



**EXPERIENCE:**

**Kate Hungerford has a solid expectation for success.**

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**ALAMEDA, CALIF., MEMBERS JOIN CITY PARADE**

## Sending a Message of Joy and Nonviolence

Photos by MIKE MULLEN



Young members walk the parade route of the Alameda Mayor's Fourth of July Parade, handing out information on the Victory Over Violence project.



A young SGI-USA member waves to the crowd from the SGI-USA's float.

**By DIELLE LEE**  
 SAN FRANCISCO CORRESPONDENT

**H**arbor Island Chapter in Alameda, Calif., participated in the annual Alameda Mayor's Fourth of July Parade. Members walked alongside the float to smile, wave to the crowd and pass out pamphlets with information about the SGI-USA and the Victory Over Violence Youth Summit, which will take place on Oct. 22 in Oakland, Calif.

Young dancers brightened the street with their joy and energy, and young people proudly carried the banners and flags proclaiming we were the SGI-USA. Everywhere along the parade route, people's faces lit up when we passed by. They waved to us, asked for pamphlets,

SEE PAGES 5-8

### What Parables Teach Us



**T**he Lotus Sutra, the heart of Buddhist teachings, uses parables to illustrate a number of important Buddhist principles. On pages 5-8 of this issue, we introduce "The Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House," illustrated by artist Nicole Falzone (please see her bio on page 4); the parable is found in the third chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The story depicts the efforts of a compassionate father to save his children from a raging fire to which they are oblivious. The father represents the Buddha who saves ordinary people from suffering and from their own delusion.



SGI-USA's participation in the parade promoted the upcoming Victory Over Violence Youth Summit on Oct. 22 in Oakland, Calif.

wanted to know who we were and got up and danced with the music. The SGI-USA exploded like a fireworks display in the streets of Alameda. Our unabated joy was contagious.

SGI-USA members have always been a vital part of this San Francisco East Bay community through our day-to-day

PLEASE SEE PARADE, 4

# Practice for Oneself and Others

## Back to the Basics

By JOHN KASAHARA  
NEW YORK CORRESPONDENT

Sometimes I think to myself how easy life would be if I could just go to work every day and come straight home without having to go to any meetings or doing any SGI activities. Or if I did not have so many phone calls to members to make at night, how relaxed my life would be.

Then I remember that what I am really dreaming of is a self-centered life. Though on the surface this may seem like a great way to live, it is in fact the sure way down the wrong path.

The reason why most of us are able to practice today and lead lives of value is because someone had the compassion to take the time to teach us about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. If it were not for these people and their "practice for others," then surely many of us would still be leading lives without any hope, without a noble sense of mission. As practitioners of the Daishonin's

Buddhism in the SGI organization, we all have found a great reason to live—not just for ourselves but for the happiness of the world.

Whether at work, at SGI activities or at home, there are always people around us who are suffering or in need of encouragement. Though our own lives may be hectic and not necessarily full of great things at this moment, I believe that it should be our greatest joy to reach out to those yearning for inspiration, chant with them and share SGI President Ikeda's and the Daishonin's writings with them.

The Daishonin says that "if you light a lantern for another, it will also brighten your own way" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1598). Based on this quote, President Ikeda once added: "Please be confident that the higher your flame of altruistic action burns, the more its light will suffuse your life with happiness. Those who possess an altruistic spirit are the happiest people of all" (Feb. 8, 1993, *World Tribune*, p. 4).

With this spirit in mind, let us all become victorious in our lives and help others to do the same. Practice for oneself and others is the great light illuminating the way for all of us in the 21st century. **WT**

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The Golden Stage Group of Reno Chapter enjoy one another's company at a 'Getting To Know You' potluck, March 19.

## Reno Golden Stage Group Blossoms

By NORMA GITTELMAN  
RENO, NEV., CORRESPONDENT

The first meeting for the Golden Stage Group of Reno Chapter held on March 19 was a "Getting To Know You" potluck with 25 people in attendance, of which 13 were Golden Stage members. Others attending were friends, spouses or district or chapter leaders who wanted to support the meeting.

A few members had not been active in SGI-USA activities and said that this sort of meeting was exactly what they had been looking forward to attending. Others had seen one another at various meetings, but had never done much more than say "hello."

After reviewing the group's motto and primary focus, each person took time to introduce themselves, sharing some of

their experiences in practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism as well as their personal interests and work backgrounds.

A second gathering was held during Memorial Day weekend. It was suggested that holidays are sometimes very difficult for those who have family living a distance away or who have limited mobility for various reasons. Our "Indoor Picnic" was ideal because it eliminated having to contend with the elements and gave us a wonderful, relaxed and comfortable atmosphere in which everyone enjoyed the many topics that were discussed. Dialogue continued long after the topics of interest were introduced by various members.

Spirits were high with everyone enjoying themselves from early afternoon to well into the evening. Exiting comments in-

cluded: "That was the best meeting I ever attended!"; "When is the next meeting? This was fun!"; "Can we get a phone list so we can keep in touch?"; and, "I never knew there were so many interesting people in our chapter!"

The Golden Stage Group is evolving and their attendance at district and chapter functions is apparent by their strong support and happy smiles. Determinations have been made to attend the Golden Stage of Life Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center in December. Also, determinations to become more active in the community mark the Reno Chapter Golden Stage Group members as vital SGI-USA members on the go! **WT**

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EXPERIENCE — KATE HUNGERFORD, MARINA DEL REY, CALIF.

# Great Expectations

**Kate Hungerford says she now has 'a solid expectation of success, regardless of circumstances.'**

I grew up in Philadelphia. When people ask me which part I just laugh — we moved so much that in the eight years of grade school, I attended 11 schools. We often lived in federal housing projects and I saw life as something to be endured, or rather, home as something to be endured. Violence, addiction and tragedy were the norm. I had one safe harbor, and that was my ability to draw. It flourished in school and so did I, although I lied about where I lived and had the parents of "nice" families drop me off in front of stranger's houses. Kids from "the projects" were not welcome in the tight little circles of the honor roll, where I had my away-from-home identity.

If high marks in school were enough to produce happiness, things might have been different. But they are not. By the end of high school, I was desperately looking for a way out. After a few years of half-hearted attempts at working my way through art school, I landed in Los Angeles, met and married a talented guy from a good family, forgot all about my art and became a fashion model. I thought I had finally escaped my roots.

By 1984, despite the birth of my son and our financial fortune, I was deeply unhappy. My marriage was in bad shape and I felt trapped again. I blamed my husband for his drug problems as well as mine. Under it all, I felt that I was basically from "bad stock."

What I recognize now was that deep karmic patterns were firmly imbedded in my life, and I carried the same destructive tendencies and behaviors as my family and brought them all with me — wherever I went. Of course, when I received the Gohonzon, I had no idea of how critical the timing was, and that I was about to radically alter the direction of my life.

As my marriage disintegrated, the fear that my child would suffer like the five kids in my family had suffered really woke me up. I started going to

the library and checking out religions. I found Zen Buddhism interesting, but it seemed to have nothing to do with real, everyday life.

A designer friend invited me to dinner one night, and the first thing I saw when I walked into her house was her Buddhist altar. With tremendous skepticism, I accepted her challenge to "chant for my desires for 30 days." I attended SGI meetings and did my best with gongyo, chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo a lot and before the 30 days was up, several of the things I had written down had come to pass. That's the beauty of this practice. It was those very desires that have caused me to chant and lead my life into a rhythm with the universe whereby I am at the right place at the right time — usually in spite of myself. "As is," I call it. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is not just for elevated, spiritually oriented-anyway, ain't-got-a-life-so-may-as-well-be-holy types, but for people like me, with all kinds of human weaknesses and strengths and the baggage to go with it.

Two years ago, when the collapse of a large company ended my high-paying career as a securities broker, I cashed in my retirement so that my three children and I could live while I went back to art school. I had no idea what I would do for money after that, since I was not getting teaching credentials and there's not a great demand for painters in the work world.

In "The True Aspect of All Phenomena," Nichiren Daishonin says, "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385). That means doing the things a bodhisattva does. So instead of allowing my fears to guide me, I based my action on my Buddhist practice. I have been a district leader in the SGI-USA for 14 of my 16 years of practice, so I know how to anchor myself and my life-condition to kosen-rufu. During this time I participated in the Linus Pauling exhibit, the women's general meeting, my district general meetings, weekly chanting sessions at my house and regularly introducing people to this practice. Whenever my fear snuck up on me, I reminded myself of my true identity.

Last November, I was des-



Kate Hungerford, by her painting 'Not in Dictionary,' at the J. Paul Getty Museum, where she works as a staff assistant.

perately looking for work and getting no where. I had my own ideas about what pay I needed, etc. One of my seniors in faith said that he'd recently decided that often what he thought he needed and what he actually needed were two entirely different things; that these days he has more or less given the Gohonzon the job of delivering, while he himself just does the footwork.

I chanted for the universe to send the job I needed for my happiness ASAP, and promised to take the next one that came up as an act of faith. Later that day, a friend called and when I told her I had registered with a temporary agency, she said, "Well, darn, if you're going to temp, why not come up here to the J. Paul Getty Museum and temp?" I started to hem and haw about it not being enough money, and then I remembered my promise.

I based my action to take this position not on some outside force magically "sending" me a job, but on trusting my prayers as a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

I was sent to the conservation laboratories that day at the museum, and the staff assistant who I was sent to help would hand in her resignation. Two months later, despite my lack of seniority, I was interviewed and awarded the job. I am sure that my attitude of willingness and determination, skills polished by my Buddhist practice, got me the job. But what is truly extra-

ordinary about my situation is that my job, which is administrative in nature (filing, book-keeping, travel arrangements), would ordinarily have nothing at all to do with my own artwork. Also, working full time, being the single parent of two young children would leave me no time to pursue showing my art.

There are some 2,000 employees working at the Getty, and I have yet to see a situation like mine. Of all the departments, there is not one other space like ours; it is a spacious, beautifully lit suite of labs with big, white, empty walls — well, they were empty. When our department head saw a photo of my work, he invited me to hang my paintings anywhere I wanted. There are currently six pieces up and lots of room to add more.

As my paintings hang in the conservation lab of one of the largest and most publicized museums in the world, the heads of several departments as well as conservators, scientists and all kinds of people from all over the world are requesting my price list. The head of museum operations bought a painting last month. As a painter, this allows me an exposure that most emerging artists attempt to achieve by spending huge amounts of time, money and work chasing gallery owners and schlepping long distances to group shows. It also allows me a salary, great medical and dental benefits for my whole family,

a pension fund, an environment loaded with art, artists and one extraordinary view of the city.

Recently, as part of the Getty's biannual staff art show called "The Getty Underground," I was invited to participate in the Art Talk series, where I gave a talk at the Getty Conservation Institute about my art. As I watched the projected images of my paintings, all that kept running through my mind was that anything is possible. Instead of the technical art talk I'd planned, I wound up talking about my life and encouraging the audience to never give up on their dreams. I got back to my desk and there were emails from people I don't even know thanking me.

For me, for every hour of time dedicated to helping others practice Buddhism, whether I am chanting or doing activities, I get back one hundred-fold. I'd say my dream of being an artist is alive and well, and living in Los Angeles. More important, however, is this: After 16 years of experiences that defy the odds, where there once was an innate fear of things not working out, there is now a solid expectation of success, regardless of circumstances. This is real freedom. **W**

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Photo by MARTIN COHEN



**ARTIST**

*Nicole Falzone of Playa del Rey, Calif.*

“When I was asked to do the illustrations for ‘The Three Carts and the Burning House’ parable, I did not realize the profound impact it would have on my life,” says artist Nicole Falzone. “The greatest challenge was to convey the depth of this parable; I had to capture its essence within 14 frames.”

“During this process, I experienced a great change from within. Doors opened in my life presenting opportunities for tremendous growth and joy. I realized the ability I have, but I lacked belief in myself and this perception of self-worth needed to change. I have tremendous appreciation for having been given this opportunity. Through my art and music, I hope to inspire others to find joy and value in their lives.”

The artist Nicole Falzone is a multitasking soul. In addition to being an artist, she is an accomplished musician—drummer, vocalist and songwriter. As an exceptional multimedia artist, her artwork includes ballpoint pen (the medium of the parable illustrations), pencil, charcoal and even fine art creations on the toy Etch-a-Sketch.

Born in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Nicole’s family moved to Los Angeles when Nicole was a child. She showed immediate promise as a musician, banging out mean rhythms with her first rattle.

The young artist sat for hours in the corner drawing crayon creations.

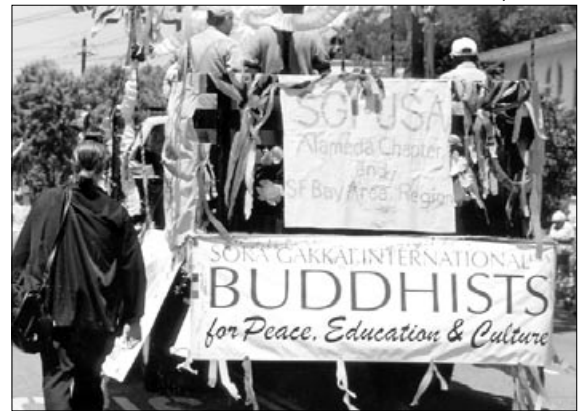
Nicole came from an artistic family. Her mother, Joan, is a fine artist and her father, Sam, is a renowned jazz saxophonist. At age 3, Nicole received a pair of drumsticks and her first drum lesson from her father and at 9, a pair of bongos. Live music inspired by friends and family echoed from the Falzone home on a regular basis.

A hallmark event transformed Nicole at age 10 when she held her own in a jam session with professional musicians, including the percussionist from the rock group Santana. This experience brought forth the realization that music and art would always be a part of her life.

Nicole began her professional career in her teens, and throughout the years has had multimedia art shows and become a prominent session musician, as well as a featured performance musician on numerous tours.

In recent years, Nicole and her artwork have also received significant media attention. She has appeared on *The David Letterman Show*, *The Donny and Marie Show*, *Good Morning America* and has been featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today*. **WT**

Photos by MIKE MULLEN



An SGI-USA jazz band entertains the crowd from the Victory Over Violence float at the Mayor’s Fourth of July Parade in Alameda, Calif.

**FROM PARADE, I**

lives in Alameda. As individuals making contributions to our city, we have been spotlighted in the newspapers and local television channels. But we had never let our community know us as an organization of lay Buddhists. Our joining the Fourth of July Parade was like coming out of the closet proclaiming, “We are SGI-USA.”

We are often reminded that Buddhism is win or lose. When something has never been done before, like a bunch of Buddhists getting itself into a long-

standing, local tradition like the parade, at what point could we declare it a success? Was it in just entering the parade? Was it in getting through all the obstacles that cropped up in preparation before the event? When could we say we had won?

It was clear to us once the parade began and we were representing the SGI-USA to our community, that our victory was celebrating our Buddhism in front of 100,000 people.

Everyone who joined in that day agreed with John Wiitala, an exemplary jazz musician and long-time Alameda resident. “That was the most fun I’ve ever had playing with the SGI,” he said when he got off the float that had traveled five miles through

the streets of Alameda, carrying enthusiastic, energetic and outstanding SGI-USA musicians.

Our radiating presence in the parade said: “This is who we are. We are Buddhists. We are unshakably happy.” For five miles on the long, hot parade route, our energy and enthusiasm for who we are did not stop. We celebrated our Buddhism nonstop, no matter if there was a crowd lining the streets or one person sitting alone.

Freedom of religion is an inalienable right won with the independence of this country, and it is that freedom that allowed Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism to come to the United States. For the first time, it hit me why the SGI-USA’s pres-

ence in the Fourth of July Parade was so significant. In securing the peace of the land, we in the SGI play a key role. Every once in a while, our vitality and

the vibrant truth of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo must be seen and heard in the place where we live. Like a liberty bell, we must ring out. **WT**

**LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS**

RONNIE SMITH  
Mid-Atlantic Zone Men’s Leader

BILL AIKEN  
Mid-Atlantic Zone Senior Advisor

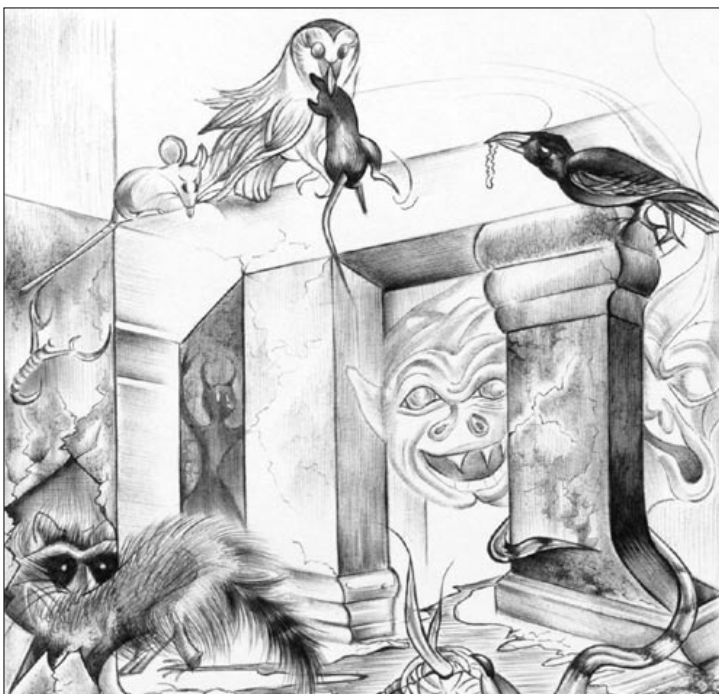
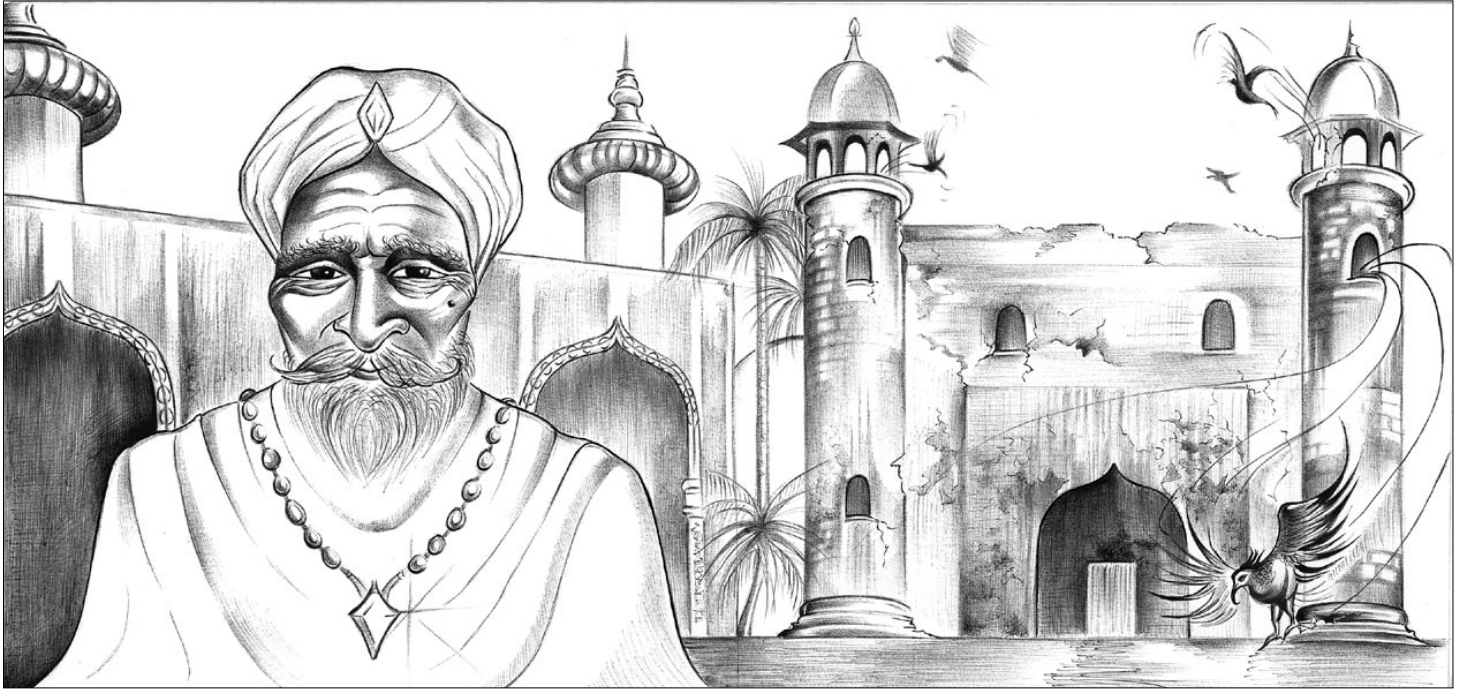
KELI McHALE  
Mid-Atlantic Zone Youth Leader

DAVID GOODWIN  
Mid-Atlantic Zone Youth Leader

# The Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House

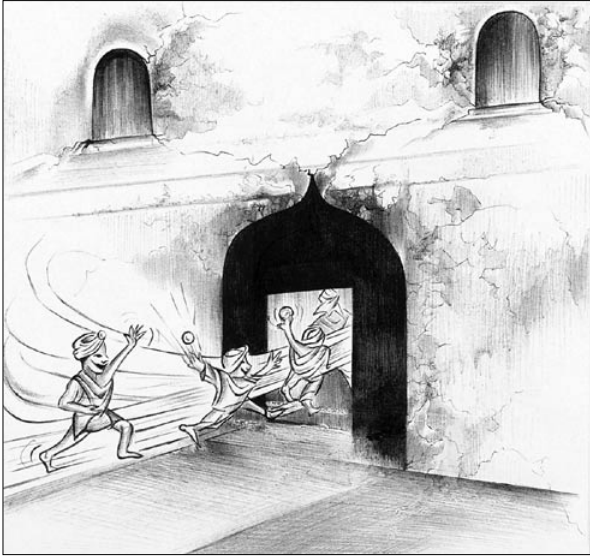
The following parable appears in the “Simile and Parable” (third) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Our day-to-day world is like the burning house, filled with suffering and strife. Like the wealthy man’s children, people tend to live their lives in the superficial happiness of this troubled world, absorbed in playing while all around them the fire of suffering rages. The wealthy man is the Buddha, whose vast compassion for all people is like that of a parent for a child. That compassion is embodied in the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Just as the wealthy man uses the expedient of three carts to lure his children from the flames, the Buddha has employed expedient means to enable people to free themselves from suffering and find solutions to their problems.

*Illustrations by Nicole Falzone*



There was once a man who was very old, and very wealthy. He lived in a spacious mansion on a large estate with his many children. Also on his estate was a very old house that was falling apart. It had been built long ago but had not been cared for, and now it was in terrible condition. More than 500 people shared the many rooms of this crumbling house with animals who had taken up residence. (1)

Predatory birds such as kites, eagles, crows and owls nested among the gaps in the rafters. Lizards and snakes, scorpions and centipedes crawled across the rotting floorboards. And wild dogs, weasels, raccoons and rats scurried in and out of the holes between the walls. The humans and the animals kept themselves alive by killing and eating each other. Demons lived on the estate too. Growling and screaming, they hunted human and animal corpses to feed on. As you can imagine, this was a terrifying place to live. (2)

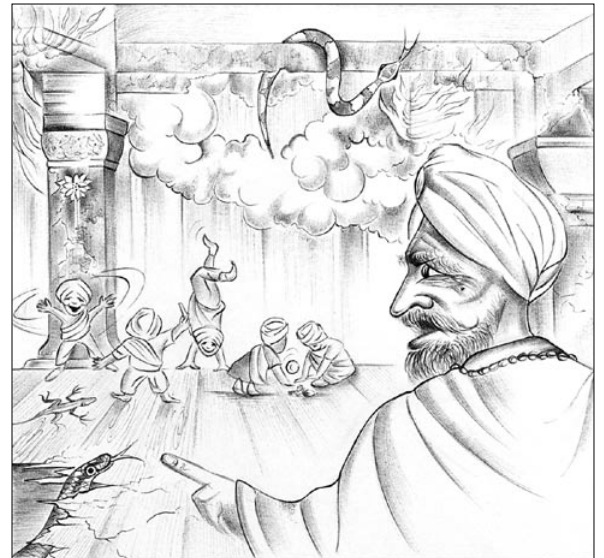
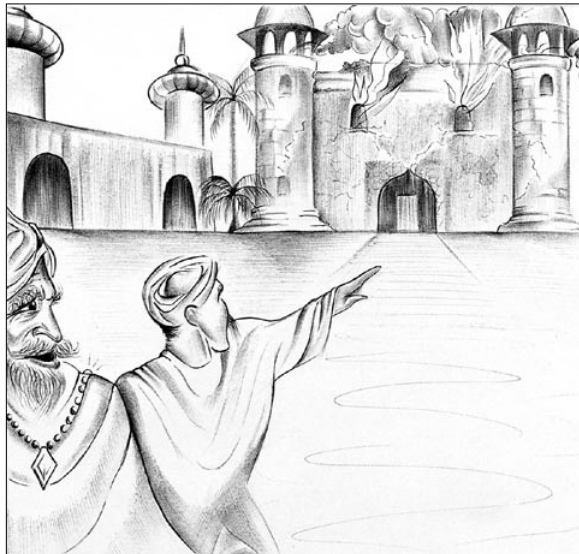


Strangely, there was only one small door to this vast house. One day, the wealthy man's children were playing outside the door and wandered into the old building to continue their games. (3)

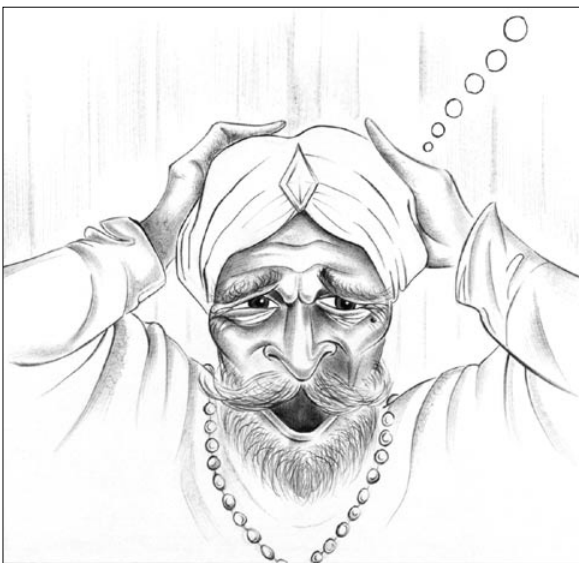


The caretaker had just left to run errands when a thin tendril of smoke could be seen rising in a back corner of the ruined house. Suddenly a fierce fire broke out. The pillars and the walls blazed, and flames engulfed the entire structure. The demons, animals and humans were dying in agony from the intense heat. (4)

(5)  
The caretaker saw the fire and raced to the wealthy man's home. "Sir!" he cried, "I have terrible news to report. The old house is on fire and your children are playing inside!"



The two of them ran to the burning house. The wealthy man went into the doorway and shouted to his children: "Get out! Hurry! The house is on fire!" But the children were so busy playing they could not hear him. (6)



He realized that his children were completely unaware of their peril, and they would burn to death if he did not take action. (7)

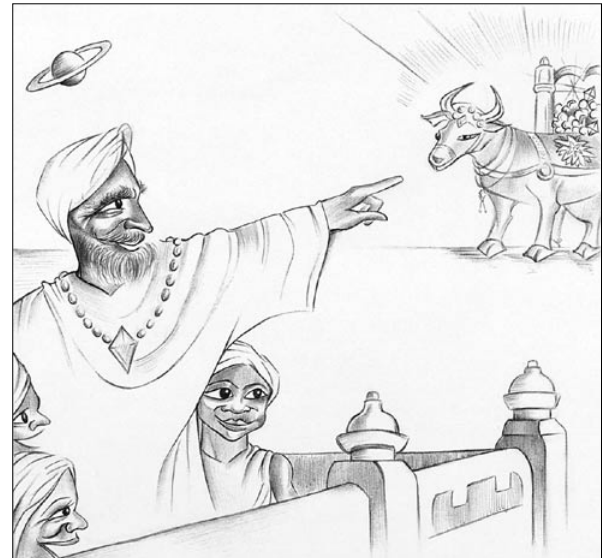
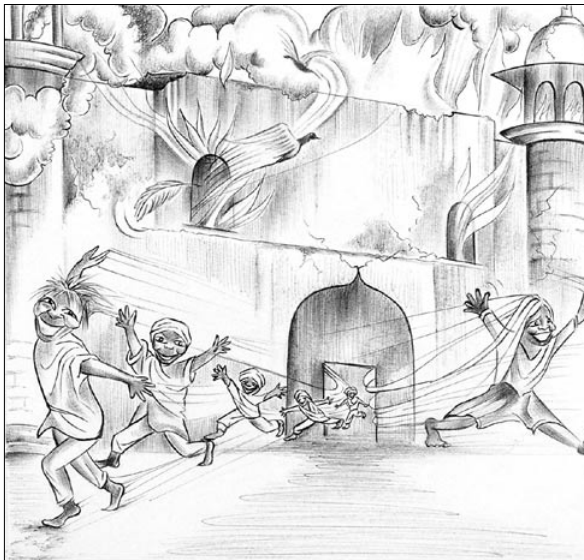


Trying to solve this dilemma, he realized that he could not carry all 30 of them at once, and if he were able to pull all of them on a surface like a table, he would not be able to get through the tiny doorway. But he could not let his children be killed by the raging fire. (8)

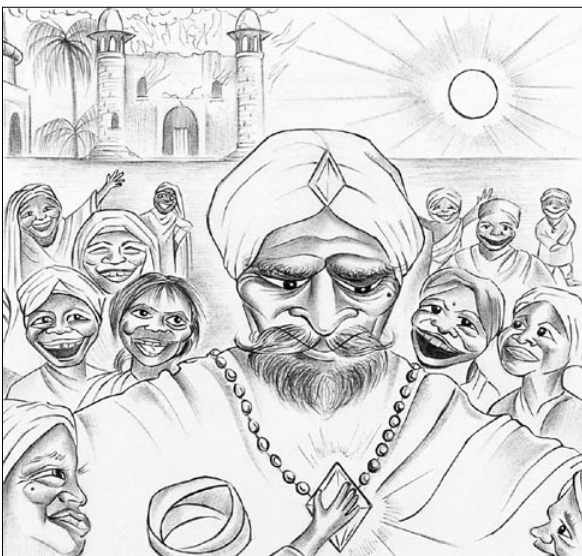


He would have to think of something delightful to entice them with. Again he called out to his children: "I have wonderful new toys for you. There are three special carts, one drawn by sheep, one by deer and one by oxen. Hurry out here and get them so we can all go for a ride!" (9)

The children rushed out of the burning mansion in search of these marvelous carts their father had promised them. (10)



The man, sighing with relief that his children were safe, gathered them and took them to his treasure house. "My fortune is limitless because you are my precious children. You will each share this treasure equally." (12)



They clamored around their father, asking where their new toys were. (11)



The man presented his children with a magical cart drawn by a great white ox. It was resplendent with gold, silver and many other jewels. He told the children: "This magical cart will fly you as swiftly as the wind to any place in the universe. And as I love you all equally, here is one for each of you." The children were delighted at this and enjoyed themselves immensely. (13)



The three carts pulled by the sheep, deer and ox are the three vehicles of Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva. Using these to draw us, his children, away from the flames, the Buddha guides us to the supreme vehicle of absolute happiness, or Buddhahood, represented by the jeweled cart drawn by the white ox. The sutra states that this magnificent cart is 500 yojana (2,175 miles) high

and 500 yojana wide, and decorated with gold rings, silver ridge-poles, gold ropes and 84,000 invaluable bells. Seated inside are all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The Buddha invites those of us who embrace Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to join him, with the promise that we will experience absolute happiness wherever we travel aboard this supreme vehicle. (14)

# 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 35-36

**On the fifth anniversary of March 16, 1958, Soka Gakkai members see off two priests to conduct the first Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies in the United States. One of the priests is Nichiren Shoshu Study Department Leader Shinno Abe, who will later become the 67th high priest, Nikken.**

Josei Toda looked Shin'ichi Yamamoto in the eye and said: "When a person takes action as a Buddhist for peace and the happiness of humanity, obstacles and devilish functions inevitably arise. There will also be major persecution.

"But, Shin'ichi, I want you to advance with courage. You must live out your life, daring to call forth persecution. When you take the lead and challenge great difficulties, then, in accord with the principle of consistency from beginning to end, you will open the way to the attainment of Buddhahood in this lifetime not only for yourself but for all who strive with you.

"What's more, a person's real worth is revealed when obstacles arise. It is then that the true na-

Shin'ichi never for a moment forgot these words. He couldn't predict when he would face great persecution or when the storms of oppression would start to rage, but he sensed that they would not be long in coming.

The interference of a veteran member of the ruling political party in his planned meeting with John F. Kennedy was surely one such sign, Shin'ichi thought. Toda had said that, in their efforts to block the further development of the Soka Gakkai, those in power would take aim at the organization's leaders. Shin'ichi was certain that they would use any means at their disposal. He also imagined that they would again, as they had done in the Osaka Incident, conspire to have him ar-

media, they could firmly establish an image of the Soka Gakkai as dangerous, antisocial and criminal. In this way, the Soka Gakkai would lose credibility in society and be isolated.

Shin'ichi also anticipated that the authorities might call on former Soka Gakkai members and have them fabricate scandals surrounding the organization, making it look as if they were giving the "inside story." Their strategy would be to use a certain sector of the mass media to spread these false accusations and thereby plant seeds of doubt in members' minds, attempting to destroy the organization's solidarity.

This is a method frequently used to persecute religions. For instance, in order to undermine the reputation and prestige of the Catholic Church, the Nazis concocted and spread scandals about Catholic priests, who enjoyed high respect among the people.

Shin'ichi realized that many forces in society that feared the Soka Gakkai's growth—from political parties to other religious groups and the mass media—would some day pool their energies to attack the organization, tossing aside their differences in ideology or belief in their shared animosity.

Shin'ichi recalled a poem Josei Toda had composed in the



predawn hours of July 9, 1956, the day after the House of Councilors elections [in which Soka Gakkai-backed candidates had first run for and been elected to national office].

*As you make your ascent  
Of a still steeper mountain,  
Set your mind firmly  
On the journey for kosen-rufu.*

Shin'ichi clenched his fists. His heart blazed with a fighting spirit at the thought of the difficult road of kosen-rufu that lay ahead.

On March 16, the Tokyo region was visited by light rains, which started in the early morning. The VIP waiting room at the Tokyo International Airport in Haneda overflowed with members who had come to see off two priests who would be traveling to the United States to conduct the first Gohonzon-conferral ceremonies abroad. This trip had been realized at Shin'ichi's request as Soka Gakkai president.

One of the priests was Nichiren Shoshu Study Department Leader Shinno Abe, who would later become the 67th high priest, Nikken.

The two priests would travel together to the United States and split up to follow separate itineraries. They would conduct ceremonies in the cities of Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Diego, Long Beach, Seattle, Chicago, Louisville, Washington, D.C., New Bern, Colorado Springs,

Junction City, Abilene, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Sacramento. They would return to Japan two weeks later, on the evening of March 30.

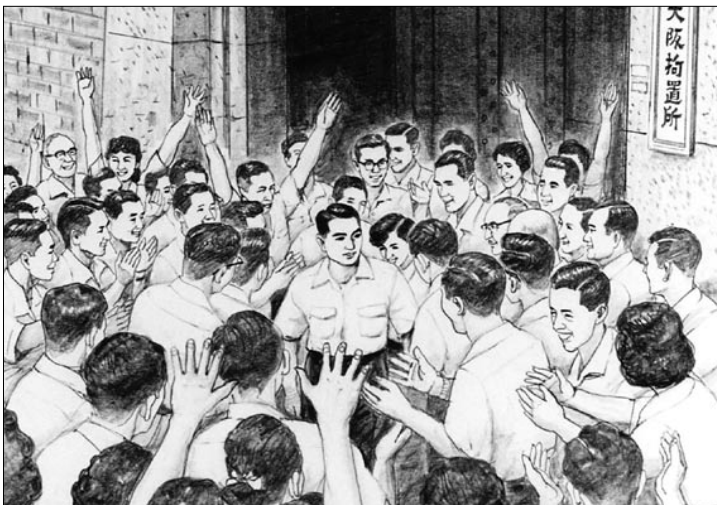
This March 16 marked the fifth anniversary of the momentous ceremony conducted at the head temple in 1958, in which Josei Toda entrusted 6,000 youth with the responsibility of realizing kosen-rufu. The fact that the priests' departure on their very first trip to confer Gohonzon abroad fell on this significant day added to the gathered members' excitement.

Even so, they were somewhat troubled by the drizzle that had begun to fall that morning. It had never rained on any of President Yamamoto's departures to overseas countries, so the bad weather cast a shadow over them.

The farewell began a little before 9:00 a.m. Following remarks by the Nichiren Shoshu general administrator, the Soka Gakkai's representative, General Director Koichi Harayama, gave a speech.

Harayama expressed his joy that the priests' departure fell on March 16, a date that shone brilliantly in the Soka Gakkai's history. And he characterized their trip as a magnificent undertaking that would go down forever in the annals of Nichiren Shoshu.

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



The Osaka Incident: Shin'ichi Yamamoto is released from prison in July 1957 after being arrested on trumped-up charges.

ture of each member's faith becomes clear. Cowardly individuals and those seeking to exploit the Soka Gakkai will leave. Difficulties weed out those of false faith and create lions of those who remain. And that's fine."

rested on trumped-up charges.

Shin'ichi knew that—even if he were finally proven innocent—if the authorities arrested and prosecuted him as Soka Gakkai president, then had it widely reported by the

## LETTER TO HIGH PRIEST NIKKEN ABE

## ‘I WILL TAKE ACTION FOR JUSTICE’

As part of the World Tribune’s ongoing commitment to provide its readers with the latest news concerning the state of Nichiren Shoshu, we provide the following letter to High Priest Nikken Abe from the priest Endo Ishida that explains his decision to secede from Nichiren Shoshu (see Aug. 4 World Tribune). Serving as an administrator in the Nichiren Shoshu Overseas Bureau for the past three years, Ishida worked closely with Overseas Bureau Chief Kotoku Obayashi on the development of Nichiren Shoshu’s international movement. He is the first priest to secede this year and the first since the Tokyo District Court ruling in the Seattle Incident trial in March. Ishida asks High Priest Nikken to take full responsibility for the decline of the head temple, Taiseki-ji, and expresses his determination to take “action for justice” together with SGI members.

To Nikken Abe  
Chief Administrator of  
Nichiren Shoshu

Quoting the “Encouraging Devotion” (13th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra in “The Opening of the Eyes,” Nichiren Daishonin states: “There will be forest-dwelling monks wearing clothing of patched rags and living in retirement, who will claim they are practicing the true way, despising and looking down on all humankind. Greedy for profit and support, they will preach the Law to white-robed laymen and will be respected and revered by the world as though they were arhats who possess the six transcendental powers. These men with evil in their hearts, constantly thinking of worldly affairs, will borrow the name of forest-dwelling monks and take delight in proclaiming our faults ... Because in the midst of the great assembly they constantly try to defame us, they will address the rulers, high ministers, Brahmans, and house-holders, as well as the other monks, slandering and speaking evil of us, saying, ‘These are men of perverted views who preach non-Buddhist doctrines!’ ... In a mud-died kalpa, in an evil age there will be many things to fear. Evil demons will take possession of others and through them curse, revile, and heap shame on us.... The evil monks of that muddied age, failing to understand the Buddha’s expedient means, how he preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, will confront us with foul language and angry frowns; again and again we will be banished” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 270).

The head temple, Taiseki-ji, is an unbearably tragic sight today, in contrast to the auspicious

events scheduled in 2002 to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Defeat in the Seattle Incident trial has increased others’ distrust of you, which permeates the head temple. The number of believers who go on pilgrimage to the head temple is on a steady decline. Those living at the head temple are well aware of the stagnation in faith that prevails on its grounds.

The Fuji School’s “pure current of faith” over the past centuries that Taiseki-ji has been boasting about has dried up. We cannot help but feel that the spirit of the Daishonin, the founder of true Buddhism, and Nikko Shonin, the founder of Taiseki-ji, has been completely lost at the head temple. As we observe the pathetic reality of Nichiren Shoshu, it is obvious that you, High Priest Nikken Abe, are only interested in believers’ offerings and have caused all this by allowing your jealousy to destroy the harmonious unity of priesthood and laity.

Indeed, you, High Priest Nikken, embody the third powerful enemy who appears to obstruct the progress of kosen-rufu as described in the “Encouraging Devotion” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

In 1964, I became a Nichiren Shoshu priest as a member of the fifth class. I have been part of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood since then. But I have come to be convinced that there is no other way than leaving Nichiren Shoshu for me to help revitalize this sect and contribute to the spread of the True Law. Let me share part of my sentiments as I secede from Nichiren Shoshu today.

The decline of Nichiren Shoshu that became so visible at the end of last year makes it evident to me that the Buddhist gods have deserted Taiseki-ji,

where I have lived over the past decades. The current dismal financial condition of the head temple and the extremely irrational actions you took to cope with this crisis prove my point.

On April 5, 1998, the last day of the 100,000-member pilgrimage that year, the Dai-Gohonzon was suddenly transferred (from the Grand Main Temple [Sho-Hondo] to the Hoan-den temple), and the demolition of the Grand Main Temple was abruptly announced. We priests residing at the head temple were notified of the transfer of the Dai-Gohonzon only a few minutes before it was executed. We wondered why the Dai-Gohonzon, the foundation of our school’s faith, had to be transferred in such a secretive manner.

In November 1998, you issued an admonition, in which you announced that offerings would be collected for the construction of the Hoan-do temple [where the Dai-Gohonzon will be enshrined from 2002]. At the end of 1999, the first collection of offerings took place, but the number of participants and the total amount of money collected were shockingly below your goal. Only 60 percent of Nichiren Shoshu’s goal was achieved.

I vividly remember what High Priest Nittatsu, my mentor, once said: “We have come to the decision that we will, from now until forever, allow believers to worship the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of True Buddhism at this Grand Main Temple for their attainment of enlightenment and the fulfillment of all their desires in the present and future. We thus designate this structure as a great edifice at which to pray for world peace.” I have been struggling to suppress my distrust of you, my suspicion that your self-righteousness lay behind the

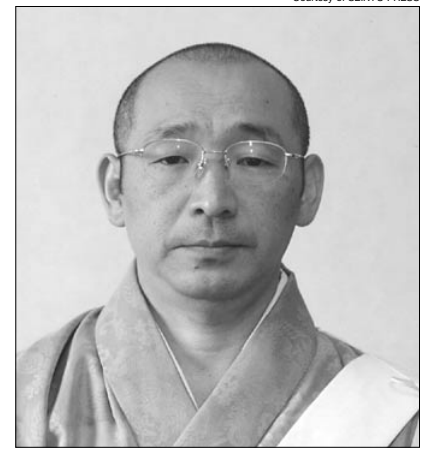
abrupt transfer of the Dai-Gohonzon and the demolition of the Grand Main Temple.

The disappointing results of the collection campaign in 1999 eloquently prove that Nichiren Shoshu believers are not convinced that demolishing the Grand Main Temple and constructing the Hoan-do temple was the right thing to do. It also shows me that their hearts have begun to close to Taiseki-ji.

In the meantime, you chose to avoid the essence of the matter and ordered all priests’ salaries at the head temple to be reduced by one-third. You justified this by saying that you had discovered a number of unnecessary expenditures at the head temple. As a result of your decision, I know that it became financially impossible for some priests at the head temple to send their children to kindergarten.

High Priest Nikken, I cannot agree with what you have done.

Is it not a fact that the true cause for the current financial strains of Nichiren Shoshu lies in your foolish behavior? Is this not reflected in your destruction of various buildings at the head temple out of your jealousy toward the former high priest, Nittatsu, and the Soka Gakkai? And if Nichiren Shoshu is truly having financial problems now, should you not first dispose of the two residences that you privately use—those located at Nakamachi, Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, and at Shoto, Shibuya Ward, Tokyo? Your self-centeredness is manifested in your limitless greed for offerings from believers. You are exploiting Nichiren Shoshu for your per-



Endo Ishida

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

sonal purposes. This, by all means, should not be tolerated.

Next, I want to address the Seattle Incident trial. Since most of us did not have any chance to observe the trial, all we knew about it was based on information from the Public Relations Bureau of Nichiren Shoshu. The great majority of the priests of our school were led to believe that Nichiren Shoshu would score a stunning victory in this trial. In March, just before the ruling was announced, those Nichiren Shoshu council members and other priests who gathered at the head temple were full of optimism, some even saying: “We will no doubt win a huge victory.” “We will publish a large run of a special edition.”

However, the trial outcome was exactly the opposite of what we expected. The judge denied the credibility of your court testimony and acknowledged that it was true that you were with prostitutes in Seattle. With such a clear-cut defeat, I now see how ignorant we have been of the truth of the matter. And I know that having made a big deal out of publishing a special edition was just a joke. Nothing brought us, the Nichiren Shoshu priests, greater shame than the official ruling. At the same time, I realize that the Public Relations Bureau intended to hide the truth from us.

You once clearly said that you would resign from the position of high priest if the Seattle Incident were proven true. Nothing is more base than your behavior now as you try to justify your position, thus

further deceiving the priests and believers of Nichiren Shoshu by telling them another round of lies and excuses. The statement that you had published is evidence of this: "The verdict was not adequate, and it was a misjudgment by the judge."

Looking back, the atmosphere at the head temple during the celebration of your 77th birthday last December was still composed and light-hearted. However, failure in the collection drive last December and defeat in the Seattle Incident trial dramatically changed the atmosphere at the head temple. These two major setbacks resulted in a decrease in the number of pilgrimage participants to the head temple; there is growing distrust in you and the current priesthood.

I have been attending every *gokaihi* (ceremony to worship the Dai-Gohonzon) under your leadership. Especially this year, participants have continuously decreased in number. The faces of the participants have continued to darken, and it has become obvious that they are participating in the ceremony merely out of obligation.

The summer training pilgrimage had a remarkably low attendance compared to last year. There were days when we only achieved half of our attendance goal. As a result, the *gokaihi* ceremony that was supposed to be held twice a day had to be reduced to once a day. Not only that, less than 2,600 people — which used to be the regular attendance for each *gokaihi* ceremony when it took place twice a day — showed up when the *gokaihi* ceremony became a once-a-day event. This serious decrease in attendance dumfounded us. Is it not true that the many chief priests of local temples predict that Nichiren Shoshu will accomplish only 20 or 30 percent of the goal of 300,000 participants in the pilgrimage slated for a year and a half from now? Deep in their hearts, they all know that achieving 300,000 participants is totally impossible.

Strangely enough, it often rains on the Saturdays and Sundays when the summer training pilgrimage is held at the head temple. I often witnessed it begin to rain harder just before the *gokaihi* ceremony and could not help but take it as the sorrowful tears of the Dai-Gohonzon. Believers were often drenched when they entered the Hoan-den temple. The tatami mats thus absorbed a lot of moisture, and a musty smell permeates inside.

***Convinced that taking action for justice together with 10 million believers with correct faith is the way to regain the purity of the Fuji School and the way to repay our debt of gratitude to the former high priest, Nittatsu, I hereby declare that I secede from the current Nichiren Shoshu.***

Furthermore, the violence and discrimination that abound at the head temple have negatively influenced many acolytes who have received training there. Life has disappeared from their faces. De-filed, their eyes shine no more. I do not see any sign of vitality in these young priests who are supposed to shoulder Nichiren Shoshu's future.

Remembering the days when I became a Nichiren Shoshu priest, our mentor, High Priest Nittatsu, watched our growth with his gentle smile, and I was so proud to receive training as a young priest at the head temple. As I walk around the head temple grounds these days, I reminisce about the good old days at the head temple and the many warm words I often received from High Priest Nittatsu. Today, however, all the structures that High Priest Nittatsu built have been destroyed.

In those days, we were fresh from the completion of the Six-Compartment Lodging and the Grand Reception Hall. All of Nichiren Shoshu was vibrantly advancing toward the great objective of kosen-rufu. Taiseki-ji was full of daimoku, and the Soka Gakkai members who visited the head temple were in high spirits, determined to promote kosen-rufu.

Nowadays, no trace of such a positive spirit is seen at Taiseki-ji. Pilgrims are scarce, and those who traverse its grounds are lifeless, their faces looking down.

In "The Strategy of the Lotus Sutra," the Daishonin states, "When one comes to the end of one's good fortune, no strategy whatsoever avails" (WND, 1000).

The dramatic decline of Taiseki-ji over the past six months or so exemplifies the truth of this statement. Though it is summer now, I feel emptiness in the wind that blows over the head temple grounds. Where did the spirit of Taiseki-ji go? I am in deep agony, with an inescapable sadness in my heart.

Taiseki-ji, the head temple of

Nichiren Shoshu, where the Dai-Gohonzon is located, is supposed to be a sacred haven of faith. It should be an enlightened place. Why did it have to become deserted? The answer is obvious in the Daishonin's writings: "The Great Teacher Miao-lo says: 'You should understand that one's life and its environment at a single moment encompass the three thousand realms. Therefore, when one attains the Buddha way, one puts oneself in accord with this fundamental principle, and one's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena'" (WND, 366).

Our environment is the reflection of our mind, and our mind permeates the entire universe.

The current emptiness at Taiseki-ji, which has strayed far from the great cause of kosen-rufu, clearly manifests the emptiness in your mind. In other words, Taiseki-ji today reflects your excessive attachment to your own welfare and that of your family. It is a reflection of your burning jealousy toward Honorary President Ikeda, a reflection of your evil, wicked mind as the third powerful enemy of Buddhism. You, High Priest Nikken, must know that you are the one fundamental cause for the current decadence of Taiseki-ji.

Also, I have been assigned to the Overseas Bureau since April 1997. What I saw in this assignment is that even though you advocate world kosen-rufu, you lack the heart to bring happiness to each believer and to realize global kosen-rufu.

In reality, Nichiren Shoshu temples or offices in various parts of the world do not have many priests. They are facing severe financial circumstances. Out of your personal emotions toward having a central stronghold in Europe — which I believe is only to satisfy your ego — you give special treatment to particular countries. And you do not show any interest in how Nichiren Shoshu

temples are being managed in Asia or South America. You do not even care how believers in those countries practice the Daishonin's Buddhism.

By rights, the Overseas Bureau budget, which is supposed to be discussed by the top management of Nichiren Shoshu and then distributed most effectively to respond to the reality of overseas Nichiren Shoshu temples, is administrated at your whim. The budget has been distributed unevenly, and Overseas Bureau Chief Kotoku Obayashi has followed your direction blindly. As one who knows the condition of Nichiren Shoshu in each country and who functioned as a liaison with each country, I was deeply concerned about the irrationality of your leadership. I really have been suffering from this. Indeed, you are self-righteous and have no mercy.

World kosen-rufu means that the Law, the Daishonin's Buddhism, spreads throughout the world, and the people of each country enjoy accumulating the benefit of Buddhist practice. However, I have no choice but to say that your behavior shows that your view of kosen-rufu is very shortsighted. Yours is not based on the spread of the Law. In your mind, kosen-rufu just means building temples. It is now clear that the great goal of global kosen-rufu will not be accomplished under your leadership.

As we herald the anniversary of the former high priest Nittatsu's death tomorrow, I declare that I will leave Taiseki-ji for now. Convinced that taking action for justice together with 10 million believers with correct faith is the way to regain the purity of the Fuji School and the way to repay our debt of gratitude to the former high priest, Nittatsu, I hereby declare that I secede from the current Nichiren Shoshu. I proclaim that you, High Priest Nikken, the fundamental obstacle to kosen-rufu, should take responsibility. I strongly request your resignation from the position of the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu.

July 21, 2000  
Endo Ishida

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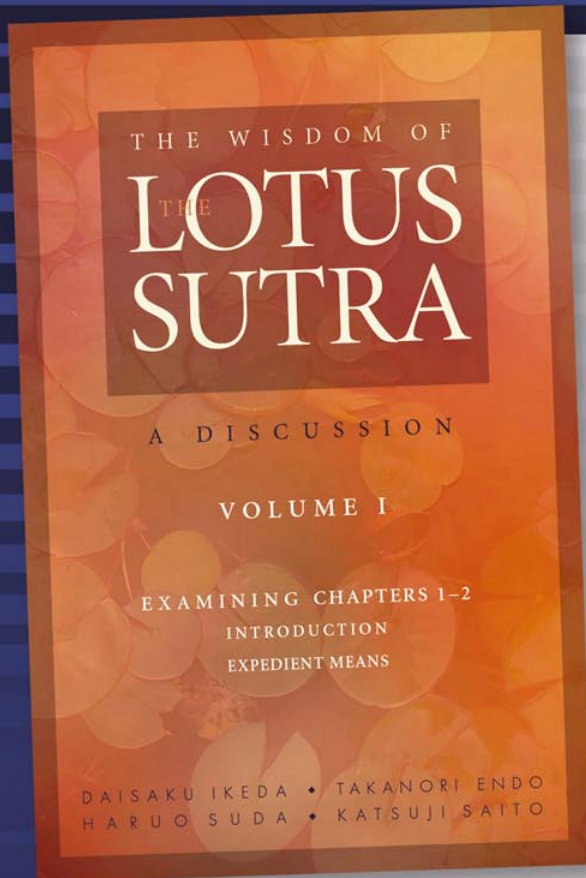
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