

## EXPERIENCE—AJAY MALHOTRA, OVERLAND PARK, KAN. READY FOR THE NEXT VICTORY

**After overcoming a major illness, Ajay Malhotra shows actual proof in his work and determines to raise capable youth.**

Soon after I began my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1993, I had a facial paralysis attack called Bells Palsy, which led to the complete deformation of my face. At the time, I was living in India and my doctors were skeptical of my recovery, but because of my Buddhist practice I knew that I would win. And even though I was not able to open my mouth properly to speak, I determined to chant my way through it. I increased my daimoku while lying in bed and slowly but surely, the paralysis subsided. The benefit was not in simply recovering, but in my determination not to give up under any circumstances.

One of my next goals was to pass the exams to become a certified public accountant. In preparation, I studied 12 to 15 hours a day. Because of my recent paralysis, I was not able to sit for long periods of time, yet I was determined to challenge this obstacle with my practice. At home, my parents objected to my Buddhist practice. I began doing morning gongyo when my family was still sleeping and evening gongyo after everyone had fallen asleep. All the while, I based my struggle on the following guidance from SGI President Ikeda: "Youth means grappling with all kinds of problems. It means resolving, in spite of all difficulties, to push aside the dark clouds of despair and advance toward the sun, toward hope. This strength is the hallmark of youth" (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 15).

A turning point came when I attended a Youth Division Training Course in 1996. There was a change in my attitude in faith and the meaning of the words *actual proof* changed from that of *benefit* to that of *mission*. I learned, and began to appreciate, the importance of practicing for the happiness of others. On the last day of the training course, I found out that I had passed all of my exams and that I was among a very few young adults in India to pass CPA exams at age 21, four years earlier than is typical.

From that moment on, I began doing morning and evening gongyo in the presence of my parents. I was realizing that my mission was not simply to have successes in my career, but to bring every person in my life closer to the Gohonzon. I started visiting other SGI members, driving a scooter from one part of Delhi to another, and chanting with the members everywhere I could. I also began taking responsibility for SGI meetings and activities.

However, the opposition from my parents continued to increase. The only way I was able to continue my practice was by chanting vigorous daimoku, studying and challenging myself in the forefront of every activity. I was determined to take complete responsibility for my family karma and started exerting myself even more. This struggle brought a positive change within me and, rather than begrudging my faith, I started appreciating the Gohonzon for all of my hardships and for the circumstances allowing me to change my karma.

During this period, I asked my parents for permission to go to an SGI training course in Japan, but they said no. Though I was hurt and somewhat discouraged, this situation encouraged me to show actual proof of this practice to my parents.

Through my determination and efforts at work, I was offered a job in one of the world's

largest companies and given the opportunity to visit the United States for four months. I was beginning to show my parents the power of the Gohonzon. They no longer asked me to quit my practice, but instead began respecting it. In fact, while I was away, they took special care of my altar by cleaning it on a daily basis.

After my return from the United States, work became extremely hectic. I spent 18 to 20 hours a day in the office. I would go to work at 10:00 a.m. and return home at 5:00 a.m. the next day. Sometimes I did not return home for two days. No matter how tired I was, I was consistent in doing morning and evening gongyo and praying to eradicate the negative influence of the Nichiren Shoshu movement in India. Most importantly, I always appreciated the Gohonzon. Though these circumstances were tough, I never allowed myself to give up.

In my own way, I was determined to be an ambassador of President Ikeda in my office. I was determined to become the most trustworthy employee of my company and rise in my career. Again, because of my determination and continual efforts, I was nominated as the best team leader. Five months later, I was promoted to manager and became the youngest person in the company to hold this position. Most recently, my company appointed me to work on special projects in the United States when normally, such projects are given to individuals with more seniority. This was the actual proof I was looking for, to prove the greatness of this practice by becoming trusted at my workplace.

Based on recent encouragement and reflecting on my many experiences, I know that I must repay my debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon. I am now determined to: 1) advance on a daily basis in faith, practice, and study; 2) fight against evil until the last moment of my life; 3) challenge myself for the happiness of all the members; 4) rise in my career to continually show actual proof of the power of the Gohonzon to society; and 5) to raise 10 capable youth division members in the Kansas City Area by the end of 2001 to make the Year of Total Victory a reality.

President Ikeda once wrote, “When you make kosen-rufu your life’s objective and pray to excel at your work in order to show proof of the goal’s validity, you will be opening the way for your own victory and good fortune” (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 60). I am determined to show actual proof in the form of having an excellent career, not to just be successful, but to bring members and my parents closer to the Gohonzon.