

# World TRIBUNE

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### SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 25 SPEECH — PART 2

## Toward May 3, 2001: The Rainbow of Hope

'Aiming toward the great rainbow of hope of May 3, 2001,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'let us triumph in all our endeavors and create a wonderful personal history.'

*The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 45th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, April 25.*

in the age of *mappo* [the Latter Day of the Law]. Through art and culture, Soka Gakkai cultivates a happier, more peaceful and harmonious reality than that which now exists in the modern world" (p. 31).

Two well-known American scholars of the sociology of religion, Dr. Phillip Hammond and Dr. David Machacek, have recently published a book titled *Soka Gakkai in America—Accommodation and Conversion*, which has attracted a great deal of interest. [A Japanese translation of the book has just been published.]

In the book, there is this passage: "As the lotus flower is to the muck at the bottom of a pond, so are art and culture to Soka Gakkai Buddhists living

I wish to applaud our two newly appointed SGI arts division leaders—Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter—for standing in the vanguard of these efforts to create "a happier, more peaceful and harmonious reality."

Today, we have representatives of the Soka Gakkai's arts division present. I'm happy to see you. Thank you for coming.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that not advancing is regressing. Even if we chant a lot of daimoku (Nam-myoho-enge-kyo), we cannot really be said to be moving forward or truly practicing the Dai-



A huge rainbow appears over the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall on April 24, the day before the meeting commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day.

shonin's Buddhism if we fail to take concrete action for *kosen-rufu*. That is not true faith. Because action equals faith. Each of you—and the SGI as a whole—is working for *kosen-rufu* and advancing toward that goal on a daily basis. The important thing is to keep pressing forward, no matter what happens along the way, and to emerge triumphant in the end. This is Buddhism. The purpose of our faith is to achieve ultimate victory in life.

The new century will soon be here. The Soka Gakkai has

won in all its struggles of the 20th century. Let's all stay in good health and strive to lead long, vigorous lives, so that we can win in all the struggles of the 21st century—both in our personal lives and in our efforts to widely propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism.

**Nothing is stronger than the prayers of Soka Gakkai women.**

On April 22, SGI training course members and I welcomed officials from the Inner Mongolia Art Academy. [SGI

President Ikeda received the title of Preeminent Honorary Professor from this academy, located in the city of Huhhot, the capital of China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo.]

The vast plains of Inner Mongolia are extolled in a song that has been passed down through the generations:

*Beautiful is the shimmering, eternal blue sky.*

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 2

## MIDDLEWAY PRESS LAUNCHES FIRST BOOK — 'THE WAY OF YOUTH'

By DAVE McNEILL

SGI-USA BOOK PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

The first book from Middleway Press, SGI President Ikeda's *The Way of Youth: Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life's Questions*, will be available at neighborhood bookstores, bookstore chains and on the Internet this month.

*The Way of Youth*, based on

the popular "Discussions on Youth" series in the *World Tribune*, contains President Ikeda's responses to the questions of today's youth. Edited for a general audience, the book offers insights into a variety of issues of concern to today's young people, including how to build confidence and character, learning to live with and respect both yourself and others, finding true happiness, dealing with peer

pressure and how to contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society. Though written from a Buddhist perspective, the book is sure to appeal to teens and parents of all faiths.

Middleway Press, SGI-USA's trade publishing division, was established with the express purpose of publishing and marketing books on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to the American public via mainstream



changing with the advent of Middleway Press.

Middleway books will not be available at community center bookstores or through SGI-USA's Mail Order Center. We hope that interested members will go to their local bookstores, buy the book (or ask for it if they don't yet carry it) and recommend it to friends and family members.

We thank you for your support of the SGI-USA's newest endeavor, Middleway Press, and we are determined that it becomes an indispensable tool for our activities in the United States and the world. **WT**

# Dealing With Anger

## Back to the Basics

BY GEOFF RÖHDE

SACRAMENTO REGION MEN'S LEADER

"Don't get mad—get even!" This might be typical advice from dysfunctional soap opera characters, but it's not Buddhism. Lose the "get even," and you are making some progress. Lose the anger, and you are really getting it!

Anger is one of the three poisons, so we try to minimize,

not feed it! Consider, for instance, Nichiren Daishonin's advice to Shijo Kingo, one of his most dedicated (and sometimes angriest) disciples: The Daishonin tells him that the gods will not protect a short-tempered person, that it is vital to master his emotions, that he should be considerate of those who believe in the Lotus Sutra, no matter what they may have done in the past.

As we practice this Buddhism and try to better our organization, we have to remember to model the behavior we wish to see from others. Getting mad at leaders, fellow members or the

SGI itself is counterproductive.

How best to avoid this trap? We can try practicing as the Daishonin did—that is, not getting mad even at the fools and bozos who seem to want to mess up our lives. We can try also to cultivate the habit of forbearance. The "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" says: "Forbearance means the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. This mind of forbearance is called Shakyamuni Buddha" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 771).

Lastly, before we proceed to blast someone for errors real or imagined, we can reflect on these quotes: "If anyone sees a

person who accepts and upholds this sutra and tries to expose the faults or evils of that person, whether what he speaks is true or not, he will in his present existence be afflicted with...severe and malignant illnesses" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 324). "Believers in the Lotus Sutra should absolutely be the last to abuse one another. All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas, and one who slanders a Buddha commits a grave offense" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 756).

Next week: Ted Morino on righteous anger.

### FROM SPEECH, 1

*Beautiful is the cuckoo's song.  
Beautiful is a young maid's  
tender heart.  
But most beautiful of all are  
mothers.*

Nothing is more beautiful than mothers, it proclaims. May 3 is Soka Gakkai Mother's Day—congratulations to mothers around the world! May you always be full of vitality and good health!

I propose that May 3 be a day when all women's division members take a complete rest from work and activities, and where husbands and children take care of all the housework. What do you say?

I ask the women's division members to have a really enjoyable day.

In a letter to Nichinyo, the Daishonin writes: "Even under such [trying] circumstances, as a woman you have inherited the life of the Lotus Sutra. In fact, you have inherited the life of the parents [indicating the Lotus Sutra] of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Is there anyone else in the entire land of Jambudvīpa who possesses such good fortune?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 916).

There is nothing more noble or respectable than the "mothers" of our organization—the women's division members—who dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu. They shine with unsurpassed brilliance as suns of happiness and philosophy. Nothing in this world is stronger than the prayers of the Soka Gakkai mothers. Soka Gakkai presidents Josei Toda and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi

often used to say this.

The Daishonin cautions Shijo Kingo, a great predecessor in faith of our men's division members, as follows: "With women, you should never go so far as to reprimand them for their faults, much less quarrel with them" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1176).

I want to reconfirm that, just as the Daishonin teaches, the Soka family is committed to thoroughly treasuring the women's division. No one is working as hard. They are worthy beyond measure.

I therefore hope that male leaders will absolutely refrain from bullying them and bossing them about. Rather, men should always thoroughly treasure and respect the women's division members. If anything, they should serve them with the utmost deference.

One tends to find that it is precisely those male leaders who are the most arrogant and overbearing in public who are constantly scolded by their wives and as meek as mice at home. Those who arrogantly bully the children of the Buddha in this beautiful, noble, pure realm of the SGI ultimately find themselves leading wretched, miserable lives.

### Disrupting the harmony of believers is the gravest offense.

The Daishonin repeatedly urged his followers to respect and get along with one another, to advance with unity of purpose—in the spirit of many in body, one in mind. Only then, he stressed, could they be assured the protection of the Buddhist gods.

All members are noble children of the Buddha. We are all

equal. Our lives are all precious and worthy of respect. The Daishonin sought to instill this basic recognition in his followers. When meeting fellow members, the children of the Buddha, I always strive to convey my greatest respect and appreciation for them.

Only in the Soka Gakkai and the SGI can we find an ideal example of the harmonious unity of believers. In Buddhism, disrupting the harmonious unity of believers who uphold the Mystic Law is the gravest offense. The Nikken sect caused disunity among the believers who were dedicated to realizing kosen-rufu. This offense consigns them to a state of hell for all eternity.

It is crucial that the beautiful solidarity of the SGI's kosen-rufu movement never be destroyed. Mr. Toda declared, "The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my own life." Those who seek to ridicule, exploit or destroy our organization will fall into lives of hellish suffering without fail.

### The SGI possesses all the qualities needed of a 21st century religion.

What qualities are needed for religions of the 21st century? In what direction should religions head?

This is a subject of much discussion around the world. Dr. Karel Dobbelaere, an internationally respected Belgian scholar and former president of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion, came up with a list of six specific qualities that he maintains religions will need in order to survive in the modern world. Having conducted in-depth research on our organization, Dr. Dobbelaere

concludes that the Soka Gakkai and the SGI possess all these characteristics.

What is the first quality? It is for religions to have a communal basis and an ability to invigorate the community and bring people together.

Dr. Dobbelaere highly rates the SGI discussion meetings, in which members offer one another mutual support and encouragement, and unite to form a true human community. We thus pass the first requirement, he says.

The second characteristic is for religions to inspire people to live vibrant, joyous lives and bring forth dynamic energy. Dr. Dobbelaere sees the daily practice of gongyo performed by SGI members and the various SGI activities they participate in as a great source of vitality and energy.

Indeed, the SGI members tend to brim with life and enthusiasm. The Nikken sect, in stark contrast, has devolved into utterly lifeless, enervated "funeral Buddhism."

What is the third quality? It is for religions not to restrict themselves solely to the sphere of the individual but to provide motivation for both public and private spheres to improve society as a whole. On this point, too, Dr. Dobbelaere applauds the SGI for the wide-ranging activities it pursues in society, especially its activities to promote education, culture and peace, all of which produce unique value in society.

In particular, Dr. Dobbelaere says that since we parted ways with the priesthood, the SGI has been making even greater contributions to society. As an example, he cites the relief efforts conducted by Soka Gakkai members in the aftermath of the

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devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake in the Kansai area in 1995 and our promotion of value-creating education in Brazil and other countries around the world.

Incidentally, I have received reports of the dedicated efforts our members are making to offer assistance to those affected by the eruption of Mt. Usu in Hokkaido, Japan.

The fourth quality is for religions to stem excessive individualism by stressing social responsibility. Again, Dr. Dobbelaere finds the SGI doing just that. The SGI is in complete contrast to the Nikken sect, which thinks only of its own welfare and prosperity, and has absolutely no sense of social responsibility.

The fifth characteristic is for religions to demonstrate broad-mindedness. Dr. Dobbelaere clearly recognizes that the SGI suffered much at the hands of the priesthood owing to the latter's intolerance, and he was pleased when we cast off those authoritarian chains.

A grand total of 70 million pilgrims from the Soka Gakkai and the SGI visited the head temple before the split with the Nikken sect. Our members also made enormous financial contributions to the priesthood. The Nikken sect's actions in arbitrarily cutting off and casting aside the Soka Gakkai members, who had served the priesthood so sincerely and selflessly, are unforgivably evil.

In any event, the SGI will always respect the culture and conventions of each respective country in which our members practice. The SGI members pride themselves on being good citi-

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 3

## FROM SPEECH, 2

zens of their communities and countries while working in cooperation with people from all spheres and walks of life, sincerely striving to widen the circle of trust and friendship in society.

Some people mistakenly view *shakubuku*, the way we propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism, as exclusionist. However, when we go to the very core of *shakubuku*, we find that there is no higher act of compassion and tolerance. We rise above differences in circumstances and position to sincerely listen to others. Though we may encounter opposition and ridicule along the way, we never resort to violence to get our point across. We rely solely on earnest dialogue to lead others to happiness.

Tolerance is different from compromise. Tolerance must go hand in hand with a thoroughgoing commitment to articulate the truth. Otherwise, it cannot be called genuine tolerance.

The sixth condition Dr. Dobbelaere lists is for religions to be concerned with the welfare of the global community, not just seeking the development of their own communities. The fact that we have members from 50 countries and territories here today is surely clear proof that the SGI fulfills this condition.

Dr. Dobbelaere commends

the SGI for its trailblazing activities for peace. He also acknowledges the SGI's aim of creating a peaceful world where all people can live in harmony.

Based on Dr. Dobbelaere's analysis, we can conclude that the SGI today is a religion equipped with all the qualities needed for the 21st century.

#### Youth will determine the SGI's future victory.

Dr. Dobbelaere has high expectations for the SGI youth division members, saying that they hold the key to world peace in the 21st century.

Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, too, stressed that *kosen-rufu* must advance through youth leadership. I share exactly the same sentiments. You, my dear youth division members, are people of mission who will shoulder full responsibility for all aspects of our movement in the 21st century. You will determine the SGI's future victory.

Consequently, I ask the men's and women's division members to train, foster and warmly watch over the youth. Unless the youth grow, the SGI will have no future, no 21st century. Youth, please stand in the vanguard of all struggles for *kosen-rufu*! Please win without fail. Make the new century a century of the youth division, a century of youthful leaders.



SGI President Ikeda receives calligraphy from the Inner Mongolia Art Academy President Wen Yuting on April 22 at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo.

Youth division members, I'm counting on you!

#### Pitiful is the fate of those who betray the Soka Gakkai.

President Toda once said: "Betray the Soka Gakkai, and see what happens! You'll fall into hell without fail." He was incredibly strict. This was his unshakable conviction.

Pitiful is the fate of those who, though deeply indebted to the organization, betray the Soka Gakkai, a gathering of Buddhists who have directly inherited the Daishonin's teachings and are striving for the goal of *kosen-rufu*. No matter how such traitors may later repent their actions, they can never fully atone for what they have done.

The great German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes, "The coward threatens when he is safe." This describes the Nikken sect — this describes all who have betrayed us.

The German poet Friedrich von Schiller, a close friend of Goethe's, has a character in his play *The Robbers* say: "I never despair even when things are at the worst. Courage grows with danger. Powers of resistance increase by pressure."

#### Win through everything in life based on courageous faith.

Mr. Toda left the injunction "Never let up in the struggle against evil!" No matter what persecution I encountered, I never slackened in my efforts to fight injustice and wrongdoing. The Soka Gakkai has waged this battle 365 days a year, year in and

year out. We have never given in to any of the base, cowardly intrigues directed against us.

I have won. I have indisputably won. I have adorned this profoundly important milestone of the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding with my victory. I want all of you to follow my example and win through everything in life based on courageous faith.

Helen Keller, the renowned author and educator who refused to be defeated by the disabilities of blindness and deafness, says in *My Religion*: "Happy the man who can say to himself, 'Here, too, was the victory!' Here is the shrine of the life we have chosen." These words strike a resonant chord with Buddhism.

Your good health contributes to *kosen-rufu*. Your longevity contributes to *kosen-rufu*. Therefore, please take good care of your health. I ask all of you to lead long lives.

Yesterday, a huge rainbow appeared over this Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall. I have never in my life seen such a magnificent rainbow. It was so spectacular that it took everyone's breath away.

Aiming toward the great rainbow of hope of May 3, 2001, let us triumph in all our endeavors and create a wonderful personal history.

I conclude my speech with my sincere prayers for your good health and successful endeavors.

Thank you. **WT**

#### TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

## Action Equals Faith

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that not advancing is regressing. Even if we chant a lot of daimoku, we cannot really be said to be moving forward or truly practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, if we fail to take concrete action for *kosen-rufu*. That is not true faith. Because action equals faith. Each of you — and the SGI as a whole — is working for *kosen-rufu* and advancing toward that goal on a daily basis. The important thing is to keep pressing forward, no matter what happens along the way, and to emerge triumphant in the end. This is Buddhism. The purpose of our faith is to achieve ultimate victory in life.

- 1) Have you ever experienced that "not advancing is regressing" in your Buddhist practice?
- 2) Have you ever experienced a time when you chanted a lot but did not move forward because you were not taking concrete action?
- 3) "Action equals faith" — what does this mean to you? How would you explain it?
- 4) What goals are you taking action for right now? What action do you feel you need to take that you are not taking yet?

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FROM SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER MATILDA BUCK

# Prayer: A Real Force for Change

By MATILDA BUCK  
SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER

A woman is walking along a river bank, looking for a way to cross to the other side. Finally, she sees someone on the opposite bank and yells across, "Hey, how do you get to the other side?"

The other person yells back, "You already are on the other side!"

Perspective. Perspective in anything, especially in life, can make all the difference. In fact, a change in perspective—especially to one that's clear and lofty—is one of the great benefits of our Buddhist practice. In this article, I would like to look at perspective in terms of prayer. After all, our practice entails very focused prayer twice a day—how can we make that prayer a real force for change in our lives?

Here's a quiz. True or false—"When I chant to the Gohonzon..."

- I feel that something must be wrong with me.
- I doubt I can overcome my problems.
- I doubt I can reach my goals.
- I feel victimized by life.
- I relate to penitents and martyrs.
- I feel I don't deserve to pray for my own happiness.
- I want the Gohonzon to reward me.
- I believe the Gohonzon is punishing me.
- I want the Gohonzon to save me.

If you answered "yes" to even one statement, first: don't feel alone. Second: keep reading.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism empowers each individual to bring forth his or her Buddhahood. This is a conscious posture we should try to take as we chant. Repeat after me: "At the core of my life, I am a Buddha. I can tap this power through my strong prayer. I can move toward my desires and I can contribute to my world."

It sounds good, but for many of us, this is a difficult posture to sustain.

Not only do self-limiting attitudes ("Something must be wrong with me; things always fall through") often seem natural and real, but the truth—that we are Buddhas—may seem unnatural, even preposterous and arrogant. This is how we feel, even though Nichiren Daishonin tells us repeatedly



Matilda Buck

that Buddhahood is our true identity, and even though the Lotus Sutra, which we repeat twice a day, reveals that we all have the potential for Buddhahood just as we are. The idea that we have a deeper identity from which we can make this empowered prayer often is still theory for many of us.

To mark the women's meetings last February, President Ikeda sent us a beautiful message that addressed this very thing, asking us to become happy based on our profound and strong prayer. He referred to Nichiren Daishonin's letter "The One Essential Phrase," which reads in part:

"Even though one neither reads nor studies the sutra, chanting the title alone is the source of tremendous good fortune. The sutra teaches that women, evil men, and those in the realms of animals and hell—in fact, all the beings of the Ten Worlds—can attain Buddhahood in their present form. [This is an incomparably greater wonder than] fire being produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, or a lantern lighting up a place that has been dark for a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years. If even the most ordinary things of this world are such wonders, then how much more wondrous is the power of the Buddhist Law!" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 923)

In his message, President Ikeda focuses on this phrase about the lantern that instantly lights a cave that has been dark for even 10,000 years. "The moment we sit in front of the Gohonzon and offer prayers, the sun of Buddhahood, the

originally enlightened state inherent in our lives, arises, sending out brilliant lights," he writes. But how many of us sit with that feeling as we chant to the Gohonzon? Up until a few years ago, I know I didn't.

Don't get me wrong. In my first two decades of practice, I had changed from a sad and confused person to one who could feel optimistic most of the time. I was able to turn around some tough situations, and I appreciated that I had found a noble and fulfilling way to live.

I also learned how to cope much better with the pain in my life. I kept this pain in a deep, dark cave at the pit of my life, hidden from my consciousness. But I could feel it, at a very deep level. That's how carefully I had accommodated it all my life, working around it so I wouldn't have to deal with it. It translated as a small voice that told me I would always live with pain, with restriction. I could build a lot of positive causes and effects on top of it, I could improve my situation, I could grow spiritually, but that dark cave would remain unchanged.

Until, that is, the lantern of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo exposed that cave and gave me enough light to see this reality at last. But it was not an easy process.

"I wonder," I said to myself (and "wonder" was really the beginning of the process), "if I really believe that the core of my life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or is it instead this deep acceptance of pain, the belief that I will never be without it?"

The answer that came back was a shock: "You have always lived with this pain," my little voice in the cave said. "There is no other way. This is the true reality of your life."

Another voice countered with: "Nichiren Daishonin says the fundamental reality of my life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—Buddhahood. You can become truly happy."

How could I deserve that kind of happiness? I thought, "Well, if I am a Buddha, I should become happy, but to tell the truth, I can't imagine it. It doesn't feel OK to be happy." What could I do?

I decided to try a new perspective, to chant from the perspective of a Buddha. I faked it for a while. I kept repeating to myself: "My life is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; I am a Buddha; I am living as a Bod-

hisattva of the Earth; therefore, I can bring this power out and solve my problem. Not only do I deserve to be happy, I must become happy; that's how I will demonstrate the Great Law."

Because I was trying to chant from a different perspective, an empowered perspective, I began to see things differently. Small, almost imperceptible changes appeared. Think about that cave: Nothing could be more immutable than a place that's been dark for 10,000 years. But even a little light that is shed consistently has an immediate, though inconspicuous, effect. Life that needs absolute darkness cannot continue; it will evolve or disappear. Life that needs light will begin to develop. The ecology of the cave will never be the same.

That's what happened in my own life as I kept that light of my Buddhahood, that new, conscious perspective, going. Within one year, I had concretely changed a problem that had been with me all of my life. Inside my hidden cave, that which fed on darkness shrank, and what needed light grew and thrived and eventually bloomed into an undeniable happiness.

Theoretically, I had known these principles for a very long time, but I think unconsciously the doubt that I could ever change that part of my life was so strong that it squelched any hope of trying, so I often chanted as though the Gohonzon "out there" might reward me for good behavior, but certainly I didn't have the power to change this—it was too eternal and omnipresent. Consciously changing my perspective in my prayer, coming from the perspective that I was a Buddha and had the power of Buddhahood, helped me overcome my doubt and continue until I saw victory.

Overcoming doubt is a big issue when it comes to prayer. Praying from the empowered perspective of Buddhahood will help us overcome doubt. This is how President Ikeda encourages us: "One thing is certain: The power of belief, the power of thought, will move reality in the direction of what we believe and conceive of it. If you really believe you can do something, you can. This is a fact. When you clearly envision a victorious outcome, engrave it in your heart and are firmly convinced that you will attain it, your brain makes every effort to realize the mental image you

have created. And then, through your unceasing efforts, that victory is finally made a reality."

In closing, I would like to share some points on challenging doubt. In the *World Tribune* last year, Editor in Chief Ted Morino explains that doubt-free faith is not a fixed condition and does not mean unquestioning faith. In fact, questions are good. They lead us to delve more deeply in faith and strengthen our life-state. As we grapple with doubt, we build our own deep conviction. When we make the decision "I am going to look at this from the perspective of Buddhahood, not just my own fearfulness or cynicism or whatever," doors will open. Ted describes the process of overcoming doubt and gaining both self-confidence and a stronger practice, based on the nine consciousnesses:

❖ First, using the six consciousnesses, choose to chant with trust in the Gohonzon and in the Buddhahood inherent in our own lives. Couple this with 100 percent effort—that is, prayer plus action—to win day by day. This is the basis for the rest of the steps. (This refers to the first six of the nine consciousnesses: the senses of hearing, sight, taste, touch, smell and conscious thought.)

❖ Second, persevere in this kind of effort, thus increasing our trust in ourselves subconsciously (the seventh consciousness).

❖ Third, as we continue this way, "to trust ourselves will become our tendency," writes Ted Morino, "which is called karma" (the eighth consciousness).

❖ Fourth, as we practice Buddhism with positive feelings, our joy and self-confidence grow and we truly enjoy living, experiencing the fullness of the Law. This is the proof that we can strengthen our Buddhahood (ninth consciousness). In this life-condition, our self-confidence—our confidence in our Buddhahood—is unshakable.

Like the two people facing each other on the riverbank, happiness is a matter of perspective, of where you choose to stand. To achieve our own great happiness, to have the compassion and stamina to serve humanity, we need the power of the perspective of Buddhahood.

We are, all of us, already on the other side. Through a strong empowered prayer, we can begin to know this. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — DEBBIE LIPTAN, PORTLAND, ORE.

# Discarding My Provisional Teaching

**Debbie Liptan discovers the true meaning of SGI President Ikeda's guidance that 'the purpose of life is to be happy.'**

It's remarkable. I've now been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with the SGI for over 30 years. That's almost two-thirds (not quite) of my life! I have so much manifest fortune — marriage, child, home, financial and job, health. And yet...

About two years ago, I became aware of an increasingly unbearable discomfort inside of me. I absolutely could not relax, no matter what situation I was in. Indeed, I was facing a few stressful situations — especially at work. However, it was nothing compared to serious problems I had faced and overcome in the past, using my practice to face and change myself.

But there it was. I felt like I was having a nervous breakdown. I could not stop crying, even at work. It became clear to me that I needed to understand something much more deeply about the life of the Buddha than I ever had before.

So, I started a journey, a quest. At the beginning, it seemed to me, I was trying to resolve a question that had plagued me since I started my practice. What does it mean to attain Buddhahood as we are? And how does that sync with "striving" to do our human revolution? If we attain Buddhahood exactly as we are, why are we encouraged to change ourselves, i.e. do human revolution?

I started seeking answers to long unanswered (and unasked) questions. It was a bit scary. In addition to chanting and deeply studying the Goshō (Nichiren Daishonin's writings) over and over — especially "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime" — I also sought some professional help. I was feeling way too emotionally unstable and needed an objective viewpoint to give me honest feedback.

Wow. What an incredible journey this has been. One revelation after another. The first big breakthrough happened when I was attending a conference last year on "Enhancing Our Relationships" at the Florida Nature and Culture

Center with my husband. In one of the small group discussions, my group included two other women with the same religious upbringing as me. As we discussed our assigned topic, we started to realize that the three of us had a similar issue. It did not seem appropriate to have our own happiness as a goal in life. All our lives, the images we had been raised with were those of people who were "self-sacrificing," virtuous people who suffered for the sake of others.

As I studied the Goshō, I started to focus in on Nichiren Daishonin's admonition to "discard the provisional teachings." I had never paid a lot of attention to those words. I assumed they were intended for people who practiced an inferior form of Buddhism. Now I started to wonder. Here are his exact words:

"Even though you chant and believe in Myōhō-rengē-kyō, if you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but an inferior teaching. 'Inferior teaching' means those other than this [Lotus] sutra, which are all expedient and provisional..."

"Your practice of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of the sufferings of birth and death in the least unless you perceive the true nature of your life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, then your performing even ten thousand practices and ten thousand good deeds will be in vain" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 3).

Wow again. This passage exactly describes how I felt. I have practiced diligently and sincerely for all these years. And yet, I could not feel joy in my own life. What was my provisional teaching?

I soon had an answer to that prayer, thanks to one of my leaders. I was having a conversation with her one night about various organizational matters and I found myself becoming increasingly agitated about how the conversation was going. By the time I hung up, I was totally distraught. I even had a hard time chanting about it. And yet, I had to ask myself, what was my problem? This person, I am absolutely sure, had no idea whatsoever that I was having a problem with the conversation. I had maintained my "bright, positive attitude" throughout our conversation and fell apart when I hung up the phone.



Debbie Liptan with her son, Jamie.

The next morning I had to face it, because I had to do morning gongyo and there was no avoiding how I was feeling. I could barely chant, I was crying so much. Finally, I said to the Gohonzon: "Okay. Whatever it is, bring it on and let's be done with it."

Suddenly, as I chanted, I saw that at the very deepest levels of my life, the nuns of my childhood were inextricably linked with my SGI (and formerly NSA) leaders. Deep inside me, they were the same entity. I believed that I had to live up to their expectations — or what I perceived to be their expectations — in order to be seen to have strong faith and be a valuable "capable person" for kosen-rufu. I had not changed my fundamental view about how to live or view my life since I was in parochial school!

Now I was becoming determined to get to the bottom of what my own fundamental "provisional teaching" was. In preparation for the 10th anniversary of the "Clear Mirror" guidance that SGI President Ikeda gave to the women's division, we all began refreshing our study of that precious gift. What was the very first guidance he gave in that speech? "The purpose of life is to be happy." How simple. How profound. Funny, I had not really noticed that before. Did I think that guidance was for the faint of heart who didn't really have the guts to suffer for the members? Actually, I think so.

So close, I could smell it. I was talking to my therapist — who by now is practically a Buddhist himself — about all of this, about my search for my "provisional teaching," my realization that I'm not a happy person, that I want to be happy, but I have something stopping me, etc. He listened with great interest in what I was saying. Then he said to me: "You know, I see a lot of people in here. Some of them are really not happy. You are not one of them."

Wow. I'm already a happy person? Wow. I see. I really do see. I am already a happy person. My personal provisional teaching is that I do not believe that happiness is an appropriate purpose in life. This is amazing. No matter how many incredible conspicuous and inconspicuous benefits I receive from my practice, I cannot let myself experience joy, because I believe in the depths of my life that it is not appropriate to want to be happy! Now what? Something else from the very same Goshō struck me deeply: "...when you chant *myōhō* and recite *rengē*, you must summon up deep faith that Myōhō-rengē-kyō is your life itself" (WND, p. 3).

He did not say, "Hang in there and keep chanting...some day you'll get it." "Summon up," he said. I have to do it myself. That's what he's saying. I can do it myself. I need to reform my life view, reprogram my underlying operating system.

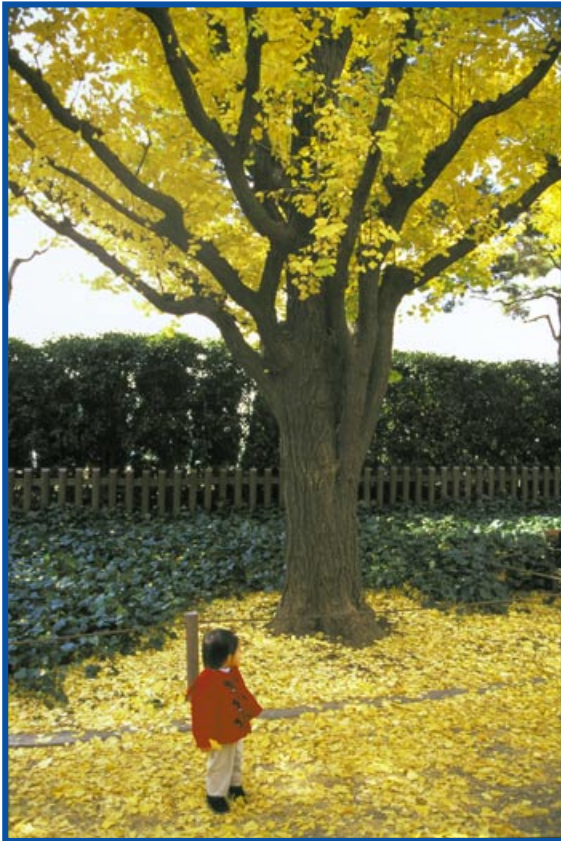
So, here's what I'm doing. Every day I tell myself three

things, over and over again. They are: 1) I am a happy person; 2) Life is good; and 3) Everything will be fine.

I say this to myself when I'm chanting, driving in the car, walking down the street — whenever I find myself feeling that anxious, I-know-there's-a-catastrophe-I-must-prevent feeling. I am working to actually change how I view life. I have decided that this is the year that I begin to live as a Buddhist, not just practice Buddhism. I now know there is a huge difference.

And something else, too. I believe this is my mission, our mission, as American born Buddhists. Only we can get to the bottom of what will prevent someone raised in our culture from fully experiencing the joy of practice, the joy of life. As we uncover — each of us — our own "provisional teaching" and then discard it, we can share in our own unique language our discoveries with our fellow Americans. We are the Kumarajivas of American kosen-rufu. We can teach the essential spirit of Nichiren Daishonin to America! **W**

**If you have any questions about your subscription to the *World Tribune* or *Living Buddhism* magazine, please call 1-800-835-4558**



'May the future of this infant be filled with blessings!' Tokyo, Japan. December 1999. Photo by Daisaku Ikeda.

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



Wilma Webb, representing the Honorable Wellington E. Webb, mayor of the City and County of Denver, presents the City and County of Denver Proclamation to Fred Zaitu, SGI-USA executive advisor, declaring May 23 'Dialogue With Nature' Day in honor of SGI President Ikeda.

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



Jazz trio, led by noteworthy local musician and member Joe Andres (left), plays during the exhibit's opening.

**SGI PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO DENVER'S 'DIALOGUE WITH NATURE' EXHIBIT**

# Expanding the Road to Understanding and Exchange

**'Nothing gives me more joy if I can, through my photos, help expand the road to mutual understanding and cultural exchange beyond the limits of national boundaries and beyond the lapse of time,' SGI President Ikeda says.**

My sincere gratitude to the Mayor of Denver, the Honorable Wellington E. Webb, and the Vice Provost of the University of Denver, the Honorable Ved P. Nanda, those city officials who have devoted their time and effort in support of this photo exhibit and many others who took time to attend its opening today.

Indeed, it is my great honor that you all kindly worked together to hold such a magnificent exhibition for my photos in Denver, the Queen City of the Plains. For this, I am truly grateful.

In June 1996, I visited Denver for the first time. Deep in my heart, I have since been adoring this international city hugged by the great Rocky Mountains. Denver always reminds me of the infinite expanse of blue skies, the land and lakes full of fresh foliage, the Rocky Mountains that exude such resolute spirit and, most of all, the beautiful hearts of its people.

Though my stay in Denver was short, the unlimited splendor of your city was deeply etched in my heart.

In the midst of my hectic schedule, each photo I took at my lodging or from the window of my car records a moment of life that I encountered in Denver. Indeed, photography possesses a wondrous power to enshrine a moment for eternity.

Of course, I am not a professional photographer. As an individual who endlessly admires art that is open to all people, nothing gives me more joy if I can, through my photos, help expand the road to mutual understanding and cultural exchange beyond the limits of national boundaries and beyond the lapse of time.

When I visited your city four years ago, I received an honorary doctorate in education from the University of Denver, an academic citadel of pioneering spirit. No award reflects such universality than one given in the world of education.

The "Ikeda Cherry Trees" planted near the SGI-USA Denver Culture Center and enjoyed by the citizens of Denver have been commended several times for beautifying the city. I understand that our members, to embellish their beloved city, have planted more than 500 cherry trees.

We, the SGI members, are determined to advance together with our communities, aiming toward the creation of a great haven of humanity for the 21st century.

I end my message of gratitude with my heartfelt prayer for the good health of all present and for the further glory of this treasured land that the world holds in such high esteem.

*Daisaku Ikeda  
President  
Soka Gakkai International  
May 23, 2000*



'The blazing sun prepares to touch the ocean.' Okinawa, Japan. February 1999. Photo by Daisaku Ikeda.

Photo by CAROL DIMEFF



(L-r) Andrew Hudson, spokesman for Mayor Wellington Webb; Cara Roberts, director of the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film; SGI-USA Western Zone leaders Brian Matsuo and Rita Risom; Wilma Webb, the secretary's assistant, District 8, U.S. Dept. of Labor; Dr. Ved P. Nanda, vice provost, University of Denver; Jan Tyler, City and County of Denver election commissioner and member of SGI-USA; and Fred Zaitzu, SGI-USA executive advisor.

# Denver Welcomes 'Dialogue With Nature' Exhibit

By LISA MATSUO  
DENVER CORRESPONDENT

On May 23, an exhibit of SGI President Ikeda's photographs titled "Dialogue With Nature" opened at the Denver City and County building, sponsored by the Mayor's Office of Art, Culture and Film, the University of Denver and the members of SGI-USA's Rocky Mountain Region.

From the majestic view of the Rocky Mountains to the tiny dragonfly on a lotus bud, the viewers are surrounded by President Ikeda's more than 80 photographs taken around the world.

Adjoining the exhibit is a pictorial history of the SGI-USA Denver cherry tree-planting project. For 12 years, members in Denver have contributed to their city in their own unique "dialogue with nature" by annually planting the Ikeda cherry trees.

Denver's first lady Wilma Webb presented SGI-USA Executive Advisor Fred Zaitzu with Denver Mayor Wellington Webb's proclamation of May 23 as "Dialogue With Nature" Day.

The first-ever Global Harmony Award presentation was presented to President Ikeda and accepted on his behalf by Mr. Zaitzu. University of Denver Vice Provost Ved P. Nanda,



Photo by CAROL DIMEFF

Discussing one of President Ikeda's works.

who was also the keynote speaker, presented the award.

"Daisaku Ikeda is not just a poet, nor just a philosopher," said Dr. Nanda. "He talks about what matters to him and to us. He talks about all the problems that challenge us as human beings. I am overwhelmed with his deep insight and I am deeply grateful to President Ikeda for his contributions to global peace."

Dr. Nanda called "Dialogue With Nature" a feast for the eye, as well as the mind, the body and the soul. "I hope that more and more people come and see it" he said. "It's wonderful!"

The exhibit is open and free to the public until June 16. **WT**



'A dragonfly rests upon a lotus bud.' Tokyo, Japan, July 1991. Photo by Daisaku Ikeda.



'Peach blossoms in luxurious abundance at the height of spring.' Yamanashi, Japan. April 1998. Photo by Daisaku Ikeda.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 13 SPEECH—PART 1

# The Spirit Must Prosper

**'If the spirit prospers,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'it will lead to happiness for the individual and true prosperity for society.'**

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at a Soka Gakkai Youth Division General Meeting, held at the Soka University Auditorium in Hachioji, Tokyo, May 13.*

**M**y friends of the youth division from throughout Japan, thank you for coming from such long distances to attend today's meeting!

At the outset, I wish to say this: As youth, please write histories of momentous achievement! Please strive so hard that you astonish the whole country with what you accomplish!

I fought. Wherever I went, I created a fresh history in our movement for kosen-rufu. I won the struggle in Osaka in 1956, even though everyone said we could not possibly succeed. Newspapers at the time ran the headline "The Unbelievable Has Happened!" That's just how startling a victory it was. Everything I have done has been a shared struggle with my mentor, Josei Toda, and that is the eternal pride of my youth.

Today, we are extremely honored to have with us a large number of guests from the Federal Republic of Nigeria. [At this meeting, Nigeria's Conference of the Northern State Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture conferred the title of International Grand Patron of Northern Nigeria on SGI President Ikeda. A delegation of 34 Nigerian leaders, headed by former Nigerian Ambassador to Japan Mai-Bukar Garba Dogon-Yaro mni, as well as ambassadors and diplomatic officials from African countries such as Djibouti and Ghana, were in attendance.] Therefore, I will give you a short quiz on Nigeria.

First, where in Africa is Nigeria located?

(Many members raise their hands.)

How about you?

(The member replies, "It's in

western Africa.")

That's correct. Now, what is the population of Nigeria?

(Again, many members raise their hands.)

All right, how about you?

(The member replies, "120 million.")

That's right. What is Nigeria's major river?

("The Niger River.")

What sport is Nigeria famous for?

("Soccer.")

What is its main agricultural product?

("Cocoa.")

Who is the distinguished Nigerian diplomat who has made unsurpassed contributions to friendly relations between Nigeria and Japan, and who has encouraged and supported the youth of Japan with all his heart?

(The auditorium fills with eager voices asking to reply.)

All right, you, over there.

("Yes, that would be Ambassador Dogon-Yaro.")

That's right!

**Africa is home to the richest human spirit.**

There is a famous saying from the homeland of the worthy, honorable former Nigerian Ambassador to Japan Mai-Bukar Garba Dogon-Yaro mni, currently chairman of Nigeria's Conference of the Northern State Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture. It is: "A person's mind is his fortress." If a person has a strong mind or will, that person and the organization that he or she leads will be invincible against any attack.

There is another saying: "The heart is a tree. It grows where it wants to." The heart is free and unfettered. It is the driving force for realizing the perpetual peace and development of humanity.

A Buddhist scripture also teaches, "It is the heart that is important" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1000). Consequently, spiritual degeneration leads to the degeneration and ruin of all else. Many think this is taking place in Japan right now.

If spiritual decline continues in the blind pursuit of superficial prosperity, only a disastrous outcome awaits. In contrast, if the spirit prospers, it will lead to happiness for the in-

dividual and true prosperity for society. Here lies one of the most important challenges for the 21st century.

I proclaim that Africa—and not least your esteemed nation of Nigeria, which I love so dearly—is home to the richest human spirit.

With the attendance of Mr. Dogon-Yaro and all the outstanding leaders of Nigerian society that he has brought with him, today's meeting has become a magnificent ceremony heralding the dawn of the new millennium.

Congratulations on this historic Youth Division Leaders Meeting and Kansai Youth Division General Meeting!

Just now, my wife and I have received honors of incomparably profound significance from the vibrant nation of Nigeria, which is spearheading the African Renaissance. I am deeply moved. More than that, I am solemnly determined to work even harder to contribute to the welfare of Nigeria. Thank you very, very much.

The magnificent land of Nigeria shines with limitless hope, as bright as the rising sun at dawn. It overflows with dynamic energy for growth and development. The joy of progress and improvement fills the land, and a glorious future opens before it.

In the past, the great British historian Arnold Toynbee and I discussed the subject of Africa. We concurred that an age of Africa would come in the future. Dr. Toynbee, who had visited Nigeria, was particularly impressed by the enormous human energy of that land of education.

**What matters most is whether your spirit is strong or weak.**

Buddhism correlates birth, old age, sickness and death to the minerals gold, copper, iron and silver, respectively (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 733). Birth, or life, as you see, is identified with gold. It is my firmest conviction that the golden brilliance emanating from Africa's youthful life-force will impart a new creative energy to world civilization.

Life itself is golden. I hope that all the youth division members will make their youth a vibrant, golden period. You will be the one who loses, if you do



SGI President Ikeda talks with former Nigerian Ambassador to Japan Mai-Bukar Garba Dogon-Yaro mni, currently chairman of Nigeria's Conference of the Northern State Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Hachioji, Tokyo, May 13.

not shine as brightly as you can, living your life to the fullest.

I hope the young men's division members will become a shining presence, so that people will look at them and say: "He is a wonderful young man. As long as we have young men like that, the country's future is bright."

Also, we are about to enter the Century of Women. I hope the young women's division members will aim for happiness and peace, and lead wise, intelligent lives.

What defines youth? It is not your age. There are old people who are still young in spirit. On the other hand, if your spirit is old and tired, then so are you—no matter how young you are in years. What matters is whether your spirit is strong or weak, whether it is alive or dead. It all comes down to whether you possess a passionate fighting spirit inside.

*(To be continued in the June 16 issue)*

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

## The Definition of Youth

From This Speech:

What defines youth? It is not your age. There are old people who are still young in spirit. On the other hand, if your spirit is old and tired, then so are you — no matter how young you are in years. What matters is whether your spirit is strong or weak, whether it is alive or dead. It all comes down to whether you possess a passionate fighting spirit inside.

- 1) Do you think that our culture focuses too much on youth in terms of age? Do you think that we need to change our society?
- 2) Have you known old people who were still young at heart? What were they like?
- 3) Have you known young people who were old at heart? What were they like?
- 4) Based on SGI President Ikeda's definition of youth — that it is found in our spirit alone — when did you feel the youngest in your life?
- 5) And when did you feel the oldest in your life? How did you overcome it?

# 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 19-20

*'Unless we have leaders who possess a great philosophy capable of transforming this world, which could be likened to a burning house, the times will only become more chaotic and confused,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells the young men's division.*

At the February young men's division leaders meeting, Shin'ichi Yamamoto's voice rang with a burning passion to eliminate misery from this world—which the Lotus Sutra describes as “replete with a multitude of sufferings” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 69)—and build a lasting peace.

“It is said,” he continued, “that we are living in an age of irresponsibility. What will happen to the world if this is allowed to continue? Unless we have leaders who possess a great philosophy capable of transforming this world, which could be likened to a burning house, the times will only become more chaotic and confused.

“We of the Soka Gakkai uphold the supreme philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which teaches respect for the dignity of life and the equality of all human beings. Basing all our actions on the Gohonzon, ‘the object of devotion, foremost in the entire world’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 376), we are advancing proudly with ‘global citizenship’ as our motto.

“No nation has the right to harm or exploit another for the sake of its own prosperity, gain

or security. The Daishonin's Buddhism provides the guiding principles for preventing such injustices.

“Therefore, let us who embrace this Buddhism rise and sow the seeds of its philosophy of peace and happiness around the world, for the sake of humanity 10, 20—no, 100—years hence!

“April next year [1964] will mark the sixth anniversary of the death of our mentor, Josei Toda. Since his passing, Mr. Toda's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons has continuously resounded in my heart. It elucidates the great principle for liberating humanity from the threat of nuclear war. I am firmly determined to do everything possible to convey his message to the leaders of the world, for the sake of the human race and for all posterity.

“As I was considering my opportunities for doing so, I learned through a certain influential citizen that President Kennedy of the United States wished to meet me in a private capacity. Arrangements proceeded for such a meeting to take place. However, there was interference on the part of the Japanese political establishment.



One politician, in fact, tried to tell me what to do, acting as if he were doing me a big favor.

“Taking everything into consideration, I decided to cancel my meeting with the president this time. I do not wish to bow to such pressure and create a situation where the Soka Gakkai becomes vulnerable to political exploitation.

“Nevertheless, sooner or later I must communicate the ideas outlined in Mr. Toda's declaration to leaders and citizens of the world over. When that time comes, I hope that all of you will join me in speaking out wholeheartedly and passionately.”

Having lost this opportunity, Shin'ichi and President Kennedy never had another chance to meet. Some 10 months later, President Kennedy was felled by an assassin's bullet.

Following the YMD leaders meeting on Feb. 1, Shin'ichi attended the young women's division leaders meeting on Feb. 4, also held at Waseda University's Memorial Auditorium. Shin'ichi again spoke on his mentor's Declaration for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons.

“Japan is the only country in the world that experienced firsthand during the war the destructive effects of the atomic bomb,” he said. “This qualifies

us to tell the world that a nuclear war must never be permitted to break out, and that all nuclear weapons should be banned. In fact, it gives us the responsibility, the duty, to do so. This is why I am determined to spend my life, along with all of you, widely proclaiming the ideas that Mr. Toda outlined in his declaration.

“I also propose that, as a step toward realizing peace, the leaders of nations around the world gather for a summit once a month, or even once every two or three months, to discuss peace. Not only the United States or the Soviet Union would play host to such a summit but countries around the world, such as China, Japan, Thailand, Ethiopia and so on.

“The objectives of the summit would be world peace, the welfare of all humanity and the prevention of war. I believe that if such a meeting was held regularly for a year or two, extremely meaningful results could be achieved.

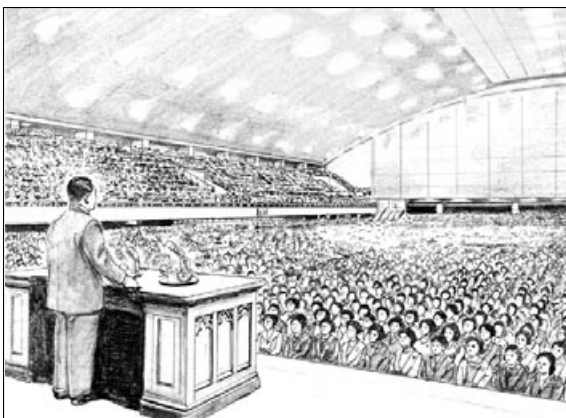
“Let us strive not only for our own happiness but unite and advance for the happiness of all suffering people, for society and for the world.”

The youth felt they had caught a glimpse of Shin'ichi's profound commitment to carrying out the wishes of his mentor and doing everything in his power to realize world peace.

February was traditionally a month of heightened efforts for propagation in the Soka Gakkai. This “February tradition” began in 1952, when Shin'ichi, then leading the activities of Tokyo's Kamata Chapter as a chapter staff, broke the propagation record accomplished in a single month by a single chapter. He achieved an unprecedented 201 new member households, which served as a major breakthrough, triggering a wave of propagation that eventually led to the realization of Mr. Toda's lifelong dream of 750,000 member households.

Now that February had arrived again, the members were filled with fresh enthusiasm to introduce others to the Daishonin's Buddhism. The women's division's activities were particularly noteworthy. Embracing their friends with gentle smiles, they spoke earnestly and sincerely of the way to true happiness. The glowing heart of their humanity brought warmth and comfort to all around them. Through their efforts, friends gradually opened hearts that had been stubbornly shut. As a result, the sphere of mutual understanding and sympathy grew ever wider.

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



# Impressions of SGI Spring Training Course in Japan

**Five hundred SGI members from 50 countries attended the recent SGI Training Course in Tokyo, April 22–26. The following are impressions of five of the 55 SGI-USA participants.**

**T**hrough participating in the spring training course in Japan, I learned about the kind of person Buddhism can help me become. I encountered hundreds of SGI members who embodied the qualities of just this sort of person. These members greeted the participants wherever we went, always wearing warm smiles, waving colorful SGI flags and oftentimes even bowing to us.



This spirit was crystallized for me by the final words of President Ikeda at the 45th Headquarters Meeting, held at the palatial Makiguchi Hall. At the end of the presentation, President Ikeda bowed deeply to the applauding crowd. He then addressed the gathering by explaining that the reason he had bowed to us is that he knows that each and every one of us is a Buddha. He reiterated that he deeply believes this, and with emphasis declared, "And that is what makes me strong!"

There stood one of the most respected men of this century—a writer, poet, photographer, philosopher and the founder of numerous institutions—an individual who has literally altered the destiny of humanity. And what did he do? He insisted that his strength derived from his ability to bow to the Buddha nature of others.

I am determined to learn how to bow to the Buddha nature of others here in the United States with at least a fraction of the sincerity that my Buddha nature was bowed to by the SGI members of Japan.

—ADAM GAMBLE, Cape Cod, Mass.

**S**GI General Director Eiichi Wada said something in one of the meetings that struck me. He talked about celebrating May 3 with the prime point of

mentor and disciple, and that we need to deepen our understanding of and renew our pledge to our mentor. He said that mentor and disciple is not just a phrase but the spirit of President Ikeda to carry out his deep profound pledge to his mentor, Josei Toda.



I realized that all President Ikeda has built until now was based on a pledge deep in his heart to his mentor. Therefore he was willing to go through everything he has in order to build this beautiful, solid organization. I also realized that even though my practice all these 20 years has been sincere and consistent, I have never had such a deep pledge in my life to accomplish my mentor's dream with my whole life.

I came back totally inspired to chant to gain the wisdom, courage and energy to persevere and make a difference in all aspects of my life. Dedicated action and struggle for kosen-rufu will enable me to understand the heart of my mentor, President Ikeda. For the first time in many years, I wrote and sent to him my May 3 determination toward 2001. This is my pledge that I will give my whole life to accomplish. I feel now that I am on the path to understanding that there is no greater life than one dedicated to kosen-rufu.

—TINA MAY, Collingswood, N.J.

**H**aving grown up in the SGI, I never appreciated the organization. Before leaving for the trip, a men's chapter leader in Phoenix who participated in last year's training course said, "You'll have a great time," but he encouraged me to take great notes to share with the members upon my return.



One of the activities on our agenda was participating in an exchange meeting. As our group approached the community center in Asaka in Saitama Prefecture, we were welcomed by a sea of Japanese members with signs and flags. I had never experienced such a heartfelt welcome in my entire life. I personally felt President Ikeda's

presence, and for the first time I understood what it meant when he says, "Please take good care of the members."

I realized what I was feeling was the SGI spirit, and that it wasn't just my words that were going to encourage the members in Phoenix. It was my action to correctly relay that SGI spirit to everyone.

I also learned that it is very easy for me to be happy, but the real essence of this practice is to help others become happy. I know I have it good, and it's because of my faith and the warm encouragement that I receive from President Ikeda, especially in the *World Tribune*. I now really appreciate the organization, and I am so proud to be a member of the SGI-USA.

I'm determined not only to appreciate my good fortune but to share with others the greatness of my mentor, President Ikeda, this wonderful Buddhism, and the SGI organization. Everyone should have it this good.

—JEE MOON, Phoenix



**J**ust before I went to Japan, I felt stuck in my life and in my Buddhist practice. I felt I had reached my limit in terms of what I could achieve in my life. I took it as my mission in going to Japan to embrace President Ikeda's guidance. I saw his vision. I was amazed at how many people of different countries practice this Buddhism. I could see that kosen-rufu could be actualized. Although this conference was about the Soka Spirit issue, the emphasis was on the mentor-and-disciple relationship. Each country that gave a report mentioned the Seattle Incident, and I was moved that they were all using this incident as the stepping stone.

Mr. Wada mentioned how President Toda told young Daisaku Ikeda that one day he would like to see a school established to fulfill Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's philosophy of education. President Ikeda promised that he would establish a university. Two days later, we visited Soka University in Japan, and I saw how big it was and all the awards that President Ikeda has received. I realized that he was able to do that because he carried out President Toda's dream.

I realized my commitment toward kosen-rufu was nothing compared to President Ikeda's. He committed his whole life to actualizing President Toda's dream and realizing the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism worldwide. I then realized the reason why I was suffering and stuck in my life was that I never personalized President Ikeda's dream. I was never committed to propagating Buddhism as he does. It was an incredible turning point for me.

I'm determined to share this spirit and help members open their hearts to President Ikeda and to share his vision. I want to support them to challenge themselves to grow and gain fortune in their lives.

—IRENE WANG, Los Angeles

I chanted for three years to go to Japan and see President Ikeda. I really wanted to capture his heart. The first time I saw him was at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo, where he received an honorary

professorship from the Inner Mongolia Art Academy. When he entered the hall, the atmosphere totally changed—I felt at home. As part of the program, an orchestra of junior and senior high school students performed. When they finished, President Ikeda asked them if they knew a Japanese song. After they finished their performance, he told them they needed to practice more and invited them to the opening of Soka University, Aliso Viejo, next year. Some of them were crying. I learned from him to challenge the youth by entrusting them with a goal.



I am determined to introduce two people to Buddhism by July 3, prepare the youth to welcome President Ikeda next year and to protect him with my whole heart.

—SONIA ROZO, South Miami, Fla.



Photo by RAJIV MISTRY

A performance at the Great Lake Region meeting, May 7.

## Great Lakes Region Gathers

BY MAUREEN AITKEN AND JOHN BROOKS  
MICHIGAN CORRESPONDENTS

**M**ore than 600 SGI-USA members of Chicago Region No. 3 converged in Lansing, Mich., on May 7 to propose a new name and a unified goal of increasing peace, culture and education from southern Chicago through northern Indiana and up to the tips of Michigan. Many of the members took trips more than five hours long to get to Lansing.

This first-ever region meeting celebrated a member-voted proposal to change the region name to Great Lakes Region. "I think the most significant thing about this change is that the request came from the membership, a sort of grassroots effort," said Region

Women's Leader Doris McCloskey. "Personally, I feel a greater sense of connection within the entire region with a geographical name rather than a number designation—it's a little more personal, a little more descriptive, much more humanistic."

Youth division member Cole Beber liked the meeting so much that he saw the entire package as a training session that gave him ideas on how to organize future activities. "If you look at our roots here, we started with pioneer members coming to Michigan, and no one was practicing," he said. "Being able to have this meeting is because of the pioneer members. I am appreciative of them, appreciative because I am able to participate." **WT**

**Inspired and Thankful**

Hello! I'm an SGI member here in the Philippines and I've already heard a lot about the *World Tribune*. My first time reading the newspaper, it was very informative and inspiring and I'm so happy that through it, I can be informed of how far our organization has come. I also want to take this opportunity to express my greatest gratitude to the SGI-USA's Victory Over Violence campaign, which inspired us to form our own in support for our common goal of kosen-rufu. Here in the Philippines, particularly the youth division members of Davao City Chapter, we started our activity on March 18 and it's already a monthly meeting. We call this version "Humanity Quest."

The meeting was developed, with the help of our senior leaders and the whole of the young women's and young men's team, where everyone counts. To the SGI-USA Youth Peace Committee, congratulations!!!

—MAYLAINE JANE LADISLA,  
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Thank you for a wonderful article in the May 26 *World Tribune* (p. 11) with Mr. Marc Kielburger, the young gentleman who has the foresight to create his dreams.

Please send our congratulations to Marc and his "Free the Children" international organization.

—foreavedreammachine-  
usa@worldnet.att.net

**Regarding Breast Cancer Experience**

Kay Rynerson's words (May 12 *World Tribune*) upon discovering that she had cancer closely paralleled my own thoughts when diagnosed in April with carcinoma of the colon. (Like Kay, I am a vegetarian, a walker, an exerciser and one who is committed to good health.) I moved quickly from anger to self-pity to determination to fight this battle and emerge victorious with a more profound appreciation of life, of all aspects of my practice, and of my beloved ones.

Surgery was scheduled for May 8 and I made the determination to recover from this major operation and leave the hospital in a week. When my significant other brought me the *World Tribune* of May 12 and I read Kay's "Savoring the Present Moment," my determination was strengthened. I shared the article with visiting friends who had cancer and also thought about it during the seven endless nights. These difficult evenings also gave me the

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opportunity to come as close as I could to understand the meaning of the Mystic Law.

I later recalled Nichiren Daishonin's statement, "Believe in this mandala [the Gohonzon] with all your heart. Nam-myohorenge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412).

I believe that with the removal of the malignancy, and upcoming chemotherapy, together with active faith, practice and study, I will experience the chance to cleanse my body, renew my commitments, and live my beliefs and passions. I intend to treasure every moment; I already see each day as a lifetime. Kay Rynerson's encouragement was a wonderful start.

—DEBORAH KANTER,  
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**About Depression**

I read the debate over the use of psychotropic and antidepressant drugs with great interest. In our society, "mental illness" is a highly charged topic muddled in stigma and shame. I believe that not one of us can say whether a person should take any medication or not. Do we question a post-menopausal woman who chooses to utilize hormone replacement therapy? Do we question a man who takes medication for blood pressure, or undergoes chemotherapy? Certainly not, nor would we.

If a person is sick with physical or mental illness, then he or she can chant to the Gohonzon to get better, and to find the best doctor to help them in that process. Their decision to take any medication or not is a highly personal one: it should be made with a qualified, caring physician and involve their own wisdom, medical research, and clinical trials.

We can achieve enlightenment and absolute happiness from our strong dedication to faith, practice, and study — we all need the Gohonzon to do this. We need to encourage people to seek the Gohonzon ever more in their lives — not intervene in their decision to take medication or not.

If someone is in danger of hurting him-/herself or others, then I believe intervention is necessary in order to protect human life. We should not burden suffering individuals with further shame by telling them that they are wrong, or their faith is shallow, to "use" pharmaceutical assistance under a physician's care. Please, let's be very careful not to judge others' lives. Let's help them find the answer that is right for them, based on their strong faith in the Gohonzon, their study of the Goshu and President Ikeda's writings. Let's honor the decisions they make as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and support them in their struggle to become happy and healthy.

—PATTI COVICH,  
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**Greetings**

CONGRATULATIONS to 12 graduating high school seniors in Washington, D.C., Region! The next step toward victory in the 21st century! From Baltimore: Nick Gardner, Patrick Konfirst and Cassie Lyons; from Montgomery: Bobby Akinshinwa, Tony Geisler, Noni Person, Justin Smart, John Stonebraker and Alena Tansey; from Prince Georges: Lea Dean and Malinda Mochizuki; and from Washington: Porsche Huggins.

SGI members work in every profession one can think of. I am a mortuary science student at Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. I am trying to find out how many SGI members around the world are employed in the funeral services. I would be particularly interested in corresponding with licensed funeral directors from around the world, as well as locating and communicating with everyone else employed in the profession, be it one who works for a livery service, hair dressers, trade people, etc. Please reply to jkwokdude@yahoo.com or, phone at 313.417.3792, or mail to James K. Warunek, P.O. Box 36791, Detroit, Mich. 48236-0791. Thank you very much.



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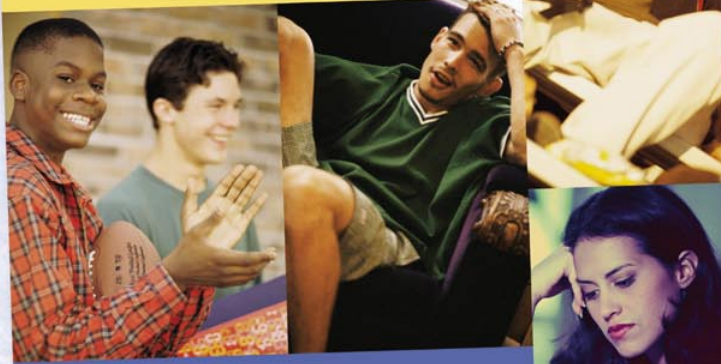
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**Daisaku Ikeda**  
Foreword by Duncan Sheik

**B**ased on the popular "Discussions on Youth" series in the World Tribune, *The Way of Youth* brings together President Ikeda's responses to the questions of today's young people. Edited for a general audience, the book offers insights into a variety of issues of concern to today's young people, including how to build confidence and character, learning to live with and respect both yourself and others, finding true happiness, dealing with peer pressure and how to contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society. The book is sure to appeal to teens and their parents of all faiths.

**"The book is an outstanding guide to humanity. I recommend it to all who desire to seek self-improvement."**

—Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and Founding Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

**"Mr. Ikeda gives young people a way to function in the real world."**

—Marion Collins, Principal, Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies

**"This book was written with the hope that young people can perhaps benefit from the advice of someone like me, who has had a bit more experience than they have. Instead of sermons delivered by persons who claim to have some superior kind of understanding, I hope readers will accept what I have written as advice from someone who has walked a little farther along the road of life."**

— From the author's preface



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