and the world—in a total of 148 countries and territories. Of all the religious groups in Japan, the Soka Gakkai’s New Year’s gatherings rank No. 1 both in festive spirit and attendance. I have received a stream of reports from SGI organizations outside Japan as well, telling of the high-spirited start to the new year being made by our fellow members in each country.

The most important thing is the people’s spirit.

Representatives of the Soka Gakkai’s student division have sent me a collection of famous sayings. I want to share a few of them with you today.

First, a quote from Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*: “The first step towards victory undoubtedly is to gain courage.” The key to

victory is indeed courage. A person without courage cannot accomplish anything.

By courage, however, I do not mean the reckless, barbaric courage that resorts to violence. That is not true courage. Faith is the supreme form of courage—it is courage that accords with reason.

Parallel Lives, which has become a model of behavior for the lives of so many, also contains these words: “The city is well fortified which hath a wall of men instead of brick.” The famous Japanese warlord Takeda Shingen similarly declared, “People are the walls; people are the fortress.” Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda also called on the Gakkai to “build a stronghold of capable people.” He was a person of exceptional insight.

What leads to lasting victory is not money, authority or worldly fame. Groups or areas that are successful have built solid ranks of capable people. The most important thing is people—the people’s spirit, their

commitment. We must be determined to hold fast to our convictions. A spiritual fortress is unconquerable.

Those who keep striving for good despite criticism are true disciples.

The Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius in *The Meditations* cites the words “It is royal to do good and to be abused.” To do something supremely worthy and be vilified for it—I constantly find myself in this situation. Above all, these words conjure images of the regal figure of Nichiren Daishonin. Accordingly, those who keep striving for good despite being criticized and maligned are true disciples of the Daishonin.

Marcus Aurelius also declared: “Do not act as if you were going to live for ten thousand years. Death hangs over you. While you live, while it is in your power, be good.” Death is inescapable; that is why it is important to do good while we are alive, he says.

True heroes are those who spread the Mystic Law.

Who are the true heroes? Says Chinese author Lao She, “True heroes are those who remain free of the slightest regret or despair, no matter how prolonged or how

great the hardships they suffer.” This quote was sent to me by members of the Soka Gakkai’s Young Women’s Division International Group.

The real heroes are not those who fight with military might or Japanese warlords such as Oda Nobunaga or Toyotomi Hideyoshi. The true heroes are those who strive for kosen-rufu, those who spread the Mystic Law, the indestructible foundation for bringing lasting peace to the world. You, the SGI members, are the true heroes. This is what the Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, tells us. The Daishonin is Japan’s greatest hero. We must create an era in which this is widely recognized.

People the world over honor us with their support and friendship. They have great expectations for the development of our movement. This is a wonderful thing. The many prestigious honors I have received from around the globe are all honors that I have humbly accepted as your representative. I hope you will have firm conviction that they are a symbol of the incredible good fortune you are accumulating in your lives.

I hope you will do your best in all your endeavors again this year! **W**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA’S NEW YEAR’S POEMS FOR 2000

New Year’s Poems

From *Seikyo Shimibun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper:

*The year 2000 —
The dawn of the age
Of Soka.*

*With friends in the sunshine,
Singing a paean to life,
Let us fight injustice
With firm resolve and light hearts.*

From *Soka Shimpo*, the Soka Gakkai’s youth division newspaper:

*Live a triumphant life free of regret
As you walk the path of champions,
Aglow with a passionate
And incandescent spirit.*

From the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai’s study magazine:

*Be proud masters of philosophy
And triumph in all endeavors,
As our momentous force for justice
Proceeds in solid unity.*

*New Year’s Day —
The dawning sun
Rises in my heart.*

*Families filled with joy and good fortune
Have spread throughout the world —
Let us rejoice, and continue
To compassionately share with others
The Mystic Law.*

*Youth who are my life!
Illuminated in the undying light
Of compassion,
Courageously take the lead
For kosen-rufu.*

*No one can take away
The noble mission
I embrace in my heart —
My pledge to accomplish kosen-rufu.*

*As pioneers who will be remembered
For a hundred and even a thousand years,
Win in every struggle,
Your lives fragrant as lotus flowers.*

*With the firm resolve of heroes,
Leave behind a great history
That will be remembered for all time.*

*The dawn of a new century has begun,
Bringing the light of our determinations
To shine ever more brilliantly.*

Daisaku Ikeda, New Year’s Day, 2000

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 9 SPEECH—PART 2

The Power of One Committed Person

A person who gives serious thought to the welfare of society is 'invincible, regardless of what happens,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'When one such committed individual stands up in earnest, the entire area in which he or she lives and the organization in which he or she practices will flourish.'

Part 2 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 40th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Dec. 9, 1999.

I can clearly picture the beautiful relationship that existed between the young Dr. Rakhmanaliev, chair of the World Committee on Awarding the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal and Prize, and his mentor, the renowned Russian philosopher A. F. Losev. His mentor was persecuted during the Stalin era and imprisoned for 33 years.

Great people, just people, are often subjected to oppression. If one doesn't encounter obstacles in the cause of championing justice, one isn't fighting hard enough.

Although Losev was deprived of his liberty for more than three decades, he is said to have freely written book after book in his head. After finally being released from prison at age 81, he went on to publish 20 books over the next 15 years, until he died at 95. He apparently wrote the majority of these works from memory—by recalling what he had already formulated in his mind during his imprisonment.

In his youth, Dr. Rakhmanaliev received direct guidance and instruction from the elderly Losev in Moscow on an almost daily basis for eight years. Lacking any support from the government, Losev lived in extreme poverty. Whenever Dr.

Rakhmanaliev, a graduate student, went to visit his teacher, he would bring some cookies or dry crackers that he had bought with his scholarship money. They would then share them while drinking hot cups of tea and studying together.

I was filled with profound emotion when I heard this. Having stood all alone by my mentor, Josei Toda, when his business experienced severe financial difficulties, and having attended his private "Toda University," I deeply appreciate Dr. Rakhmanaliev's sentiments.

To share others' sufferings and hardships—I hope that SGI leaders and Soka University teaching staff members will always have such warmth and compassion. This is the path of victory as a human being.

Though harshly persecuted during his lifetime, Losev is today regarded as one of the foremost philosophers of the 20th century.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev also enjoyed a close friendship with the literary historian Dmitri S. Likhachev, one of Russia's courageous voices of conscience, who died in October. Even in his 90s, Likhachev was able to recite passages from books he had written in his 20s and 30s.

The examples of such outstanding intellects led Dr. Rakhmanaliev to believe that the more the human brain is used, the more its potential increases. I agree. Just as physical exercise strengthens the body, mental exercise strengthens the brain. All aspects of our Buddhist practice—our efforts to study Nichiren Daishonin's writings and Buddhist doctrine, do gongyo and carry out dialogue to spread the ideals of Buddhism—serve as a workout for the brain.

Recently published findings by American scientists show that, in research conducted in monkeys, the adult brain can grow new cells or neurons to replace old ones when they die. Until now, it was believed that brain cells stopped growing once adulthood was reached and gradually died off with age. This new discovery, though, shows that new cells are constantly being added to the cortex—the thinking, learning and memory center of the brain—even after adulthood ("Neurogenesis in the Neocortex of Adult Primates," Oct. 15, 1999, *Science*).

Congratulations to all our seniors!

A true Buddhist refuses to condone cruel, inhuman behavior.

I want to share some words of wisdom from Likhachev, a champion of human rights and humanistic ideals: "While cultivating physical strength can naturally contribute to long life, it is little recognized that cultivating mental strength is also indispensable for longevity." "Consideration and kindness are conducive not only to good health but to enhancing physical beauty."

He also reached these conclusions about life: "If you think only about yourself, and live solely preoccupied with your own happiness to the exclusion of all else, you will leave nothing valuable behind in life." "The highest value in life is goodness—moreover, goodness that is backed by wisdom and decisive purpose."

It is just as he says. For this reason, real, humanistic education—education that teaches these fundamental values—is important. We are entering an age of humanistic education.

Please be assured that your daily activities as SGI members constitute the ideal way of staying fit and healthy, as well as the way to long, genuinely



SGI President Ikeda receives the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Dec. 9, 1999, from Rustan Rakhmanaliev, chair of the World Committee on the Awarding the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal and Prize.

fulfilling lives.

"The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). These are the Daishonin's famous words. The behavior that the Daishonin refers to is respecting, valuing and protecting other human beings with all one's being.

In contrast, there are arrogant people, who act as if everyone else is here solely to serve them, who are cruel and inhuman, brandishing authority and throwing their weight around. A true Buddhist refuses to condone the behavior of such people.

If you give serious thought to the happiness of your friends and the welfare of your society and community—racking your brains over how you can con-

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Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at Soka University

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Soka University students hold their 9th annual performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 at the Soka University Auditorium in Hachioji, Tokyo, Dec. 18.

tribute, taking action to try to make a difference—then you will find vibrant wisdom welling forth from your life. Courage will rise within you quite naturally. You will develop your character in the process.

A person who lives this way is invincible, regardless of what happens. When one such committed individual stands up in earnest, the entire area in which he or she lives and the organization in which he or she practices will flourish. This is an unchanging formula for victory. It was so in the past, and it remains so today.

The power of Buddhist reason can win over people in positions of great authority.

Incidentally, Chingiz Aitmatov, the respected Kyrgyz writer after whom the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal is named, was born the same year as I, 1928. We were born exactly a hundred years after the great Russian author Leo Tolstoy, who was born in 1828.

Tolstoy was excommunicated by the church authorities of the day, who were jealous of his fame and reputation. Yet he was completely unfazed by their persecution.

The youth, the common people, the intellectuals and even the international public opinion were overwhelmingly on his side. Thinking people denounced the church's arbitrary excommunication of this famed writer.

At the beginning of this century, Tolstoy wrote a letter to the powerful Russian czar, proclaiming that all of humankind was moving from evil to good, from darkness to light. Trying to stop this movement, Tolstoy wrote, was "a futile endeavor."

He courageously declared that it was impossible to stop humanity's advance toward enlightenment.

Until the last moment of his life, Tolstoy fought unflinchingly against injustice and the high-handed ways of authority. Tenacity is vital in any struggle.

In *The Philosophy of Creation*, Dr. Rakhmanaliev writes: "There is something of unsurpassed greatness. It is not the greatness of authority, but the greatness of the spirit." The greatness of authority and position is not genuine; it is but an illusion.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev also states, "There is no form of communication suited to expressing the majesty of the spirit more than dialogue." Let us continue to pursue dialogue, talking heart to heart with as many people as possible, thereby spiritually strengthening and invigorating people's lives.

And, through such efforts, let us triumph in all our endeavors. Herein lies the hope of the 21st century, as well as the mission of youth. The youth division must never be defeated. The youth must win without fail for the sake of the people.

The Daishonin declares: "Buddhism is reason. Reason will win over your lord" (WND, 839). The powerful reason of Buddhism can win over even people in positions of great authority.

In an article submitted to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, Mr. Aitmatov shares his views about the SGI: "Possessing an all-encompassing vision, the SGI does not shun reality but is actively involved in the world around it and values the practical, everyday wisdom of ordi-

nary people. The SGI also leads people to a noble plane, where they apprehend the laws of existence ranging from fundamental moral ethics to the eternity of life. The SGI—it is a river of humanism. I am among those who walk along the banks of that flowing river."

This is an example of the high expectations and praise that people of integrity and conscience around the world have for the SGI. In 2000, let's strive hard again in all our challenges, with joy and unflagging optimism. Let's win!

The Daishonin writes, "The farther the source, the longer the stream" (WND, 736). I declare that we, the SGI members, represent the proud source of a stream that will flow into the 3rd millennium.

Faith is the search for solid principles, the quest for a better life.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev is 47, the same age I was when I had my second meeting with Soviet Premier Aleksey N. Kosygin. Mr. Kosygin was then 71, the same age I am now. I am aware that Dr. Rakhmanaliev and his wife, Madame Natalia Musina, share a warm friendship with the Kosygin family.

Premier Kosygin was a person of outstanding character. He kindly went out of his way to welcome me, an ordinary private citizen. His daughter was also a wonderful person.

President Ikeda met Soviet Premier Kosygin for the first time in 1974, on his first visit to the Soviet Union. Asked by Mr. Kosygin what his basic ideology was, Mr. Ikeda replied without hesitation, "I believe in peace, culture and education—

the underlying basis of which is humanism." President Ikeda met with Mr. Kosygin a second time on his second visit to the Soviet Union, in 1975. And when the SGI leader visited the Soviet Union in 1981, the year after Mr. Kosygin died, he visited the late premier's grave and called on his daughter, Lyudmila Gvishiani, who has also since died. Ms. Gvishiani confided that her fa-

ther had spoken happily to his family about his first meeting with the SGI president, telling them: "I met a very interesting Japanese today. I was happy to have had a most refreshing discussion, even though we spoke about many complex issues."

Together with the youthful Dr. Rakhmanaliev, I want to further spread the indestructible alliance of people committed to promoting peace, culture and education into the new century.

Finally, I want to introduce a number of wise Russian sayings that resonate with the teachings of Buddhism, for Buddhism encompasses all human phenomena.

First, the author Anton Chekhov writes: "It is the na-

ture of human beings to have faith, and it is imperative that they seek out faith. Otherwise their existence is rendered meaningless."

We have faith because we are human. Faith is the search for solid principles. It is the quest for a better life. Faith exists so that we, together with others, can lead lives of dignity, deep fulfillment and no regrets.

The philosopher Vissarion Belinsky writes: "Struggle is a condition of life. When the struggle ends, so does life." We must never give up our struggle. If we do, our lives become a living death.

The Russian philosopher A. F. Losev, under whom Dr. Rakhmanaliev studied, declares, "Tranquillity is motion of endless speed." I think what he means is that true peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle. We of the SGI have the same spirit. As the Daishonin says, "One should regard difficulties as peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

And here's a line from Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*: "A battle is won by the side that has firmly resolved to win."

I am praying sincerely that all my beloved fellow SGI members will enjoy good health, longevity and happiness. I also wish you a wonderful new year!

Thank for everything during the past year. Let's all do our best again next year! *Spasiba and Rakhmat!* ("Thank you" in Russian and Kyrgyz.)

(This concludes the Dec. 9 speech)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

True Peace of Mind

From This Speech:

The philosopher Vissarion Belinsky writes: "Struggle is a condition of life. When the struggle ends, so does life." We must never give up our struggle. If we do, our lives become a living death. The Russian philosopher A. F. Losev...declares, "Tranquillity is motion of endless speed." I think what he means is that true peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle. We of the SGI have the same spirit. As the Daishonin says, "One should regard difficulties as peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

- 1) "When the struggle ends, so does life." Why is that?
- 2) Why is continuing to struggle synonymous with living a full life?
- 3) President Ikeda says, "True peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle." Do you think that most people would agree with him?
- 4) Have you had an experience in which you saw that "one should regard difficulties as peace and comfort"?
- 5) How has your idea of "peace and comfort" changed due to your Buddhist practice?

EXPERIENCE — SEAN IZUMI, ARLINGTON, VA.

True Love Starts From Within

Instead of filling the void of loneliness with another superficial relationship, Sean Izumi's newly found self-reliance leads him to true love.

I moved with my girlfriend to the South Arlington area in Northern Virginia about four-and-a-half years ago to attend Georgetown University for a doctoral degree in applied linguistics.

Coming to Georgetown for my doctorate was a big challenge for me; at first I was thinking of going back to Japan after obtaining my master's degree from Southern Illinois University. I had been thinking that I am not an academic, but more of a teacher type, so doing research and writing papers did not seem so exciting. In fact, it sounded beyond me. However, professors and colleagues encouraged me and Georgetown accepted me with a generous fellowship.

Academic life was not easy, especially during the first year, since I had to take a full load of demanding courses at the same time as working as a teaching and research assistant. It added even more pressure to have to work with a professor who was one of the nation's top young scholars in the field of second-language acquisition.

During my second year, as I was getting used to academic life and started enjoying my research in second-language instruction, the unexpected happened. One evening, my girlfriend suddenly told me she had somebody else she wanted to be with, and wanted to end our relationship. The news was so out of the blue, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My initial reaction was that this kind of thing only happens in a soap opera. I must be dreaming. After all, I was chanting and doing SGI activities all along. "Why me?" I thought? Regardless of my panic, however, she was quite determined with her decision, so there was nothing I could do to change her mind. I was devastated.

So, my struggle with self-doubt, a loser spirit and loneliness began. My coursework and my teaching duties at Georgetown still continued, but I could barely do the minimum work required. I lost interest in and enthusiasm for my academic studies and was afraid to leave my apartment for fear of showing my depressed, miserable face to other people. When I did go out, I was so envious of all those couples I saw on the street, at the shopping mall, on campus, almost anywhere I went. I felt so lonely.

Initially, I was hoping that I would get out of this miserable state in a few months, but in fact my depressive life state lasted for about a year-and-a-half.

During this time, I tried my best to chant as much as possible, sometimes with a very weak, almost whispering voice and sometimes crying my heart out in front of the Gohonzon. I kept asking myself, "Why do I have to suffer so much over a failed relationship? What's wrong with me?" At the same time, I was also telling myself, "I don't want to give up. I am not a loser. I will rise above it. I will become happy!" Together with chanting, I sought SGI President Ikeda's guidance on love and relationships.

In *Discussions on Youth*, volume 1, President Ikeda focused on this very topic. He says: "The question is: Does that person [you are in love with] inspire you to work harder at your studies or distract you from them? ... Does he or she inspire you to realize your future goals and work to achieve them? ... If you are neglecting the things you should be doing, forgetting your purpose in life because of the relationship you are in [or in my case, a relationship that I desperately wished to be in], then you are on the wrong path. A healthy relationship is one in which two people encourage each other to reach their respective goals while sharing each other's hopes and dreams. A relationship should be a source of inspiration, invigoration and hope" (p. 116).

In another part, he says: "Real love is not two people clinging to each other; it can only be fostered between two strong people secure in their

individuality. A shallow person will have only shallow relationships. If you want to experience real love, it is important to first sincerely develop a strong self-identity" (p. 128).

As I continued chanting and reading President Ikeda's guidance, I began to see why I had to break up with my girlfriend and especially the way it happened. I was clearly not developing the kind of relationship described by President Ikeda. Instead, I was simply clinging to a relationship that was working at a superficial level, just so I would not have to be alone. This I did all in the name and guise of what I considered to be love. Because I did not have the courage to break away from this chain of suffering, it seems my girlfriend took the initiative in breaking that chain on my behalf!

After the break-up, in the midst of my suffering, I went to Ecuador to spend eight summer weeks in an intensive Spanish language program in order to meet the second foreign language requirement for my doctoral degree. Before returning to the States, I took the opportunity to visit the Galapagos Islands, immersing myself in nature to refresh my spirit. It was a great experience to be surrounded by all those iguanas, sea turtles, etc.

One quiet night on a boat, as I was looking up at the sky admiring the Southern Cross, hearing the sound of waves, and feeling the breeze from the South Pacific Ocean, I suddenly caught myself still thinking: "Why am I so lonely? Will I be like this for the rest of my life?" Then I remembered President Ikeda's guidance: "If you try to use love as an escape, the euphoria is unlikely to last for long. If anything, you may only find yourself with even more problems. ... However much you may try, you can never run away from your-



Sean with his fiancée, Yukiko, looking forward to their life together. Sean introduced Yukiko to the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

self. If you remain weak, suffering will follow you wherever you go. You will never find happiness if you don't change yourself from within" (p. 124).

President Ikeda is absolutely right. There I was in the Galapagos Islands, a paradise so far from Northern Virginia, and still carrying around this weak sentiment of loneliness and withdrawal from challenges that my life poses. That was a turning point in my life. I made up my mind there and then that I would polish myself and develop my character and capacity as a human being first, before I turn to someone else for what I lack due to my low self-esteem. After all, as President Ikeda says, "The relationships you form are a reflection of your own state of life" (p. 125).

I returned to the United States with this renewed spirit. On the very day I came back, I met a charming Japanese woman who, on the recommendation of a mutual friend, had been taking care of my apartment while I was away. Her name was Yukiko, and she was just starting her master's program in applied linguistics at Georgetown University. We enjoyed each other's company very much, talking about various things from linguistics to love and relationships. Nothing more than a friendship developed until a year later, when we both realized our deep feelings for each other and started dating. In retrospect, it seems that the one-year waiting period was necessary for me to consolidate my new self-reliant attitude to be a happy person no matter what.

During this period of intense hardship, a young men's leader in my Arlington Chapter visited me many times to chant and encourage me to attend many SGI activities. He really helped to

keep my faith alive by involving me in Gajokai activities, inviting me to do home visits and offering me opportunities to be master of ceremonies at world peace prayer meetings. I am so grateful to him for the trust he placed in me, and all the support he has given me to this day.

I don't intend to brag about how much I love Yukiko or how great our relationship is. But I'll say that it is the kind of constructive relationship described in the story *The Little Prince*: "Love is not two people gazing at each other, but two people looking ahead together in the same direction."

With all that has happened, I'm able to share even more happy news. After chanting with me for a little more than a year now, Yukiko has become an SGI member. Also, I took the final oral defense of my doctoral dissertation recently and passed it with distinction. And, I recently got a faculty position at one of the most prestigious universities in Japan in my field of specialty, English language education; I expect to start my teaching and researching career there next year. But, before that, Yukiko and I are getting married next February before we return to Japan together.

These are big changes in our lives, but we are both determined to create a happy life together and contribute to kosen-rufu. Although we still have many problems to overcome, together we will foster the kind of love described by President Ikeda: "If you genuinely love someone, then through your relationship with him or her, you can develop into a person whose love extends to all humanity. Such a relationship serves to strengthen, elevate and enrich the inner realm of your life" (p. 125). **W**

Photo by KATHRYN AIKEN

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

World TRIBUNE The SGI-USA's Weekly Newspaper

'EARLY SPRING'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 29-30

At the ruins of Pompeii, Shin'ichi Yamamoto discusses the question 'What is the most important thing in life, the most important thing for human beings?'

Seventeen years before the great eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E., Pompeii had been struck by a devastating earthquake, the signs of which were still in evidence when the volcano erupted.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto vividly recalled the climactic scene of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*: The villain, the duplicitous priest Arbaces, falsely accuses the young hero, Glaucus, of a crime. Glaucus is about to be thrown to a lion in the amphitheater, as Arbaces looks on coolly. The citizens of Pompeii, ignorant of the truth, anticipate the bloody spectacle. Then, a witness to Arbaces' evil deeds arrives to denounce him to the crowd, and the tension builds.

At just that moment the volcano erupts — "a vast vapor shooting from the summit of Vesuvius, in the form of a gigantic pine-tree; the trunk, blackness — the branches, fire! — a fire that shifted and wavered in its hues with every moment, now fiercely luminous, now a dull and dying red, that again blazed terrifically forth with intolerable glare," writes Bulwer-Lytton. The earth shook, and ash and stones fell from the blackened sky. In an instant, the entire citizenry of Pompeii — rich and poor, citizen and slave, man and woman, young and old — were delivered indiscriminately to the

threshold of death.

The author describes some who sought to exploit the panic and confusion, thinking, "Now is the time to make our fortune!" They became so preoccupied with looting that they lost their chance to escape. In another scene, a son callously strikes down his own father in order to steal his wealth.

But not everyone acted in such a base, inhuman manner. There were also many who behaved nobly amid the crisis, their actions shining with humanity — people who thought of their friends and, undeterred by the risk to their own lives, came bravely to the aid of others.

The blind girl Nydia, for example, leads the protagonist Glaucus and Ione, his love, with whom he has been miraculously reunited, to safety.

Bulwer-Lytton describes the reactions of human beings under such extreme conditions with incredible realism. A great deal is today known about the devastation of Pompeii because of the extensive archaeological excavation of the site. According to those findings, the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius is thought to have lasted two days, with several meters of ash and pumice settling over the city. Over that period, pyroclastic flows and hot blasts carrying fine ash from volcanic explosions struck the dying city several times.

Those who survived the dis-



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

aster were most likely those who hastened immediately to refuge outside the city gates, at the first signs of the volcano's fiery activity. It appears that there was still enough time for people, if they acted swiftly, to flee the city before it was buried in ash and escape became impossible.

The majority of those who died in the eruption were members of the wealthy class and their servants. Perhaps they were reluctant to leave their fine homes, or they spent too much time trying to gather and find a way to transport their possessions, thus losing the opportunity to escape. Some were discovered clasping sacks of gold or silver, or precious ornaments and jewelry.

Or perhaps the wealthy thought that their sturdy homes and cellars would protect them from the eruption. Unfortunately, the roofs collapsed and buried them, or the scorching heat of blasts caused by the eruption killed them.

Shin'ichi sat down on a large slab of stone by the roadside and said to the group: "I think that *The Last Days of Pompeii* poses a fundamental question: What is the most important thing in life, the most important thing for human beings? The novel depicts the calm way in which one Christian, Olinthus, who believes in God and eternal life, behaves amid this terrible calamity that resembles the end of the world.

"Actually, Christianity was virtually nonexistent in Pompeii at the time of the eruption, but Bulwer-Lytton seems to have used the character Olinthus to present his ideas about fundamental issues of human existence and the true

nature of religion.

"No one can escape the inevitable sufferings of life and death. No amount of wealth, power or position can solve this problem. Nichiren Daishonin writes, 'The most dreadful things in the world are the pain of fire, the flashing of swords, and the shadow of death' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 301). Everyone is afraid of death — that's a measure of just how precious life is to us. The crucial point is how we make use of this precious life.

"However, human beings tend to shun this fundamental question, getting caught up in ephemeral pleasures and calculations of short-term personal gain. This is regrettable.

"In contrast, we, the Soka Gakkai members, upholding the Daishonin's philosophy, awakened to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, are working for the happiness of humanity and for the sake of kosen-rufu. We lead lives of unsurpassed value, because we dedicate this most precious gift of life to the highest purpose of all."

Addressing Sumiko Kojima, Shin'ichi continued: "Ms. Kojima, life is short. We never know what will happen. Everything is constantly changing.

"But if you live according to the eternal, unchanging law of Buddhism, you will find the way to everlasting happiness. Therefore, I hope you'll build an indomitable self and strive throughout your life to fulfill your mission for kosen-rufu, no matter what happens, no matter what pain or suffering you may encounter."

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.



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

In the month of February, women across the country will be holding meetings commemorating Feb. 27, SGI-USA Women's Division Day. This year marks the 10th anniversary of SGI President Ikeda's Feb. 27, 1990, 'clear mirror' guidance. The following reflections are from two participants on that day.

The Key to My Determination

By ANDREA LOCKE
LOS ANGELES

SGI President Ikeda's desire "for the members of the women's division... to become the happiest people in the world" permeated the atmosphere when I arrived at Soka University of America, Calabasas to attend the women's training meeting 10 years ago on Feb. 27, 1990.

President Ikeda began by answering the question: "What is the purpose of life? It is happiness." He went on to explain relative and absolute happiness and that "The purpose of Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood... a state of happiness that can never be destroyed or defeated." Yes, I thought, this is what I deeply desire. Why had I continued to allow my circumstances or my own limitations and weaknesses to make me feel less than the worst person in the world at times?

I listened more intently as the profundity of his guidance

Photo by WILLIAM THOMAS



pierced my heart: "True happiness lies only in establishing such a supreme state of life. By so doing, you are able to change all sufferings into causes for joy and contentment and to live with composure and jubilation." All right, I thought to myself. I know this Buddhist practice works. But how can I achieve and maintain this state of life when obviously because of my husband's lack of wis-

dom, foresight or insight our family suffers?

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

So what was I to do to change and put my life back on the correct path of faith? He added: "When you chant to the Gohonzon, you are able to perceive the true entity of your life and tap the inexhaustible life force of Buddhahood. [Therefore] just as you look into a mirror when you make up your face... you need a mirror that reflects the depths of your life. This mirror is none other than the Gohonzon of... observing one's life."

A strong determination grew in my heart as I listened to President Ikeda explain that "chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is what polishes our life. Not only

do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that the mirror of their lives shines brightly, too. Thus, it can be said that we are masters of the art of polishing the mirror of life." This became the key to my determination until today — to take total responsibility for everything that occurs in my life — to change my life by deepening my faith and doing my human revolution.

I wanted to build a happy, healthy and wealthy family to show actual proof of the power of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I determined that every word I spoke, every thought I had and every action I performed would lead others toward this practice and kosen-rufu. I felt so much hope because everything — I mean everything — was totally up to me and my willingness to chant to see the true aspect of my life and to continually polish my character, my soul and my heart with the bright light of Buddhahood.

Today, I am happy to say that my heart is full of appreciation for every struggle and suffering that I have endured over the last 10 years. I have tried my best to always reflect on the causes I make every moment of each day. As a result, the challenges have transformed into benefits to help me live up to my determination to polish my Buddha nature. I am so happy. Not because I have the big house or lots of money, but because I have genuine hope and confidence that I do and will continue to create my future by always reflecting in the mirror of my faith.

I am so grateful to President Ikeda for giving the women's division this guidance and for being an example of how to continue practicing this Buddhism and winning in daily life. I hope that all women will strive to perceive the Buddha nature inherent in their lives in order to establish true undeniable, unswayable happiness. Together let's all ring in the Century of Women with the power of joy in our hearts. **WT**

The Responsibility of True Freedom

By REBECCA JACOBS
NORTH PALM BEACH, FLA.

Ten years ago, SGI President Ikeda gave the 'clear mirror' guidance to women that became what I believe is our emancipation proclamation. Seven of us came from Washington, D.C. to attend the meeting with President Ikeda at Soka University of America, Calabasas. It came at the end of his 17-day stay in the United States and the whole country was aware that great changes were already underway. The experience so profound, I determined to let every part sink into my life — I would think about it later. Now, 10 years later, tears of joy still come to my eyes when I recall that day.

Feb. 27 is Mrs. Ikeda's birthday. I believe he chose that day as another way to encourage us and experience a little of the great partnership they share. As we arrived at the Calabasas campus, we saw the top men's division leaders and Soka Gakkai vice presidents there to greet us — one of many surprises that indicated a new organization was emerging in the United States.

Photo by BOB GOTTSMAN



Rebecca Jacobs (center) with her husband, Loren, and daughters (l-r) Sarah, Jennifer and Meg.

"Society and daily life are the 'great earth' for our faith and practice of the True Law. The steady development of kosen-rufu can be ensured only when, based on faith, we carefully attend to the affairs of society, our daily life and our families. 'Faith manifest itself in daily life' — this is our eternal guideline."

From this point, there was a groundswell of change that happened in every woman I knew who was practicing in the SGI. We had to seriously examine how we were living our lives and take total responsibility for both our sorrows and joys. With the freedom of realizing we held the

power to great change within the realm of our own lives, we had to accept the responsibility that came with such freedom.

Most of us at that time were not completely happy with the direction our lives had taken, but what were we going to do about it? "Understanding the subtle working of one's mind is the key to faith and to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. You cannot blame others for your misfortunes. In the world of faith, it is necessary to realize this all the more clearly."

My life has changed in unimaginable ways since 1990. To say I have visited all Ten

Worlds would be an understatement. I think that is also true of the women from Washington, D.C. I was with that day. We have all gone in very different directions, but we were all very different people to begin with, and that is the point really — to be able to display our individuality with full splendor.

The line leaders, pioneers of Washington, D.C. kosen-rufu, stayed behind and sent the seven of us to be with President Ikeda that day. We became the next wave. I talked to one of my friends since about being the "bridge generation." We have both practiced more than 25 years. The challenge lies in understanding the passion of the pioneer fused with the vision of an American nation that can truly embrace the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. President Ikeda gave us the blueprint that day. The courage to take the action is up to us.

I have thought for a long time that President Ikeda knew what was going to happen in the world of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and he made every effort possible to shake us awake in 1990: "The purpose of Buddhism is not to produce dupes who blindly follow their

leader. It is to produce people of wisdom who can judge right or wrong on their own in the clear mirror of Buddhism."

This guidance set women free. Feb. 27 is our "Independence Day." It is the day that women all over the world can mark with pride. He encouraged us to find our own voice, speak out against injustice and never be afraid. When I read the women's division letter of remonstrance to Nikken a year later, I was filled with unimaginable pride in being one of the women of the Soka Gakkai. It gave me such courage to never retreat from any difficulty and to look at every problem as an opportunity to expand my life.

I now live in Florida, not far from the Florida Nature and Culture Center. The fortune and happiness that I have with my husband and three daughters is a source of continual encouragement. The deep bonds of friendship that are renewed with each new conference at the FNCC only prove the greatness of President Ikeda's words 10 years ago: "Let the flowers of the Law / Bloom with beauty and purity / Throughout this land of / America." **WT**