



EXPERIENCE:

Tarik Mitchem shares how the 'World Tribune' has influenced his life.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 29 ENCOURAGEMENT

On the Path Toward Absolute Happiness

'When you chant with faith in the Mystic Law, your life falls into the rhythm of the universe,' SGI President Ikeda explains. 'Just as saplings grow into sturdy trees, and children grow into adults, you find yourself, quite naturally, on the path toward absolute happiness.'

SGI President Ikeda's guidance at a conference held April 29 in Tokyo with SGI representatives from around the world.

The SGI has achieved phenomenal development. All of you are showing actual proof of victory in society through your strong prayers and dedicated actions based on the invincible conviction that nothing surpasses the strategy of the Lotus Sutra.

Your achievement in pioneering the way for worldwide kosen-rufu will live on for all time. The names of each one of you will go down in history.

Because you so wished it,

you were born in your respective countries and are spreading the Mystic Law. While the hardships may be many, it is hardships that enable us to savor true joy and grow.

Those who advance in life based on faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism enact a drama—a dramatic play—of transforming all problems and sufferings into happiness in accord with the Buddhist principle of changing earthly desires into enlightenment. And this story is one in which the protagonist becomes happy in the end without fail.

The Buddhist Law constitutes the highest good in that it is directed to saving all humankind and all life in the universe. If you follow this fundamental law of life, you will lead a life of absolute freedom.

When you chant with faith in the Mystic Law, your life falls into the rhythm of the universe. Just as saplings grow into sturdy trees, and children grow into adults, you find yourself, quite naturally, on the path toward absolute happiness. You overcome all difficulties and trials with composure. This is the inconspicuous benefit of faith.

Worldly fame and glory are as fleeting as froth on the water. In contrast, all of you working earnestly for kosen-rufu pos-



SGI President Ikeda meets SGI members from 50 countries and regions visiting Japan in April.

sess the most precious treasure in the entire world.

Those who strive for kosen-rufu with the same intent as the Daishonin accumulate the causes for eternal triumph. Our Buddhist practice exists so that we can acquire a store of immense good fortune and benefit that will extend across the three existences of past, present and future.

As SGI members, all of you

generously give of your time, without seeking any personal reward, to show people the correct path to happiness, to teach them the unsurpassed philosophy of the Daishonin's Buddhism. There is no more noble life than this.

You are important emissaries of the Buddha. Each day, I am praying for your good health, your safety and your longevity. And also that you will lead lives

of even greater good fortune.

I ask that you carry through with your faith to the end of your life, together with me, together with the SGI. Carry through with your faith always blazing with hope, persevering come what may and never fearing anything. Please lead a wonderful life of deep fulfillment—of which you can proudly say, "I have won!" **WT**

The 'World Tribune': A Letter From SGI President Ikeda

Renu Jiandani, SGI-USA young women's leader, shares what the 'World Tribune' means to her.



ing many challenges in every aspect of my life.

I was a young women's district

leader, and the women's district leader encouraged me by saying, "If you do your best in the district, in your family, at work and chant 1 million daimoku [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], you will get whatever you wish."

I did my best and chanted

1 million daimoku. Guess what? The day I finished my 1 million daimoku, not only did I not get what I wanted, but the Persian Gulf War started instead. I was so disappointed. Here I am chanting to become happy and for world peace, but instead I was not happy and the world seemed to be moving in the wrong direction.

I decided to write a letter to President Ikeda. It was my first time to write to him so I almost wrote a book. Just kidding! I shared with him that I was born

in India, grew up in Okinawa, and now, in America, was facing many struggles. However, I was confidently told by my leaders that if I did my best and chanted, I would get whatever I wished for. I did not—why?

I really wanted to understand why things happened this way so that I would know what to do next. I had no idea what would happen to the letter as I put it in the mail.

A few weeks later, I received my *World Tribune* and saw that President Ikeda was in Okinawa

giving a speech about the life of an Indian princess, Jansi. He talked about her courage, describing scenes of her as she put her child on her back and jumped on a horse to fight on the frontlines of battle. She was killed in the battle. Although she was only 19, she courageously took action to stand up for her people.

He went on to say that sometimes you may think you have done your best in your family, district, work and chanted but

PLEASE SEE JIANDANI, 2

Activating the Three Virtues

Back to the Basics

By GREG MARTIN
ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

A Buddha possesses the three virtues of parent (the compassion to nurture all living beings), teacher (the wisdom to lead them to enlightenment) and sovereign (the power to protect them). Also, since it embodies the life of Buddha, the Gohonzon, our object of

devotion, possesses these three. And since Buddhahood is a potential within the lives of all ordinary people, the three virtues are inherent in our lives as well. When we chant to the Gohonzon, we, too, can manifest these.

How does this work? The principle of the oneness of parent and child teaches us that the Gohonzon manifests its function as a parent when we devote ourselves to it with a child's trust. A child does not distrust its mother's milk. To sustain that trust in the face of the doubts that inevitably arise, we need to develop doubt-free faith in the Gohonzon — not

faith that never doubts but faith that can resolve any doubts that appear. This is guarding the life-condition of Buddhahood within. Practicing with the virtue of child awakens the virtue of parent in the Gohonzon and pulls it forth from within our lives.

The oneness of teacher and student (mentor and disciple) is the basis for the Gohonzon to manifest its function as a wise teacher. We should approach the Gohonzon as a student approaches a teacher, seeking advice and counsel concerning things that trouble us, never ceasing in our yearning to develop

ourselves further.

The oneness of sovereign and subject implies being an active participant in the society of the Buddha's believers. To practice in the kosen-rufu movement with a sense of duty, responsibility or mission is the Buddha's deepest intent. With this spirit, we will fully display our greatest qualities in our daily lives as outstanding citizens of faith.

Chanting Nam-myoho-engekyo with doubt-free faith, a life-long seeking spirit and a sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu (the virtues of child, student and citizen) form the foundation for fus-

ing with or embracing the Gohonzon (achieving oneness) and for manifesting the virtues of parent, teacher and sovereign.

The three virtues, in the end, are found in our lives. This is why Nichiren Daishonin says that "Shakyamuni Buddha, who has attained perfect enlightenment, is our own flesh and blood. His practices and the resulting virtues are our bones and marrow" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 365).

For further information, please see Selected Lectures on the Goshu, vol. 1, pp. 264-81.

FROM JIANDANI, I

did not accomplish what you wanted. Why not?

It was exactly from my letter. Just imagine how shocked I was to see this in the *World Tribune*. I was amazed that President Ikeda had received and read my letter. It was an awesome feeling.

He went on to answer my question. He explained the Buddhist concept of the simultaneity of cause and effect, saying that the moment the cause has been made the effect is al-

ready created. Through his speech, I gained tremendous hope that, even though I could not see it at that moment, the very fact that I had made the effort ensured my victory. With time, I found it was true.

Because of this experience, the *World Tribune* holds a deep and significant place in my life. I have continued to write to President Ikeda and, although I know it is not possible for him to respond to each letter, I always find the answers in his speeches to the millions of

questions in my mind. It feels like we are pen pals.

More than ever before, I have come to realize the spiritual value of this great newspaper. Recently, a young man in prison sent a letter to the SGI-USA office asking about the SGI. We sent him some issues of the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. A few days later, he responded by letter saying that he was deeply impressed by the writings and virtue of Mr. Ikeda. He had found hope in his life and had begun to practice. There was

no verbal communication with this young man, but his heart was moved by the publications.

President Ikeda writes: "Becoming happy ourselves is nothing. It's easy. The essence of faith, however, is to help others become happy as well" (March 31 *World Tribune*, p. 6).

Taking this to heart, I have begun to share the *World Tribune* with others. I even gave a subscription as a gift to my hair dresser, since she has been asking me questions about this practice. I want to help others

become happy. I want to encourage my members and friends who are struggling.

I believe this newspaper has the spiritual nourishment that people are looking for in their lives. The *World Tribune* can motivate and inspire us anytime, anywhere.

As you may have guessed, I love the *World Tribune*. I am determined to share this paper with everyone until one day when one hears the words *World Tribune*, it inspires instant hope for America and the world. **WT**

Entrance Exam Held at 134 Locations

The SGI-USA Study Department's Entrance Exam was held at 134 locations from Japan and Guam to the Caribbean Islands on April 30. A total of 1,839 members took the test, which focused on Nichiren Daishonin's life, the Soka Spirit and three important letters written by the Daishonin — "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime," "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" and "Happiness in This World."

SGI-USA Study Department Leader Eugene Hirahara explains that "the Entrance Exam has a great tradition in the Soka Gakkai. Whatever difficult circumstances the Soka Gakkai has faced, it has always returned to studying the Daishonin's teachings.

"Even when President Toda died, on April 2, 1958 — and many people were predicting the organization's demise — an Entrance Exam was held just six days later. This is an important activity for our new members to get started on the correct path of Buddhist practice, from the very beginning



Participants take the Entrance Exam at the Seattle Culture Center, April 30.

learning how to put the Daishonin's teachings into action for themselves and others."

The next Entrance Exam, which will be based on the same material studied this year, is scheduled for April 2001.

Mr. Hirahara emphasizes that toward next April's Entrance Exam, what's most important is the leaders' determi-

nation to study with new members. As SGI President Ikeda says in a recent essay: "Leaders who are genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu will read the Goshu every day, even if only a line or a paragraph, and make it a living part of themselves. I also hope that the youth division members, in particular, will study the

Goshu thoroughly, as they strive to achieve their goals. I have found that those who don't tend to be shallow and frivolous. Study is the marrow of the SGI. Unless we are armed with compassion and an understanding of the principles of Buddhism, we cannot carry out kosen-rufu" (May 5 *World Tribune*, p. 8). **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — TARIK MITCHEM, LOUISVILLE, KY.

Bringing Light to Darkness

Tarik Mitchem shares how reading the 'World Tribune' illuminates his life and helps him understand the value of his life and practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Life for me started as a struggle for survival. I was born 10 weeks premature with a rare fetal syndrome. A valve in my heart would not open so I could not breathe on my own; I was breathing as if I was still in my mother's womb.

Each breath I took was a solitary battle. Drastic measures were taken to save my life because I was given only two hours to live. At that time, my parents did not know I was to be the doctor's first test case for a new medical procedure. Before this procedure, premature infants with fetal syndrome died because nothing could be done to save them.

No one knew exactly what the result would be. The moment of intense uncertainty for everyone ended when medicine was injected into my heart and I began breathing on my own. I stopped the struggle for my existence; I became Tarik! But my world was to be a silent one, though it was not known at the time. Because of the lack of oxygen in my first few hours of life, I had become profoundly deaf.

My mom, who was always sensitive to my needs, discovered my deafness when I was 4 months old, but the doctor would not confirm it until I turned 1. Then I was fitted with hearing aids to amplify sounds. By the time I was 4, I was more adept at voicing sounds and I was curiously trying to produce new ones.

One day when I was with my cousin Dez visiting our grandparents, we decided to walk to his home on the same block. As soon as we entered his home, Dez immediately knelt in front of his family's altar, so I knelt too. He voiced what sounded like singsong words to me. I attempted to imitate him. Then he repeated the words. Even though my sounds were not distinct, together, we chanted

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Although I had no recollection of this event, my aunt recently shared this story with me. Several years went by before I would chant those words again.

In 1981, without my knowledge, my mom started chanting in her bedroom with the door closed. Whenever my younger brother would question her about the noises he heard, she would reply, "Oh, that's the radio."

When I was 11, I began to see my mom reading the *World Tribune*, a different-looking newspaper that sometimes had Japanese characters on the page. My aunt encouraged my mom to subscribe to this newspaper. At that time, I didn't know that my dad had demanded that she stop reading the *World Tribune*. In spite of his objections, she persisted in reading each issue and continued to chant behind her closed bedroom door.

Whenever I saw the newspaper lying around the house, I read it. Of course, I didn't fully understand what I read because my deafness made it difficult for me. I'm sure I would frustrate my mother by constantly asking her the meanings of certain words, but she always tried to explain them to me. My understanding steadily improved as I continued to read the *World Tribune*.

My mother continued to do things that appeared to be weird to me. She would face a bare wall in the living room and say words to it. I couldn't hear her nor could I see her lips because her back was to me, so I thought she was talking to herself. Soon strangers with smiles on their faces came to our house to face the same bare wall and say words to it. Even though these actions were puzzling to me, I didn't ask any questions.

My mother received the SGI membership certificate in 1992 and her Gohonzon in 1993, which she set in a box by the once bare wall. Of course, I had no idea what these things were, so I thought, "What else will appear?" I didn't ask her any questions and she didn't discuss much with me, though I anxiously continued to read the *World Tribune*.

A year later, my mom began communicating to me about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by using cued speech, a hand technique that allows deaf

individuals to read lips better. For four years she persisted in this sharing. Even though I always listened, I didn't think that what she said had any relevance for my life. But the newspaper articles were meaningful to me.

My attitude about life wasn't serious even though serious things began to happen to me.

In June 1997, I faced another struggle with life and death. Two of my deaf friends and I were hanging out when three young men held us up at gunpoint. One of them put a gun to one of my friend's head and demanded his wallet. Thinking about saving our lives, I gave him the money in my wallet.

I tried to remain calm even though the thought of being killed kept going through my head. All of this happened in a matter of minutes, but it seemed like a lifetime.

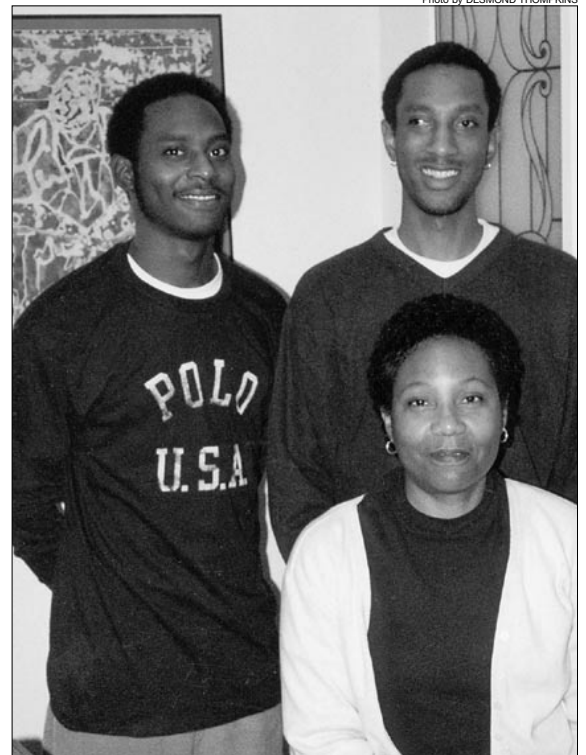
As quickly as they had appeared, they jumped in a car and drove away. They were captured that same night by an undercover cop whom they had tried to rob. Now they're serving long sentences in prison because we were brave enough to identify them in court several times.

Thinking back to that experience, I felt my mom's chanting for me to be more serious about life was what enabled me to have the wisdom and courage to remain calm so I could take the crucial action that saved all our lives. Nevertheless, I continued to act as if every second of my life wasn't crucial.

My irresponsible attitude continued until I was in the midst of yet another life and death struggle. I wasn't prepared for the physical or spiritual impact that would change how I view life.

In 1999, I had a serious car accident. Even though my car was totaled, nobody suffered any life-threatening injuries. My mom told me how fortunate I was to be alive, and that no one else was killed.

This became a turning point—I began to take life more seriously. I asked myself, "Why are these things happening to me?" I went to my mom about the words I couldn't hear but that I knew were important for my life. She cued the words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and I chanted them. Here it was 19 years later, and I was able to say those words again, but with a clearer voice and much deeper



Tarik Mitchem (right) with his mother, Glenda, and his brother, Trai, at their home in Louisville, Ky.

meaning than when I was 4!

Now, after so many years of living my life thoughtlessly and being easily defeated, I am beginning to realize that I have control over my life. I have many dreams and my biggest dream is to return to college and further my education. In April, I enrolled in Jefferson Community College here in Louisville. I am interested in pursuing a business degree. I know this will be difficult, but I am willing to win over my weaknesses.

SGI President Ikeda's guidance in *Discussions On Youth* has inspired me: "When you chant, you create the cause for your success. Daimoku is for your benefit. It strengthens your life force and sharpens your mind. It enables you to tap the vital inner strength to give full play to your talents and abilities."

I am beginning to take action for my life. I am learning gongyo with my mom. As she points to each word, I look at the word and then I look at her mouth to read her lips so I can then say the word. I participate in youth activities at the SGI community center in Louisville.

Last summer, I attended the Chicago Youth Cultural Festival with Dez and other youth from Kentucky. Dez took notes for me on some of the key points. Through participating in the festival, I learned that taking action can make a difference in my life.

Even though my life started as a struggle between life and death, so many people have continually encouraged me to bring light to darkness by practicing Buddhism. Over the years, I've been constantly encouraged by reading people's experiences in the *World Tribune*, along with other articles written by the *World Tribune* staff. I may not always remember what they wrote, but the spirit with which they wrote has touched my heart.

President Ikeda's encouragement has helped me especially when I felt that no one would understand my pain and suffering. His guidance continues to help me as I take action to live out the meaning of my name — Tarik — one who brings light to darkness.

—With help from Glenda Mitchem and Catherine Thompkins

Choruses Count Down to 'Ode to Joy'

The Chorus Conference, to be held at the Florida Nature and Culture Center June 1-4, has special significance since the eight SGI-USA culture festivals scheduled for the summer of 2001 will feature choral performances of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." Plans toward this will be discussed by the many chorus directors and

members at the FNCC conference. "The participants are looking for encouragement in faith and a deeper understanding of their mission as chorus members. They will surely have an experience that will fuel their individual growth toward next year," said SGI-USA Vice General Director Gerry Hall, one of the conference organizers. **WT**



Photo by KELVIN ONO

The Milliani Chapter Women's Division Japanese Chorus sings for seniors at the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-term Care Center on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, Dec. 12, 1999.



Photo by KATHRYN AIKEN

The Washington, D.C., Regional Chorus puts on an original music production, 'When Dreams Come True,' Dec. 4, 1999.



Photo by JENNIFER WILLIAMS

The SGI-USA Arizona Cactus Chorus performs at the Arizona State Capitol, Jan. 25.

'Dialogue With Nature' Comes to Denver

From May 24 through June 16, the SGI-USA Rocky Mountain Region along with the University of Denver and the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film will be presenting "Dialogue with Nature," an exhibit of SGI President Ikeda's photographs. The exhibit will be free and open to the public on

the second floor and rotunda of the Denver City and County Building, located at 14th and Bannock. The hours are 7:45 a.m.-5:45 p.m., Monday-Friday. The exhibit will also be open Saturday, June 3, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., and Saturday, June 10, 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. For more information, call (303) 893-0430. **WT**



Photo by SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

Ducks energize this quiet scene. Denver, June 1996.

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The Bodhisattva in All of Us

PERSPECTIVE

By FAY HOVEY
MAUI, HAWAII



Over the months that I've contributed stories of Nichiren Daishonin's disciples for *Living Buddhism* magazine, I've had to read the Goshō from different perspectives. Sometimes I find wonderful pieces of wisdom and wit or I mine passages rich with insight into the individual characters and lives of his followers that are like rare and precious metals. There are moments when I read the Daishonin's words and I simply have to stop and let them sink into me. How truly fortunate we are to have his words, always strong and sure, passionate, often provocative and unerringly human.

Without the Daishonin's compassionate outpouring of letters

to his followers, it is unlikely that we would have known about the courageous people who, against tremendous opposition, were determined to follow him and to embrace a vision of hope in those incredibly desperate times. They would have disappeared into the misty obscurities of time.

We've heard President Ikeda say: "Read the Goshō with your very lives." What this means to me is to enter into those chaotic and amazing times and imagine ourselves walking alongside the Daishonin's followers and to see how very like ourselves they were. Many of their obstacles have become familiar to us and the Daishonin's words to them have come to serve as ver-

bal touchstones that followed us through our years of practice and whose truth and application continue to deepen in meaning.

One of the things that strikes me is the offerings and gifts that were sent to the Daishonin. From the simplest of garments to the 60 plates he had no food for, all gifts were carefully noted and words of appreciation sent in response. What sparked my imagination was his careful accounting of food items, thus providing us with a vivid picture of how liquids were contained, how seaweed was packed or the types of fruits that were available and in what season.

In his deepest appreciation for the sustenance provided by his followers, the Daishonin praises them for their gifts and often says they surely must have been with him in other lifetimes, or they must be bodhisattvas or Buddhas. I believe that the Daishonin saw in these offerings

and gifts the purity of each person's Buddha nature and he was determined to communicate that to them in the clearest terms.

This is the time of the year when we are invited to participate in our annual contribution activity. Just as the basket of oranges or the arrival of a horse-load of rice gave the Daishonin the strength to continue, our sincere appreciation, in the form of monetary donations, fuels and refreshes our efforts and keeps our Buddhist movement healthy and strong. Contributing in this spirit is what I call "a bodhisattva activity." There were times when I could contribute very little. However, as the years pass and my fortune grows, I challenge myself to give more. In my heart, there is a tremendous pleasure and assurance in being able to contribute to the organization that so sincerely carries on the Daishonin's work and perpetuates this Buddhism.

Offerings

by Fay Hovey

I think of the persimmons.
How they arrived skewered and dried.
Or ripening in a net bag, the blush
of autumn blazing on their smooth cheeks.
The seaweed that reminded him of his home
in Awa province and his parents whose living
came from the sea. Dark green kelp, bundled
and wrapped in paper.

Imagine the excitement of the messenger.
The horses eager under their loads
for water and rest. A basket of melons
or one hundred mandarin oranges
holding sunlight against the darkening season.
Or the cold trip first on horseback and later,
trudging on foot through the mountains
to his door: the greetings of amazement,
to be visited with drifts banked
to the eaves of the small hut.

The taste of tea and hot sake
warming the chest and stomach.
And the sound of rice cooking,
comforting, over the small fire.
Rice, parched or polished

and white as fresh snow.
Upon the receipt of sixty slabs
of steamed rice cake, he exclaimed:
"Rice! Such a small thing, but it sustains life!"
The horse-load of polished wheat:
"Just when I thought I would die
of starvation, the wheat arrived!"
The sixty plates and thirty cups sent
when he was so hungry.
He said he would fill them
with snow and pretend they were filled with rice.
The incomparable joy of a fat bag of chestnuts
or bamboo shoots.

The solid feel of coins in a small sack
or strung, heavy in their certainty.
And yams, cooked in the fire,
roasted black on the outside and
split open, a cornucopia
of steam and sweetness.
Vinegar to make pickles
with the bunch of radishes
and bamboo containers of oil,
for cooking and for light.
Eggplants, meaty and purple,
and pounded soybean curd
to mix with vegetables.
Two sho of syrup, thick,

and more luxurious than silk.
Five blocks of konnyaku,
to cleanse the blood—and herbs,
powders that renewed his strength
when it was thought he'd never
sit up again. Ginger, for spice
and for tea to drive the cold
from his lungs.

The robes, unlined in the summer,
against the sweltering heat.
Those woven of bark fibre from
the humblest of followers.
Or quilted silk from a samurai,
hand-stitched by his mother
or his wife, to fend off
the icy teeth of the wind.
"Rest yourself and your horses tonight,"
he would say. "Let us eat together and
you will tell me how everyone is."
And placing the gifts gently
before the Gohonzon he chanted:
Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.
Later that evening,
he would take up his brush. "Thank you," the
Daishonin
always began in this way. To him, they were all
bodhisattvas. **WT**

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This history traces a pattern of doctrinal mistakes and corrupt behavior over 700 years that call into question Nichiren Shoshu's claims of orthodoxy and authority. You'll also learn about the reformers—such as the 9th and 26th high priests—and their struggle to try to bring Nichiren Shoshu back to the true spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.



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OVERFLOWING WITH THE JOY OF VICTORY

A Record of My Life by Daisaku Ikeda

Writing on the art of the French Revolution, SGI President Ikeda describes how 'it overflows with the joy of ordinary people who have been released from the shackles of oppression and have won their dignity as human beings.'

At first glance, it was just an ordinary-looking printed document faded with age. It measured about two meters in height and a meter across—the size of what would today probably be called a poster. And on it were printed two vertical columns of text. But this single document greatly impacted the course of history.

Looking more closely, I found it to portray a dignity that had survived the centuries. Its words seemed to somehow dance off the page.

Posters just like this one bearing the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which boldly proclaimed the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, were put up in the streets of Paris at the time of the French Revolution (1789). People huddled together reading the document, voicing their sympathy with its affirmations. It expressed the excitement and energy of a people standing at the threshold of a new age. The wheels of history had begun to turn.

The copy that I saw was prominently displayed in the "French Revolution and Romanticism" exhibition, which opened in October 1987 at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum.

How brilliant the spiritual light of this declaration must have been to the people! The French thinker Simone Weil comments in *The Need for Roots*: "Many of those who were not French wanted to become so. For to be French, thenceforward, meant belonging to the sovereign nation." To the people of other countries who were tyrannized by similarly repressive regimes, France at that time was a dream. In his *History of the French Revolution*, historian Jules Michelet

concludes, "From the first page to the last, it [France] has had but one hero: the people."

Without a doubt, the French Revolution, which brought down the *ancien régime*, heralded the start of the modern age and established the framework for the spirit of human rights that lives to this day. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the revolution, whose beacon shines with increasing radiance, the French government sponsored various official commemorative events both in and outside of France. The "French Revolution and Romanticism" exhibition was held as the first of these events.

Prior to the opening, in May and June, I visited France to meet with people from all sectors of French society, people who had graciously loaned valuable research materials and works of art for the exhibition. In addition to finalizing the arrangements, I wanted to express my gratitude to them.

Through the many encounters that I had with people at that time, I could see that the entire country was consumed with preparations for the various events that would take place to mark the revolution's bicentennial. And I sensed a real earnestness and passion in their efforts.

Prime Minister Jacques René Chirac (currently president), who was then also serving as Paris mayor, was particularly enthusiastic. Mr. Chirac had visited Japan a number of times, making a name for himself as a close friend of the country.

Knowing him to be a fan of sumo wrestling—he worked hard to support a sumo exhibition in Paris—I told him in jest, "I'm sorry to say that I haven't brought any wrestlers with me." He was immediately all smiles. In the course of our friendly, candid dialogue, he gave his ready consent to the holding of the "French Revolution and Romanticism" exhibition and expressed his support for further cultural exchange.

Thanks to the full cooperation of a number of key people, 19 museums across France contributed artwork to the exhibition. The number of pieces on display came to 165, far more than originally planned.

There may have been prior showings of romanticist art in Japan, but never had there been an exhibition on this scale. This was also the first event to bring together in one place so many masterpieces relating to the

French Revolution.

It featured a broad selection of paintings, ranging from neoclassicist artists such as David and Prud'hon to romanticists like Delacroix and Géricault. The paintings included depictions of such revolutionaries as Marat, Danton and Robespierre, and portraits of such colorful military and political figures of the period as Napoleon and Talleyrand-Périgord. There were also many works like David's *Oath of the Jeu de Paume* that vividly capture the seething emotions of the era. Most of the works were being shown for the first time in Japan.

The *Oath of the Jeu de Paume* portrays the historic moment of the revolution when, in June 1789, the National Assembly vowed not to adjourn until a constitution had been adopted. The piece communicates with a timeless quality the passion of such key revolutionary figures as Mirabeau and Robespierre. Because the king had ordered the assembly hall at Versailles closed, the deputies hastily proceeded to a neighboring indoor tennis court, where they convened their session.

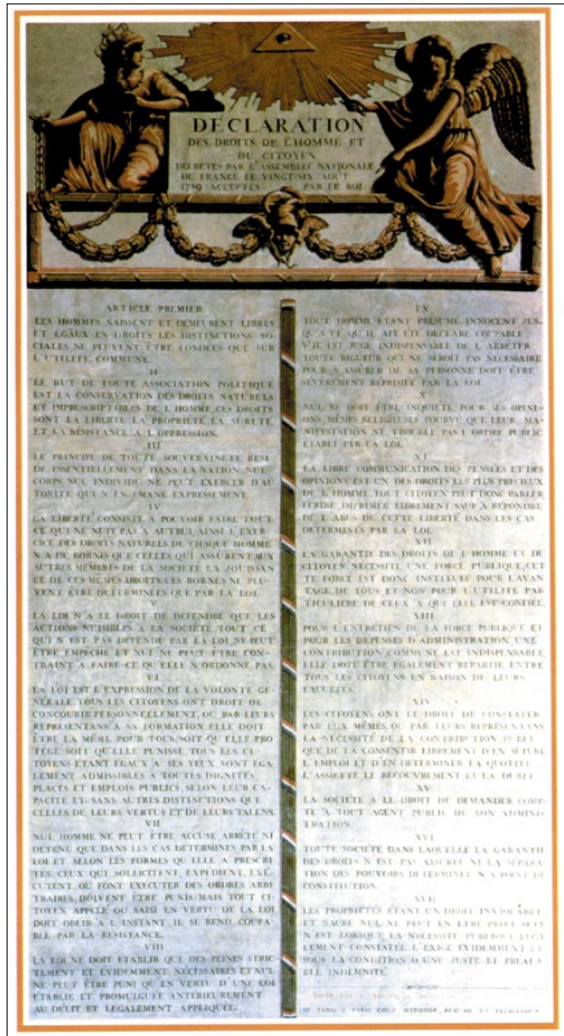
Great art has expressed the struggle for human rights.

At a special viewing of the exhibition, one guest commented that all the power of the state couldn't have put together a display of such substance. Another called it an examination of the entire history of the French Revolution. Still another expressed his excitement in being given the opportunity to view an actual copy of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

When we examine the theme of art and the French Revolution, we must keep in mind that art has been one means by which the struggle for human rights has been expressed. Great art is at its essence a treasure encompassing the spirit of all humanity. It is a force that elevates the heart to a nobler plane.

In the course of human history, however, art has often been the exclusive property of the privileged few. It has been treated as a symbol of power, contributed to the glory of kings and nobles, and been used to embellish the religious authority of churches or monasteries.

At times, it has also been the object of plunder by conquerors. It is a well-known fact that the oppressors of Nazi Germany vied with one another to take art



The text of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, adopted by France's National Assembly on Aug. 26, 1789, proclaims the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

from the territories that they occupied for their private collections. The point is that historically, art for the most part was not made accessible to the masses, let alone considered something that exists for the people.

But the art of the French Revolution is different. It overflows with the joy of ordinary people who have been released from the shackles of oppression and have won their dignity as human beings.

It was not created to serve the powerful. Rather, it was born from a deep desire to celebrate the lives of the people, to sing the praises of humanity. In the world of art, the French Revolution indeed constituted a major revolution.

Art has the power of fusion. It brings people together, awakening them to their com-

mon foundation as human beings through its universal qualities. It creates a world of humanism that enables people everywhere to respect one another's lifestyles and traditional cultures, and to share with and learn from one another. That's because it is a world that respects and guarantees human rights.

But those who suppress human rights dislike culture and the arts. They detest them. Attempting to distinguish and separate themselves from others, such people restrict art, which is meant to be enjoyed by all, to the narrow realm of their own country or ethnic group, rejecting anything that is different.

That Nazis burned books by Jewish authors is well known, but they also denied the works of Jewish artists, labeling them "de-

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



Jacques Louis David's 'Oath of the Jeu de Paume' portrays the historic moment of the French Revolution when, in June 1789, the National Assembly vowed not to adjourn until a constitution had been adopted.

generate." The Soviet dictator Stalin of the same period likewise persecuted artists whose works he deemed were out of keeping with socialist values.

By liberating the human spirit, art has the power to enlighten people to the fact that human rights belong to everyone. To the tyrants, the sight of the people soaring on wings of freedom was unbearable.

That which unites people is good. That which divides them is base and evil. The original purpose of religion is to bring people together and produce positive values. That is why, throughout history, a vibrant spirit of faith has always been at the foundation of all outstanding art and culture. Religion that is genuinely sublime will without fail cause a flowering of art and culture.

In our dialogue *Dawn after Dark*, the distinguished art critic René Huyghe, to whom I am greatly indebted, commented that, "Art and religion travel the same path leading human beings outside themselves toward a [transcendent] reality" (p. 316). Both art and religion speak to and move the

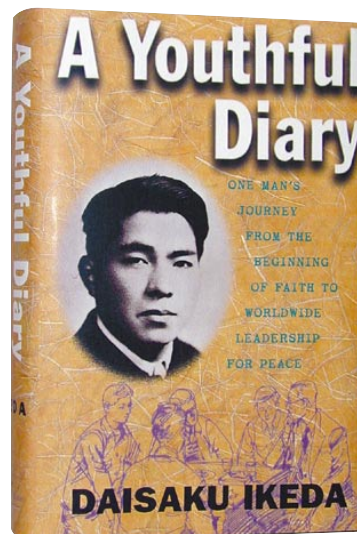
human spirit, seeking to liberate people internally. They enable people to appreciate the sanctity of life and develop a universal understanding of human rights. In that sense, they spring from the same profound dimension.

Five in a series



In the Ikeda-Huyghe dialogue 'Dawn after Dark,' the distinguished art critic René Huyghe says, 'Art and religion travel the same path leading human beings outside themselves toward a [transcendent] reality.'

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AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

What Is Kosen-rufu?

Remembering his mentor's death — and how his mentor dedicated his life to kosen-rufu — SGI President Ikeda asks, 'What is kosen-rufu?' He answers: 'It is the strengthening of the forces of the Buddha.... It means expanding the network of people who are dedicated to good and will fight for that cause with all their might from beginning to end.'

The season has arrived once again when the Youth Cherry Tree in front of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, is in full bloom.

Each year, as spring approaches and my thoughts turn to the imminent blossoming of the cherries, April 2, the anniversary of my mentor's death, comes round again.

When a human being confronts the death of the most important person in his life, when he gazes at the lifeless body, he grieves, he bestirs himself, and he is ready for anything.

Even after the memorable ceremony 42 years ago on March 16, 1958, Josei Toda continued to issue directives on organizational matters from the Rikyo-bo lodging, where he was residing during his stay at the head temple. His physical condition, however, deteriorated further.

On March 26, aware of his decline, he instructed his physician, a disciple and fellow Soka Gakkai member: "Please don't tell my family about my failing health. If you do, they will only worry, and it will serve no useful purpose. I know what's happening to me. Just contact them after I have died. It's meaningless to simply cause them worry. This is the theory of value."

Because of Mr. Toda's insistence, we were unable to notify his family about his condition until March 30. On that day, Director Satoru Izumi and I went to see his family in Tokyo and, after discussing the situation with them, it was agreed that we would have Mr. Toda hospitalized.

In the middle of the night, a little after 2:00 a.m. on April 1, Mr. Toda left the head temple and traveled from Numazu Station to Tokyo by train, occupying a

sleeping berth. He was unable to get up, so we moved him as he was, resting in his bedding. Immediately after arriving at Tokyo Station early in the morning, he was admitted to the Nihon University Surugadai Hospital in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward.

The following day, April 2, learning that his condition had improved somewhat, his disciples rejoiced. But at 6:45 that evening, Mr. Toda's son delivered the news to me by phone at the Headquarters that his father had died.

Thus the curtain closed on the turbulent life of the 58-year-old Josei Toda, a great leader of kosen-rufu. To this day, I cannot describe the shock I felt on my mentor's death — it was as if the sun had set for all eternity, never to rise again.

Strangely, when the news came, all the directors and leaders of the young men's and young women's divisions were gathered at the Headquarters, the main bastion of the kosen-rufu movement. The all-important unity that the organization would need after Mr. Toda's death was right there.

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When I think about it, Mr. Toda's every word and action was a final injunction designed to instruct and guide us, his disciples, so that we could carry on the work of kosen-rufu when he was gone. His every word and action was our training for the future.

On March 22, a meeting of the top Soka Gakkai leaders had been held at the Rikyo-bo lodging. The leaders knelt in a semicircle around Mr. Toda, who sat up on his futon. His words, wrung out from the very depths of his being, flashed through the room like lightning: "The Soka Gakkai is my life. It must always remain an organization of pure faith that exists to accomplish kosen-rufu. We must never stand by and let our precious organization be polluted by impure hearts and minds!" All who heard that mighty lion's roar can still hear it vividly to this day.

Mr. Toda was always saying that the Soka Gakkai was more important to him than his own life. During World War II, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's first president, was persecuted and thrown in prison by the military authorities. There, he eventually died. Many Soka Gakkai leaders abandoned their faith, and the organization crumbled to dust.

When Mr. Toda was released from prison on July 3, 1945, a few short weeks before the end of the war, he burned with the desire for revenge. He wanted revenge against the evil of authority that had killed his mentor in prison and plunged countless people into the depths of unspeakable suffering.

He knew that if he fought in earnest to achieve kosen-rufu, the three obstacles and four devils, as well as the three powerful enemies, were bound to arise in great number to hinder him. But if the Soka Gakkai were as weak and spiritless as it had been during the war, if it quailed and trembled before opposition, he would never avenge his mentor's death.

He had to build an organization of people whose resolve and commitment would remain unshaken, irrespective of the great persecution and oppression that they might face. And he was determined to foster champions of justice who would be willing to put their lives on the line to fight staunchly against evil and injustice, never flinching at the fiercest storms.

This was the magnificent vow of Mr. Toda, who had transcended the fear of death.

People gathering together aimlessly, without purpose, cannot summon the necessary determination and power to effect true change. Consequently, they cannot hope to triumph in the struggle between the Buddha and negative forces. Mr. Makiguchi always used to say, "Rather a single lion than a thousand sheep!"

Looking into the darkness of the distant future, gazing at the unknown that lay far beyond the present, Mr. Toda personally began to raise, with painstaking care, one genuinely committed disciple after another. He went on to forge them into outstanding leaders of matchless inner strength, who would display their potential to the fullest, no matter how dark the times they faced in the Latter Day of the Law.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 997). He also says, "Although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 618).

Embodying the Daishonin's

words, the SGI is an organization of individuals with lion-like courage, united together in strong solidarity — an organization with a noble mission to fight against the many unscrupulous, treacherous people who exist in this world. And to never be defeated by them. That is why the SGI has inherited the Buddha's will and decree, and is thus uniquely qualified to carry out the goal of kosen-rufu, which no one else has achieved.

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What is kosen-rufu? On one level, it is the strengthening of the forces of the Buddha, who act in accord with the Buddha's intent and decree, as they fight resolutely against the evils of hatred, trickery and intrigue. It means expanding the network of people who are dedicated to good and will fight for that cause with all their might from beginning to end.

When Mr. Toda became second Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1951, he proclaimed that he would accomplish a membership of 750,000 households. At that time, the Soka Gakkai membership was only 3,000. When they heard this ambitious plan to increase the membership 250-fold, the members were stunned — they couldn't believe their ears.

However, achieving a valiant force of 750,000 households was a goal that Mr. Toda vowed in his heart to realize without fail to lay the eternal foundation for kosen-rufu in Japan. And in just under seven years, he reached his goal.

A month after Mr. Toda's death, High Priest Nichijun spoke of the profound significance of the number 750,000: "I believe that in the Latter Day of the Law, the Soka Gakkai, with President Toda in the vanguard, summoned them [the Bodhisattvas of the Earth] forth. In other words, I believe President Toda called forth these people in the number of 750,000, representing the five or seven characters of Myoho-enge-kyo."

I can't help but regard the achievement of a membership of 750,000 households as the purpose for Mr. Toda's appearance in this world. But Mr. Toda saw the accomplishment of this



Josei Toda, second president of the Soka Gakkai.

lifelong goal as just another step in his journey.

He kept his eyes ever fixed on the future, always moving toward it, never stopping for a moment. His most profound desire was to eliminate misery from the face of the earth, because worldwide kosen-rufu — that is, happiness and peace for all humanity — is the Buddha's command.

In December the year before he died, just before achieving his goal of 750,000 households, he said to me, "Our next goal is 2 million!" On Feb. 10, 1958, the day before his birthday, his goal had grown: "Do you think you can accomplish a membership of 3 million households in the next seven years?"

"Yes," I replied without hesitation, "I will do it. I feel even more determined!"

A short time later, in March, he told me happily that he had dreamt he had gone to Mexico. "Daisaku," he said, "the world is your stage. Go out into the world."

In accord with my mentor's wishes, on becoming third Soka Gakkai president, I opened the door to worldwide kosen-rufu. And in November 1962, I attained the membership goal of 3 million households. The moment that was reached, I raised my sights to an even higher achievement: "Next, 6 million households!" And four years later, in 1966, I achieved that goal.

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Succeeding in one's struggles fills one with a sense of joy. Losing leaves one miserable. Therefore, if you're going to make an effort, it's important that you strive to succeed. Accomplishing one challenge is

the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

'AT THE HELM'

VOLUME 7, CHAPTER 4, PARTS 15-16

A Diet member threatens Shin'ichi Yamamoto that the ruling party will use its political clout to stop him from meeting with John F. Kennedy.

Whenever Shin'ichi Yamamoto contemplated the state of the world, with humanity forced to live in fear, the threat of nuclear weapons dangling above its head like the sword of Damocles, he was reminded of this passage from the "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "There is no safety in the three-fold world; / it is like a burning house, / replete with a multitude of sufferings, / truly to be feared" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 69).

As Shin'ichi traveled the globe, he closely observed the lives of ordinary people. In every country, he saw serious social contradictions, such as poverty and discrimination amid economic wealth and prosperity. In some countries, he saw the shadow of conflict.

Nevertheless, the people of every country, irrespective of their circumstances, wished for peace and happiness. They bravely struggled to survive.

If an all-out nuclear war were to erupt, it would have a harmful effect on all nations and even bring with it the potential of total annihilation. And, as the Cuban Missile Crisis had unintentionally driven home, the possibility of a nuclear war was fast becoming a reality.

Shin'ichi was deeply aware

that the time had come to unite the world with the ideal of global citizenship that his mentor, Josei Toda, had advocated, thereby realizing lasting peace. He had great expectations for his dialogue with John F. Kennedy, hoping it would serve to open a way toward world peace. In fact, he was counting on it.

But events took an unanticipated turn.

At President Kennedy's request, preparations for the meeting were conducted under extreme secrecy. But by the time Shin'ichi returned from his overseas trip, news of the meeting had got out, probably because various arrangements had to be made for him to travel abroad again.

Suddenly, word arrived that a member of the Diet, a veteran politician known to be a powerful player in Japan's ruling party, wished to meet with Shin'ichi. Thinking it would be rude to simply refuse, Shin'ichi decided to meet him, and personally went to visit the Diet member at his office.

After the briefest exchange of pleasantries, the Diet member began to speak in a patronizing, overly familiar tone: "Mr. Yamamoto, I've heard you're going to meet with Kennedy. There is strong opposition to

this among the members of my party. The bottom line is that they're saying, 'This can affect the relations between our two countries, so we can't just let him go ahead and do as he pleases.'

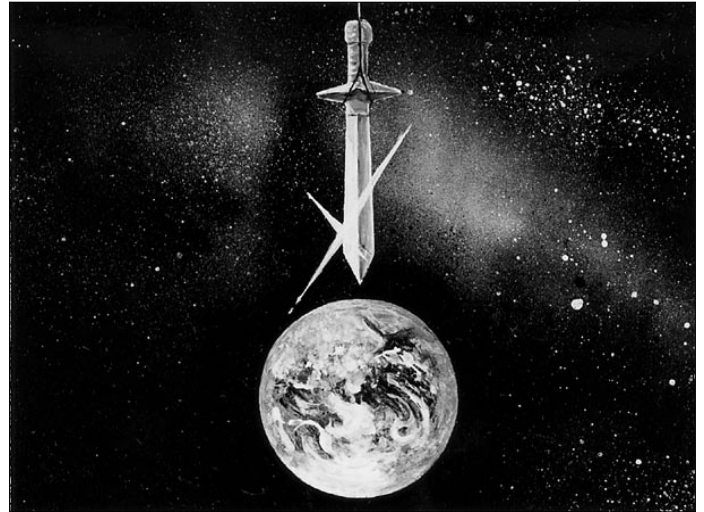
"In fact, it seems that some people in the Foreign Ministry, too, are nervous about your actions. As things stand, there's certainly going to be an uproar. And if a substantial number of my party's members become firmly opposed to your meeting, well, I'm afraid it will become highly unlikely that it will ever take place."

The Diet member was trying to intimidate Shin'ichi with threats that his party could use its political clout to stop his meeting with President Kennedy at any time.

Shin'ichi felt a surge of anger, but he listened quietly to what the politician had to say. The representative cast an upward glance at Shin'ichi, gauging his response. "Now I know," he continued, "that a meeting with Kennedy would bring you prestige as Soka Gakkai president and be an ideal opportunity to gain a favorable impression for your organization in society at large. But it's an extremely tough situation. Both our party and the Foreign Ministry are very concerned. We fear that your conduct in such a meeting could have a negative impact on Japan-U.S. relations.

"However, I want to help you. As the youthful president of the Soka Gakkai, you have a long future ahead of you. I think you are going to become an even more important figure than you are now. That's why I want you to have this chance.

"So I'm thinking about going out on a limb for you. If I take up your cause, I can keep the opposition in my party quiet. Just chalk it up to a kind of fatherly affection for you. I'm saying this in all sincerity.



"I'm not necessarily asking for anything in return, but there is something I want you to help me out with. I think that we can work together very well. And if we do, I can promise there'll be a lot in it for you.

"For example, the Gakkai has formed the Komei-kai parliamentary group in the Upper House, but, to be quite blunt, its influence is still negligible. If you were to join forces with me, I could see to it that Komei-kai gains more political pull."

Shin'ichi listened silently, but his mind was moving at lightning speed. He thought: "The aim of this Diet member is crystal clear—he wants to make me feel indebted to him and use that to exploit the Soka Gakkai for political purposes. We must never allow the pure world of the Soka Gakkai to be thrown into disarray by the dirty hand of political power. But if I ignore his proposal, he will no doubt set about blocking my meeting with President Kennedy. If he succeeds, his party will make a great show of its power and, gloating, continue again and again to try to force me to capitulate to their will.

"No! I won't give them an opening! Although it is regrettable, I will have to cancel my meeting with President Kennedy this time. Protecting the Soka Gakkai is the most important thing. It was not for my own benefit that I wanted to meet the president. It's not so crucial for me to see him that I should have to beg these politi-

cians to be allowed to do so." Shin'ichi swiftly steered a new course.

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

FROM ESSAY, 8

the departure for the next.

Mr. Toda was a great mentor dedicated to propagating the Law; he was a great leader. It was crucial, therefore, that his disciples also rise up as champions of kosen-rufu.

With that resolve, I have endured the unending onslaughts of the three powerful enemies, and I have won unprecedented victory for the Soka Gakkai. Nichiren Daishonin and all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space are praising my efforts. Mr. Toda is smiling down on me, happy to see what I have accomplished. Nothing gives me greater joy.

Be that as it may, the stage of kosen-rufu is vast, boundless. The world is waiting for us. The people of future ages are waiting for us.

My brave comrades! Let us advance! United with fresh determination, let us further strengthen our invincible force of lions and make the 21st century one in which truth and justice prevail!

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on The New Human Revolution" series in the April 2 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.



SGI President Ikeda's May 3 Poems

SGI President Ikeda composed the following poems in commemoration of May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, and dedicated them to the youth division members.

*A new era has at last arrived
Stand up, my young successors,
And lead the way to victory!*

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*The time has come,
The time has finally come,
For you, my young friends,
To take your place on the grand stage
And create a glorious new era!*

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*Strive for the completion
Of the magnificent castle of kosen-rufu,
And give your all to fulfilling
The profound pledge you made
In the remote past.*

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 3 ENCOURAGEMENT

Single-minded Prayer and Concrete Action

'First, start with single-minded prayer,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'Then, follow through with concrete action to make those prayers come true.'

SGI President Ikeda's guidance at a conference held May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, in Tokyo with representative leaders.

Sharing that from the time of his youth he has always striven to actualize the dreams and vision of his mentor, Josei Toda, SGI President Ikeda said: "A person's true worth shines in the achievements he or she leaves behind. The crucial thing is that you take earnest action — not just putting on a pretense of effort while making others do all the hard work. A great history of

kosen-rufu can only be achieved by waging a passionate, all-out struggle.

"First, start with single-minded prayer. Then, follow through with concrete action to make those prayers come true. If you do so, your Buddhist practice will be a bright example of faith manifesting itself in daily life and faith leading directly to happiness. To the extent that you work hard and undergo difficulties for kosen-rufu, you will create beautiful memories and an immortal history, and be praised by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the 10 directions."

President Ikeda also said: "Please always be cheerful, and love and support your fellow members. To strive as a champion of kosen-rufu until the very end, just as Nichiren Daisshonin teaches — this is faith, this is the Soka Gakkai spirit."

Specifically addressing the youth, the SGI leader said: "The 21st century is the Century of

Youth. I ask that the youth stand up and take on the entire responsibility for kosen-rufu."

Soka University of America President Daniel Habuki and Vice President for Administration Arnold Kawasaki were present at the conference, and President Ikeda voiced his high expectations for the ongoing development of the university, which on May 3, 2001, will open a full-fledged liberal arts campus in Orange County, Calif. **WT**

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Developing an Attitude of Trust

PERSPECTIVE

Being flexible and having an open heart are keys to success.

By STEVE SAPPERSTEIN
BOSTON



tance. He was what psychologist Douglas Murray McGregor described as a Theory X manager.

In 1957, McGregor explained his idea of Theory X and Theory Y type managers. Theory X types think their employees are stupid, lazy and unmotivated, and must be given orders to get them to move. They place heavy demands on their staff while browbeating and intimidating them into submission. Confrontation is their lifestyle.

Theory Y Managers are the opposite of this. In McGregor's model, Theory Y Managers are optimistic and have big hopes for their employees. They serve as guides to enable their employees to work responsibly and creatively, and they favor friendship as the foundation of their relationship with their staff. They freely dispense encouragement, inviting discussion and consultation while building an atmosphere of cooperation.

As the SGI-USA grows and human relationships become

more complex, I think it becomes increasingly important to develop an attitude of friendship and trust among one another. The way we go about our business has far-reaching implications in an increasingly sensitive time. I think people today want and need to be empowered. And when it comes to our own and others' shortcomings, patience and understanding — as well as taking the time to recognize and appreciate other people's strengths — will go a long way in making our organization attractive and appealing. Toward this end, I think that being flexible and having an open heart are keys to success.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to encourage a member to return to the SGI after practicing with the temple. I remember trying to figure out what I was going to say as I drove to her house. I felt I had to get my "rap" down pat before I met her. After I arrived, we did gongyo together and then engaged in some small talk. Just as I was about to launch into my prepared "rap," I was suddenly overcome with emotion. In that moment, I realized in a profound way how much I really cared about and

admired this person. From that moment, I abandoned all strategies and spoke from my heart. I pleaded with her to return to the SGI-USA at the cost of my own dignity. I even got on my hands and knees to ask this person to come back. The earnestness of my words and actions became the starting point for some really productive, heart-to-heart dialogue. Tears flowed and we broke through something that produced a deeper trust between us. Within a few short weeks, she decided to begin practicing together with the SGI.

This whole experience has been the inspiration for what I consider to be significant human revolution. The process of welcoming this dear friend back to the SGI has allowed me to clearly reflect on my own attitude and initiate some important changes within myself.

I am also inspired to unite with General Director Danny Nagashima and work to achieve the four goals he described in his New Year's message. That is: to create an organization filled with teamwork and great heart; to treasure our own families and all people; to protect our precious SGI members and not let

anyone be deceived by Nichiren Shoshu priests while showing temple members the beauty of the SGI; and to self-reflect and ponder what is the best way to realize President Ikeda's vision for individual happiness and American kosen-rufu.

This year I am determined to take a giant step with all my fellow men's division members as we continue to build bonds of trust and friendship! **WT**

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BECOME GOLDEN PILLARS OF KOSEN-RUFU

Tariq Hasan, SGI-USA men's leader, discusses the focus of the men's division for the remainder of the year.

Greetings everyone! Thank you so much for all your efforts this year. It has truly been an incredible year so far, filled with great victories. The women's division once again held their annual meetings in February, which always create so much excitement and are eagerly awaited, even by our friends of the SGI. The youth held their amazing introductory meetings in March, with each meeting overflowing with guests. One meeting I attended appeared to have more guests than members! Then, of course, on March 21, there was the great victory in the Seattle Incident Trial. In April, we had a very successful entrance examination with more than 1,800 participants, showing that new members are solidifying their faith based upon study.

Now we've begun the May Commemorative Contribution, in which each of us can show our appreciation for having encountered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and being a member of the SGI. We can show our determination for accomplishing kosen-rufu of our country through our financial support, without which our activities would not be possible. I am sure this month will be very meaningful for our continued advancement.

Although I have spoken of victories in terms of our organization, there are also numerous recent stories of members overcoming illnesses, family problems, financial difficulties and showing great actual proof at work and in society. In his message commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, SGI President Ikeda says: "All of you, my friends of the SGI, have striven to be exemplary citizens, actively contributing to the prosperity of your countries and communities and becoming a driving force for social revitalization. Your integrity of character and the sincerity of your words and conduct have won the widespread support and trust of many people. This is clear proof of the validity of Buddhism" (May 12 *World Tribune*, p. 2).

However, through home visits and personal encouragement, I've also realized there are some men who feel anything but vic-

torious. One problem that invariably comes up is the person's feeling of being at a deadlock in his life — life is just not as exciting as it once was and it's hard to figure out why. The joy in everyday living and the sense of excitement we had in our practice when we started is missing.

Nichiren Daishonin taught that "to accept is easy; to continue is difficult" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 471). As we all know, even if we continue chanting, it is not easy to maintain a sense of challenge in our practice. Especially if we have been practicing for a while and have accumulated some measure of fortune, we are subject to the natural human tendency to sit back and enjoy what we have.

I am sure you have heard the following analogy: When we start to practice, our lives can be compared to a cup of water. As we continue, we are able to expand our life-condition to be like a sink, then a bathtub and eventually an ocean. The problem is that sometimes we don't want to go beyond the bathtub. This might be because we feel the bathtub fulfills all our needs, so why go any further? Or because we've defined how much benefit we believe we can achieve through our practice and the bathtub is the limit. The problem is that our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth is for our lives to be like an ocean. We can't stop at the bathtub!

The good news is that being stuck in our practice is a common malady and there is a cure for it. It's all up to our determination and sense of challenge — nothing will ever change without a profound determination on our part. Once we decide to change the situation, the crucial point becomes what kind of prayer to offer to the Gohonzon.

President Ikeda reminds us: "What are we praying for? How are we praying? A person's state of life is expressed in his or her prayer. Therefore, I would like you to become people who pray with a broad and deep resolve. To pray to accomplish kosen-rufu, to chant seriously for everyone's happiness — such prayer encompasses one's own happiness. Those who pray in this way will amass tremendous good fortune" (November 1994 *Seikyo Times*, p. 53).

Regardless of whether you are experiencing great victories or facing a deadlock at this moment, I would like to share with you a one-year challenge. I believe at this great juncture, one year away from May 3, 2001, we have the opportunity to make a



Tariq Hasan talks with friends at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

great determination to win and open our lives up to be a great ocean. Toward May 3, 2001, let's challenge that aspect of our lives in which we have not been able to create a breakthrough. Let's not select something easy that we know we can accomplish, but something you've been avoiding challenging. I'm sure that if this is a true challenge, then it will require that we do profound human revolution.

It's not going to be easy. But if we want to be happy then at some point in our lives, we have to say: "This is it. This is the time." Besides, our sense of challenge is not just for our own sake but for the sake of kosen-rufu. Whether or not we can truly lay a foundation for kosen-rufu in our country, whether or not we can truly respond to our mentor depends on how victorious we each are in our lives. Let's break through the limits. Based upon this renewed sense of practice, let's hold the most joyful and meaningful men's division commemorative meetings in August. After the completion of the May Commemorative Contribution on June 4, I would like to ask each area, at whatever level is appropriate, to hold men's division kick-off meetings toward August. When the men's division zone leaders gathered at the last CEC in March, we determined that now was the time to help men become more active in our organization. We felt that it was so important to create activities for men to help develop camaraderie, and at the same time reduce the tendency of men in our organization to isolate themselves.

In his poem to the men's division last year titled "Your Noble Voyage of Life," President Ikeda writes: "Do not become alienated from the harmonious community of believers dedicated to

SGI President Ikeda's Eternal Guideline for the Men's Division:

Be the Golden Pillar of Kosen-rufu



Mottoes for the Men's Division:

1. Have a seeking spirit throughout your life.
2. Win in the workplace.
3. Contribute to your local communities.

kosen-rufu and fall into the hell of loneliness! Solitude may seem free of constraints, but it is like a shattered spirit that has lost its center."

As a goal toward helping us reach out to as many men as possible, we felt that if 10,000 men can gather in August, it would be a great contribution to the progress of SGI-USA. This may sound like a big number, but on the average this goal can be achieved if each district has a participation of six men. Home visitation and personal guidance is the starting point toward this effort of helping the men's division be "The Golden Pillars of Kosen-rufu" that President Ikeda asked us to become in his men's division guideline for last year.

As President Ikeda mentioned in his May 3 message, "Though one defeats a million men in battle, one who overcomes the self alone is in fact the highest victor. It is important that we triumph over ourselves. This is the purpose of Buddhism" (May 12 *World Tribune*, p. 2). **WT**

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Northwest Leaders Build Unity

Photos by DIXON HAMBY

By JASON HENNINGER
SEATTLE

On April 22, the Pacific Northwest Region's second annual all-day leadership symposium was held at the Seattle Culture Center. More than 600 leaders participated, some coming from as far as Montana, Idaho and Oregon.

The symposium began with an in-depth lecture on the Goshu "The Gods Same Birth and Same Name" by Richard Yoshimachi, Northwestern Zone men's leader. Other activities included "Gakkai Talk," a humorous skit about our organization's use of vocabulary, team building exercises focusing on unity and creative thinking, as well as

words of encouragement from Northwestern Zone Youth Co-Leader Dave Eisenberg and SGI-USA Vice General Director Ed Feasel.

A skit and panel discussion from the Soka Spirit Committee illustrated the need for courage and determination. Most importantly, they showed that though the Seattle Incident Trial was a victory for the SGI, this is certainly no time to be complacent. The struggle for justice is eternal. Following their presentation, small groups discussed the meaning of the Soka Spirit movement.

After several participants got up on stage to share their thoughts on Soka Spirit and leadership, the youth closed the meeting with a joyful rendition of "Forever Sensei." **WT**



Participants enjoy a skit by the youth division titled 'Gakkai Talk.'



Many friends are reunited during the annual symposium.



Symposium participants register in the lobby of the Seattle Culture Center.



More than 600 leaders participate in the Pacific Northwest Region's second annual all-day leadership symposium at the Seattle Culture Center, some coming from as far as Montana, Idaho and Oregon..



Team-building exercises help participants create unity.



Richard Yoshimachi, Northwestern Zone men's leader, lectures on Nichiren Daishonin's writings.