

living BUDDHISM

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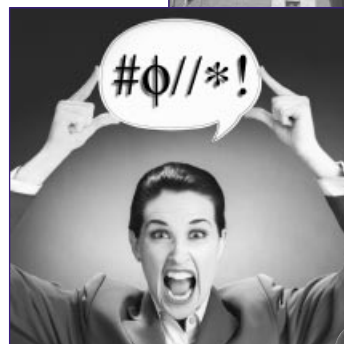
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COVER: Linda Kaye at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (see page 28). Photo by Byron Cohen.

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To Our Readers

Based on input from our readers and our desire to provide the best quality magazine possible, we will be making some changes in design. We hope you find the new Bulmer typeface in this issue easier to read.

Sincerely,
Ted Morino, Editor in Chief/Managing Editor

GLOSSARY

Buddha

“Enlightened One.” One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

Gohonzon

The fundamental object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, expressing in graphic form the life-state of Buddhahood, which all people inherently possess. Go means worthy of honor and honzon means object of fundamental respect.

Kosen-rufu

Literally, it means to widely declare and spread (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Lotus Sutra

The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members’ daily Buddhist practice.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo

The fundamental law expounded in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it expresses the true aspect of life. Chanting it

allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the essential law of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (Buddha’s teaching), all phenomena.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82)

The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of devotion, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one’s mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice for attaining enlightenment. Daishonin is an honorific title that means great sage.

Shakyamuni

Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in India (present day southern Nepal) about twenty-five hundred years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

Ten Worlds

Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (or Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. The Ten Worlds are also interpreted as states of life.

living
BUDDHISM

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Frequently Cited Sources

For convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:

— *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin:* WND, followed by the page number.

— *Gosho Zenshu:* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese) GZ, followed by the page number.

— *The Lotus Sutra,* Translated by Burton Watson: LS, followed by the chapter and page number.

From Our Readers

EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCE

I wanted to thank Fay Hovey for submitting such an interesting article on Tibetan Buddhism [“Beyond Precepts to a Full Expression of Joy and Human Revolution”] in the December 2000 issue. I, too, get asked if I practice Zen or Tibetan Buddhism, and I understand your feelings of how American society has placed these sects in the forefront of their minds when they think of Buddhism. I’ve had some trouble explaining the difference.

I work for a non-profit foster-care organization and our workplace is striving to become more diverse. Some of our activities include a sharing session called “the brown-bag lunch”, an opportunity to share our cultural values, any trips we have taken outside the U.S., and any other cultural discoveries. The coordinator for this activity (and other co-workers) has been encouraging me to do a “brown bag” on Buddhism.

I have a phobia about talking in front of others about something that could be open to debate, but this is something that I must do to challenge myself. This article is going to be the basis for my presentation. It has inspired me to share Buddhism with my co-workers.

S. Shanna Stephens, Seattle

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING

I thoroughly enjoyed the article “Beyond Precepts to a Full Expression of Joy and Human Revolution” by Fay Hovey in the December issue. I’m new to Buddhism, having practiced Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism for a little more than two months, and really appreciate Hovey’s knowledgeable distinction between it and Tibetan Buddhism. The article not only enhanced my own understanding of the difference but also gave me a basis for talking about the differences when asked by friends.

Thanks so much for publishing the piece!

Chella Courington, Montgomery, AL

Correction

The Washington, D.C. Zone Office phone number to make arrangements to attend conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center is (301) 779-3255.

CORRECTED ON CD-ROM

ZEN

Thank you for tackling the subject of Tibetan Buddhism, now if we do the same with Zen, we may really be able to change the world.

I am always amazed by how some SGI members turn green when someone mentions another sect. There is some insecurity there.

The only way to keep people from being insecure, is to teach them.

Bill Endsley, Chicago

CAMBODIAN

I wish to express my sincere thanks for the article by Fay Hovey about Tibetan Buddhism. Her article was easy for a limited-English person like me to read.

Because her article cleared my eyes that were blurred all these years. I am a Cambodian and had to run for my life, escaping that country to seek asylum in the United States twenty-five years ago. I ran from a war-torn country known as a Buddhist country. In 1975–80 Cambodia became known as the cruelest killing machine humans ever experienced since the Nazis thirty-five years before. Because I was brought up in the Hinayana Buddhist tradition, I personally have a profound appreciation for Fay Hovey’s article.

I can use it as a tool in my dialogue about Buddhism that I love to do anywhere, but in particular when I visit Cambodia. It will help me introduce Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism to people in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, because often the subject of what form of Buddhism they should practice comes up.

I would like to translate this article into Khmer (Cambodian) for our SGI-Cambodia members to enjoy and enrich their knowledge and appreciation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Vuthi Seng, Los Angeles

Correction

Photo credits for the January issue:
Page 3 Sunrise at the FNCC by Dixon Hamby
Page 4 Eagle by Jonathan Wilson
Page 5 Lake by Jean Pritchard
Page 6 Mountains by Dixon Hamby

CORRECTED ON CD-ROM

THE CENTURY of Women

Greetings to all the readers of *Living Buddhism*! I hope that all of you are safe and healthy during this severe winter.

At the final headquarters leaders meeting of 2000, SGI President Ikeda said, “The bright dawn of the century of women has arrived. Not only in the SGI, but also in society as a whole, women are extremely active and serving as an invigorating force. Wherever there are wise women, one finds a steady tide toward peace and harmony being created. Nichiren Daishonin says, ‘Women will open the gateway’ (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1566). In the unending advance of our kosen-rufu movement, it will be women — and especially the members of the young women’s division — who will open the gateway of good fortune and benefit, of hope, of eternal victory.”

This year also marks fifty years since President Toda first established the women’s division in Japan and eleven years since SGI President Ikeda’s historic guidance to American women in February 1990. It seems appropriate to consider the meaning of “century of women.”

President Ikeda repeatedly emphasizes the importance of women in the twenty-first century. I know that women possess many qualities, and it is difficult to characterize all women in a single way. Nonetheless, I believe that women introduce heart and compassion into matters of business and governance.

It is vital that women play increasingly significant roles in all affairs of society. This is true in the

United States and around the globe as women gain social and political rights.

But I don’t think President Ikeda sees this as a superficial change. When women’s opinions are heard, when women’s talents are freely displayed and their wisdom expressed, it will benefit all humankind.

This doesn’t imply that men don’t have a role. Indeed, it is a basic tenet of Buddhism that each human being has a precious mission or purpose in life, men and women equally. But the contributions of women have been overlooked by history. In fact, women have not been allowed to fully display their talents and abilities. Despite this, women have been at the forefront of the struggle for human rights.

It was less than a hundred years ago that women were granted full political rights in the United States — a challenge led by women such as Susan B. Anthony. Women led the movement to establish child labor laws and to protect and guarantee the health and education of our youth. Women fought on the front lines of the battle to end slavery in the nineteenth century. In this century, countless unnamed women were heroines in the struggle for civil rights, as symbolized by Rosa Parks.

In the same speech that I quoted above, President Ikeda asked all the men of the SGI to protect and cherish the women of our organization.

The spirit to cherish, praise and support one another is basic to our SGI organization. In *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, there is the passage



Wherever there are wise women, one finds a steady tide toward peace and harmony being created. Nichiren Daishonin says, 'Women will open the gateway.'

“Women support others, and thereby cause others to support them” (“Letter to the Brothers,” 501). This reflects the social reality of thirteenth-century Japan, where women were bound by the “three obediences” of Japanese culture, which dictated that a woman should first obey her parents, then her husband, and in old age, her son. But the Daishonin’s passage conveys a deeper reality that is true for all people: When we support the happiness and growth of others, we are making the cause to gain happiness and receive support ourselves. This is based on the principle of cause and effect and the truth that our attitude determines everything. To cherish and support one another is the bodhisattva spirit.

But I hope that — based on President Ikeda’s guidance — all of us warmly support and care for one another. This is the path toward harmony, growth and our own self-development.

I would like to share some quotes from great American women of the twentieth century who worked for human rights and for peace.

Jane Addams was a social activist who worked among the poor in Chicago during the early part of the century. She is also the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She said: “We see all around us a spirit of materialism — an undue emphasis put upon material possessions, an inordinate desire to win wealth, an inordinate desire to please those who are the possessors of wealth. Now, let us say, if we feel that this is a menace, that with all our power, with all the spirit of a soldier, we will arouse high-minded youth of this country against

the spirit of materialism.”¹

The Reverend Dr. Anna Howard Shaw — a Methodist minister and leader in the struggle to gain voting rights for women — said in a May 1919 speech in support of the League of Nations: “We women, the mothers of the race, have given everything, have suffered everything, have sacrificed everything, and we come to you now and say ‘The time has come when we will no longer sit quietly by and bear and rear sons to die at the will of a few men. We will not endure it.’ Could there be any cowardice, could there be any injustice, could there be any wrong greater than to refuse to hear the voice of a woman expressing the will of women at the peace table of the world and then for men not to provide a way by which the women of the future shall not be robbed of their sons as the women of the past have been?”²

When we reflect on these women and their lives, we can see that indeed, it is women who will lead us in our common effort to create a century of life.

Daniel K. Nagashima



SGI-USA General Director

1. Jane Addams, *In Our Own Words: Extraordinary speeches of the American Century*, (New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1999), eds. Robert Torricelli & Andrew Carroll), p.9.

2. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, *In Our Own Words: Extraordinary speeches of the American Century*, (New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1999), eds. Robert Torricelli & Andrew Carroll), p.54.

“Peace AND Security” IN THE HERE AND NOW

Most people wish to lead a peaceful and secure existence, living free of problems and worries. Often they live in a future of “whens”: “When I retire, I’ll start enjoying life,” “When I own my house, I’ll feel secure,” “When I find my soul-mate, I’ll be a complete person” and so forth. It is one thing to work toward goals and dreams, but it is quite another to escape into future fantasies and become absent from the present.

One of the negative effects of such an attitude is we deny ourselves happiness today by postponing its possibility into an elusive future that may never arrive. In other words, we sometimes believe — consciously or unconsciously — that we cannot be happy right now because something is missing from a set of external conditions that we think essential to our happiness, be it an ideal partner, money or whatever. The problem is that those external conditions are bound to change and remain forever in the state of flux. Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, however, offers a different perspective on life and points the way to establish an inner strength that allows us to enjoy happiness in the here and now, regardless of our external conditions.

In the second, “Expedient Means,” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the basis of the Daishonin’s teaching, Shakyamuni states that all people possess the potential for Buddhahood, that is, a supreme state of life full of compassion and wisdom. In subsequent chapters, Shakyamuni’s disciples such as Shariputra

and Mahakashyapa begin to understand the true meaning of this teaching. In the fifth, “Parable of the Medicinal Herbs,” chapter, Shakyamuni explains the benefit derived from understanding the Dharma or Law that reveals the universality of Buddhahood: “Once these living beings have heard the Law, they will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences, then they will receive joy through the way and again be able to hear the Law” (*The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 99).

Among the Daishonin’s followers in thirteenth-century Japan who knew of this passage were those who expected to “enjoy peace and security in their present existence” through their Buddhist practice. Contrary to their expectations, however, the Daishonin and his followers continued to experience governmental persecution because of their faith. During the Daishonin’s exile to Sado Island, many questioned the validity of his teaching. He had been subjected to attempted execution and exile to this cold northern island and appeared to them very far removed from the “peace and security” expounded in the Lotus Sutra.

After the Daishonin’s return from exile, the focus of persecutions shifted from himself to his followers. In 1275, Shijo Kingo, one of the Daishonin’s staunch believers, was facing severe harassment from his lord and fellow samurai warriors because of his faith. Kingo wondered why his life was so full of trouble and worries despite the Lotus Sutra’s promise of

...to enjoy “peace and security” means to develop the inner strength that allows us to overcome any obstacle we may face and enjoy every moment.

“peace and security.” Kingo reportedly said to one of the Daishonin’s senior disciples: “I have been practicing the Lotus Sutra correctly since last year, when you told me that those who embrace this sutra will ‘enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.’ Instead, however, great hardships have showered down on me like rain” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 471). When the Daishonin heard about Kingo’s comments, he wrote a letter to his beloved disciple to remove his doubts. In it, he states: “To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith. Those who uphold this sutra should be prepared to meet difficulties” (WND, 471).

Here the Daishonin points out that the true meaning of “peace and security” as expounded in the Lotus Sutra is not the absence of life’s problems. Rather, to enjoy “peace and security” means to develop the inner strength that allows us to overcome any obstacle we may face and enjoy every moment. We reveal and further strengthen our innate Buddhahood through daily practice. In the course of our progress, it is natural that we face obstacles, fears and doubts from time to time. Furthermore, to practice Buddhism in a non-Buddhist society is not easy; we are sometimes confronted with misjudgment and prejudice from family and friends. But what is important, as the Daishonin explains, is “continuing faith” through difficulties.

In a subsequent letter in 1276, the Daishonin reiterates this point to Shijo Kingo: “There is no true happiness other than upholding faith in the Lotus Sutra. This is what is meant by ‘peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences.’ Though worldly troubles may arise, never let them disturb you. No one can avoid problems, not even sages or worthies” (WND, 681).

The goal of our Buddhist practice is not to eliminate life’s problems; rather, it is to develop a state of inner life so strong that our sense of “peace and security” is never disturbed by any hardship. The key to developing such inner strength lies in our faith in the Gohonzon and our belief in the existence of Buddhahood in our lives as well as in the lives of others. This is why the Daishonin declares: “There is no true happiness other than upholding faith in the Lotus Sutra.” When we develop our faith as the Daishonin encourages us, facing life’s hardships becomes a joyful challenge through which we develop our character instead of a painful struggle that results in misery and loss.

In this sense, the Daishonin states, “The arrival of difficulties should be regarded as ‘peaceful’” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). He also states: “To spread the Lotus Sutra, after all, should be regarded as what is meant by ‘peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences’” (GZ, 825). As we exert ourselves in the faith, practice and study of the Daishonin’s Buddhism while communicating its greatness to others, we are experiencing “peace and security” now and building a stronger foundation for future happiness. With the Daishonin’s Buddhism we can create true happiness in the here and now instead of chasing after an elusive shadow of imaginary happiness for the rest of our lives.

We practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism so that each day we may reach the destination of a happy life in the present. Through living each day to our utmost while challenging our difficulties, we can polish our humanity and experience an unsurpassed sense of fulfillment. This is the irreplaceable treasure of faith. True happiness is much closer to us than we may think. ☸

By Shin Yatomi, vice study department leader, based on *Yasashii Kyogaku* (Easy Buddhist Study), published by the *Seikyo Press* in 1994.

Living the Teachings (4)

Dreams Fulfilled

BY FRED ZAITSU, PUBLISHER

When I was in junior high school, I decided that I would become a journalist. I dreamed about the excitement of being a newspaper reporter. But when I was in senior high school, I changed my mind. I thought journalism might be too hard and probably didn't pay very much. I was drawn toward the excitement of international trade, like an import-export business. This also fit in with my interest in the English language, one of my favorite subjects in school. It was for that reason I went to Kanagawa University—known for its foreign trade expertise—and majored in economics. It would be years later, after I started practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, that I would find both dreams—journalism and the international stage—fulfilled.

I joined the Soka Gakkai in 1962 while in college and participated in the organization's student division activities. After a couple of years, I was appointed to a position of leadership in the student division. This was very important to me because such a position qualified me to join a select group of youth attending lectures by President Ikeda on the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings." These were the chapter-by-chapter commentaries of Nichiren Daishonin on the Lotus Sutra as recorded by his disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin.

"One may ask why the results of these vows should be so long in appearing. And yet, though one might point at the earth and miss it, though one might bind up the sky, though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered."
(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 345)

Everyone knew of these lectures, and we all admired those who could attend them. I was very excited to join them. In January 1964, I attended my first lecture. I was in my senior year of college and had secured employment with an international trading company, to begin as soon as I graduated in March.

Preparation for President Ikeda's lectures was intense. We met beforehand to read, interpret and become acquainted with the material. But the material was so difficult. You couldn't just read it and understand it. It was at the lectures that it all made sense. "Oh, so that's what Nichiren Daishonin is saying!" we thought. Listening to President Ikeda explain it was like clouds lifting in our minds. Even though he was only 36, he was the leader of millions of people, the successor to the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda. He bore the responsibility to accomplish kosen-rufu, and he was very impressive. President Ikeda's lectures, however, were full of tension, but at the same time very joyful. It was an atmosphere that allowed young students like myself to fully absorb the meaning of the Daishonin's teachings. After the lectures, President Ikeda treated us to snacks, creating a very close feeling among us.

March is the month when students graduate from college in Japan. To celebrate, President Ikeda invited some thirty of us to dinner in the basement cafeteria of the Soka Gakkai headquarters. President Ikeda sat

When I think back to my dreams in junior and senior high school of being a journalist and working in the international arena, the phrase that “it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered” has profound meaning.

at one end of a long table and I was at the other, so I couldn't really hear what he said. But I remember to this day that we had delicious curried rice for dinner! I also remember that he seemed very happy to be with so many young people who were about to venture off into society. We knew of his expectations that we be successful at whatever we did.

After dinner, he went around the table and greeted each youth, offering encouragement of one kind or another. Finally, he was standing in front of me. “What’s your name?” he asked. An easy question that I answered correctly. And then he said, “I will remember you.” That was it. Not, “do your best” or “become this or that.” Just the simple statement, “I will remember you.” But that was the moment I knew in my heart that President Ikeda would be my mentor in life. I knew from then on, I would devote my life to kosen-rufu. It was more than just a thought—it was a profound feeling I had never felt before.

Just before I was to begin my employment at the trading company, I was asked if I would like to work for the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. I felt it was a tremendous honor and agreed. To my surprise, I was made the administrative director of the newly formed Asian People’s Association, which was a sort of public relations function of the Soka Gakkai. Since I was the only person in the office, I was the director of myself. My responsibility was to meet with representatives from the embassies of Asian countries and arrange opportunities for them to introduce their culture to Japanese audiences. For example, officials from the Thai embassy could inform Japanese people about their culture, and at the same time, they could

learn about the Soka Gakkai. Eventually, I was joined by other staff and even started a quarterly magazine.

After three years I was transferred to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the newspaper of the Soka Gakkai, as a reporter. For the next few years, part of my job was to use my English ability to interview American members attending the summer training course in Japan. As a result, I became very close to many Americans.

In 1971, I was sent by the newspaper to cover the American organization’s Seattle convention. This was my first trip outside Japan, and I visited several cities during my forty-five-day stay. I even co-authored a book about the kosen-rufu movement in America based on that experience.

In 1973, President Ikeda proposed sending *Seikyo Shimbun* correspondents to five cities outside Japan. He asked all the staff writers to submit their city of choice. Some chose Paris; others chose cities in Asian countries. I was the only one who wrote Los Angeles. Very soon, I was on my way.

Back in my days with the student division, I remember that we studied Buddhist philosophy all the time. There was one quote from Nichiren Daishonin that was so encouraging I read it repeatedly. It is the one quoted in the box from “On Prayer.” When I think back to my dreams in junior and senior high school of being a journalist and working in the international arena, the phrase “though the tides might cease to ebb and flow and the sun rise in the west, it could never come about that the prayers of the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would go unanswered” has profound meaning. From the moment I connected with President Ikeda and determined to dedicate myself to kosen-rufu, great things started happening and without realizing it, my prayers were answered. 🌀

Although the following education proposal addresses the Japanese educational system specifically, the themes covered by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda are universal concerns shared by people around the globe. Education has been of central concern to the Soka Gakkai since its inception in 1930. Comprising all levels from pre-school to post-graduate, the Soka school system founded by the SGI president offers an education designed to stimulate wisdom and

engagement with society. Soka University opened in Hachioji, Japan in 1971 and Soka University of America was established in Calabasas, California in 1987. The construction of Soka University at Aliso Viejo, California will be finished this year and will open in autumn. Every school is co-educational with the exception of the Soka Women's Junior College. In recent years, Soka Kindergarten schools have been opened in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.



Seikyo Press

Building a Society Serving the **ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF EDUCATION:**

Some Views on Education in the Twenty-first Century

September 29, 2000

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

In this proposal, President Ikeda focuses on the problems facing the Japanese education system and draws conclusions about the fundamental nature and mission of education. He points out that the problems young people face today are primarily caused by the degeneration of the educational function of society as a whole, a phenomenon reflecting a deterioration of the ethics of adult society.

Stressing that it is crucial to reverse our society's tendency to treat education as a means

rather than an end, Mr. Ikeda urges that society be reformed to serve the essential needs of the process of education. He calls for the restoration of the bonds between individuals and between humanity and the natural environment for the sake of our children, who are in the midst of a crisis acutely symbolized by a breakdown in communication.

As the founder of Soka University and the Soka school system, he offers several specific proposals for the reform of the Japanese education system.

Education in Crisis

As we enter the twenty-first century, education is once again the focus of considerable discussion. In Japan, this debate has concentrated on educational reform, and I would like to take this opportunity to respond to recent points raised and offer some frank opinions on this debate as well as to make some concrete proposals.

One widespread problem recently has been that of children who for various reasons, particularly bullying, refuse to attend school. It is said this problem could affect almost any child in Japan: the Ministry of Education's annual survey on Japanese

schools has revealed that absenteeism in elementary and junior high schools reached the unprecedented number of more than 130,000 students in 1999. This means that, at the elementary-school level, one out of every 290 students is unable or unwilling to attend school, and, at the junior-high level, one out of forty, an average of one student in every class.

In Japan, there has been a terrible series of school suicides and

other tragedies resulting from bullying, and the crisis is escalating, while the worldwide problem of drug abuse is gradually spreading to Japan as well. In addition, there has been a succession of juvenile crimes in recent years: a series of murders by fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds, and, in just the last year, crimes that have shocked the Japanese public such as the motiveless hijacking of an express-

failed to deal with these problems. Shocked at their monstrosity, we feel helpless in the face of such unfathomable trends.

As one individual who aspires to promote the sound growth of the young people who are to shoulder our future, I penned a proposal for a general meeting of the Soka Gakkai's nationwide education division sixteen years ago entitled "Thoughts on the Aims of Education."¹

Based on the principle that educational reform should be driven by humanism, not politics, I indicated in that proposal a humanistic ideal imbued with creativity, internationalism, and totality.

I recall that at that time, too, the crisis of education was a matter of



Teachers and parents are concerned about issues of problematic behavior, school violence and absenteeism.

way bus by a 17-year-old, killing one and causing severe traumas for all the other passengers, and a boy who brutally clubbed his mother to death with a baseball bat; crimes that would have been practically unthinkable in Japan just a few years ago.

Professionals in the fields of juvenile psychology and education analyze these issues, looking for solutions. Realistically speaking, however, adult society has still

major concern, and parents and teachers and many other concerned individuals were deeply worried about the issues of problematic behavior, school violence, and absenteeism. Some fifteen years have passed since then, and sadly, notwithstanding the efforts of those involved, not only has there been no improvement but this situation has now become the norm, and numerous new problems have subsequently emerged.

The Flight from Learning

One of the most serious problems recently has been the breakdown of discipline in schools as classes become uncontrollable due to students' disruptive behavior. This problem was initially marked at the junior high-school level but has been affecting even the lower levels of elementary school in recent years. In the worst cases, children are already undisciplinable by the time they enter elementary school from kindergarten, totally disrupting classes.

There have even been surveys that show that a third of the home-room teachers whose function is to be responsible for the children report that they are so frustrated that they have considered giving up altogether. If nothing is done, we may see the dysfunction of the entire school system.

Another acute problem is a decline in academic achievement. Students' aversion to study, as seen in their dislike of subjects such as mathematics and science, is becoming a serious problem. Various studies demonstrate how the academic level of Japanese children is deteriorating altogether and that this is now affecting high-school and post-secondary education. There are reports, which would almost be laughable if they were not so shocking, of university students who lack a grasp of even the most basic concepts.

I would refer to this situation as a "flight from learning." I don't

think it would be overdramatic to describe this trend as the defeat of education, the failure of our education system to fulfill its essential functions: the provision of spiritual nourishment that enables us to develop our creativity through learning from the wisdom of our predecessors and thus gaining access to the common cultural assets that humankind conveys from generation to generation.

In 2002, Japan will complete the phased reduction of the school week to five days from the traditional six. In tandem with this, the Ministry of Education is introducing a newly revised curriculum aiming to cultivate children's "zest for living" by providing latitude for their growth. This move must, I think, reflect criticism of the conventional cramming method that places too much emphasis on rote learning and furious examination competition and is among the principal causes of the "flight from learning."

However, there are many doubts as to whether this change will lead to a genuine revival of learning or a comprehensive improvement of academic ability among students. These concerns are based on the possibility that if the number of classroom hours is reduced as proposed, rather than promoting voluntary study as intended, the extra hours will most probably result in children either spending more time in cramming schools or spending more hours watching television and playing video games and so not necessarily produce the expected results.

I share these anxieties. Although the suffering of children, as symbolized by absenteeism, must be tackled immediately, I cannot possibly believe that the underlying problems can be fixed just by tinkering with the system.

Children Are the Mirror of Society

So what is behind our children's pathology of staying away from school, problematic behavior, and the "flight from learning," which is rampant in contemporary society? I believe the fundamental cause is the overall decline of the educational functions that should be inherent not only in schools but in our communities, families, and society as a whole.

If it is education in the widest sense that enables human beings to truly express their humanity, then there must be a functional disorder in contemporary Japanese society that prevents individuals from becoming genuinely mature. This breakdown is manifested most acutely in the most fragile and sensitive constituent of our society, that is, the children. At the risk of oversimplification, we must never forget the time-honored saying "children are the mirror of society" when considering the problems of education.

Unless adults possess a kind of self-reflective attitude to correct in themselves that which is mirrored back to them by their children, attempts to reform the system, however well-intentioned, may ultimately end up as stopgap or tem-



There has been a terrible series of school suicides and other tragedies. In addition, there has been a succession of juvenile crimes in recent years.

porary measures that merely work around the edges of the system.

I found the following words in an article on moral education by the writer Taichi Yamada very moving: “Our children need more than empty sermons about virtue. As adults, we must somehow demonstrate to them in practice how to live a better life.”²

The truth is, however, that the adult world that has suddenly been revealed after the end of Japan’s period of rapid economic growth and in the aftermath of the collapse of the “bubble” economy is in an extremely wretched and gloomy state, approaching the new century with practically no vitality. Be it in politics, the bureaucracy, business, or the media, the elite have behaved shamefully, totally bent on vindicating themselves, evading social responsibility, and protecting their own interests.

Japanese society is rife with materialism and scandalous corruption among adults, a situation symbolized by a spate of insurance-related murder cases that demonstrate our loss of values and sense of purpose. This has definitely cast a dark shadow in the hearts of our children. In a society lacking role models who can inspire the next generation, of course education cannot function properly.

There are doubtless large numbers of individuals who are unaffected by the sensationalism of the media and continue to work sincerely, adhering to a belief that what is essential is, in the words of Mr. Yamada, to “demonstrate in practice how to live a better life.” However, even these people are finding it difficult to uphold their principles. The fact that people are increasingly extolling an over-idealized image of “the good old days of the Meiji era”³ perhaps

reflects that people feel a spiritual deficiency in contemporary Japanese society.

Review of the Fundamental Law of Education

I believe these problems are also part of the reason behind calls for a review and possible amendment of the Fundamental Law of Education, the mainstay of the postwar education system, as part of a series of educational reform plans.

The July 2000 report by the prime minister’s private advisory board, the National Council on Educational Reform (NCER), stated that the majority view was that an amendment of the Fundamental Law of Education was required, and that “in the preamble and provisions in Article 1, there is an overemphasis on individual and universal humanity and an omission of respect toward the nation, the community, tradition, culture, the home, and nature.”

In fact, it is hard to find fault with the principles stated in the preamble and Article 1. Article 1 of the Fundamental Law of Education stipulates the objectives of education as follows:

“Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labor and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of the

peaceful state and society.”⁴

This is a perfectly acceptable statement of the universal principle of “full development of personality” based on the principle of respect for individual dignity, and is pertinent to peoples of all times and cultures.

However, in applying this universal principle, its relevance must be tested in the social and ethical context. I feel in this sense that those who drafted this law were not specific enough. People failed to delve into what the individual in this context really means. In fact, the individual can only become a fully realized individual in interaction with others, and in order to do this it is necessary to control egotism. This is perhaps so self-evident that the drafters of the law failed to pay enough attention to it. They failed to be adequately aware of the dangers of individualism degenerating into selfish egotism.

Thus, any review or revision of the law proposed by the NCER must be based on a clear understanding of the way in which universal principles find expression within cultural particularities. And I believe that this same concern motivated Tatsuo Morito, the minister of education who was instrumental in drafting the Fundamental Law of Education and who later expressed doubts about its effectiveness.

Although it was not mentioned in the council’s report, there is a reactionary mood in the country calling for a return to the spirit of the following section of the Imperial Rescript on Education to

correct these deficiencies.

“Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all;”⁵

Merely filling the text with references to culture, tradition, and the home will not, I think, produce much effect. Without question, reinstatement of the virtues extolled in the Imperial Rescript on Education would be totally anachronistic when one considers the role the Rescript assumed in Japan’s imperial and patriarchal systems before and during the war.⁶

The Fundamental Law of Education has been the mainstay of the postwar education system in Japan, and for this reason I believe that any revision should be undertaken only after careful thought and review; hasty revision is to be avoided.

A Paradigm Shift

The modern Japanese educational system has reached a critical juncture. We are witnessing the consequences of education being subordinated to various bureaucratic and political agendas under the control of the Ministry of Education.

Modern Japan’s progress, whether it be the prewar policy of building national prosperity and military strength or the postwar stress on becoming an economic superpower, has been motivated by an unconditional national

imperative to catch up with and surpass the advanced countries of the West. At the same time, ever since the Meiji era, education has been coercively positioned as a means to attain these goals. Both of these approaches are now evidently at a stalemate as Japan is compelled to make an orbital change in direction from industrialization to adaptation to the information-oriented era.

Hence, as I consider education in the twenty-first century, I would like to assert that what is most urgently needed is a paradigm shift from looking at “education for society’s sake” to building “a society serving the essential needs of education.”

In formulating the conceptual paradigm of “a society serving the essential needs of education,” I was inspired by Professor Robert Thurman of Columbia University. Each time I have had the chance to meet him, I have been impressed by the depth of his vision. In an interview with the Boston Research Center (BRC),⁷ he was asked how he viewed the role of education in society. He replied, “I think the question should rather be: What is the role of society in education? Because in my view education is the purpose of human life.”

This is indeed a penetrating insight. Professor Thurman says that this view is largely due to influences from the teachings of Shakyamuni, whom he considers one of humanity’s first teachers. This resonates with Kant’s ethical philosophy, which insists that we respect the autonomy of others

and that humans must never be used as a means to an end.

Learning is the very purpose of human life, the primary factor in the development of personality, that which makes human beings truly human. Nevertheless, development of personality has consistently been reduced to a subordinate position and viewed as a means to other ends. This view has prevailed worldwide throughout modern history, particularly in the twentieth century.

The educational system has therefore been reduced to a mere mechanism that serves national objectives, be they political, military, economic, or ideological. A certain type of personality, not the full development of personality, has been sought, as if casting individuals from a uniform mold. Treating education as a means rather than an end reinforces a utilitarian view of human life itself.

It is a terrible tragedy that the twentieth century suffered ceaseless wars and violence and became an unprecedented era of mass killing. Needless to say, this demonstrates an increase in killing power, the negative legacy of technological advance. Furthermore, I feel that it is in large part due to an overturning of values in modern civilization, caused by ceasing to regard human beings as the basis of value and instead assigning merely subordinate roles to education, which should be a fundamental and primary human activity.

In this regard, I feel some anxiety about attitudes toward the IT revolution. As was described in



Michael S. Yamashita/COBBIS

Extra hours of free time will most probably result in children spending more hours watching television and playing video games.

the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society at the Okinawa-Kyushu Summit this year, “Information and Communication Technology (IT) is one of the most potent forces in shaping the twenty-first century.”⁸ There can be no doubt that the IT revolution will become one of the mega-trends in the forthcoming century, and it is of course important not to be left behind.

University professors and officials have frequently noted that the deterioration of academic ability among Japanese students, especially in mathematics and sciences, if left unsolved, may negatively affect Japan’s economy and technological ability and consequently delay Japan in the worldwide race toward the IT revolution. It is only right to be apprehensive in this regard.

While globalization naturally entails both positive and negative

aspects, the current toward internationalization in the twenty-first century will be unstoppable. No country can remain unaffected.

Yet, my personal uneasiness is about the possibility of retracing the footsteps of the past, that is, returning to the idea of “education for society’s sake” in tackling the problem of how to improve the academic level of our students.

Insofar as the IT revolution by nature has the potential to cause a paradigm shift in contemporary society, its influence contains positive and negative potentials. However, my observation of the current state of affairs is that only the optimistic and positive aspects have been stressed.

In the United States, which anticipated the IT revolution first, especially in the financial sector, and sometimes appears to have carved out for itself a monopoly position where materialism and

“casino capitalism” thrive, the darkness of the IT revolution undoubtedly casts a growing shadow. If all that the new invention of IT brings to human society is a tendency toward materialism, then what use is this revolution?

A Society That Confuses Happiness with Pleasure

In the face of this tendency, we need to return to the core issue of human values. I believe we need to redefine the crucial concept “development of personality.”

People have come to take this phrase, described as the purpose of education in the Fundamental Law of Education, for granted. But this is a universal goal that we must strive to realize and implement. It is a fundamental concept, and it can never be reemphasized enough as the key to educational reform.

For this purpose, let us experiment by replacing the phrase “development of personality” with the word “happiness.” The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who was an outstanding educator, never ceased to stress that the purpose of education is ensuring children’s happiness.

Makiguchi’s pedagogy is gradually gaining international recognition today, but it was originally conceived under the prewar militarist regime in Japan, which mobilized every educational institution to foster obedient imperial subjects. It

was against this process that Makiguchi protested, asserting that education’s true aim should be the lifelong well-being of children and critiquing the Imperial Rescript on Education as providing nothing more than a “minimum set of moral standards.”

In other words, he was a far-sighted individual who, during a period of fanatical militarism, held fast to his belief that society should serve the authentic needs of humanistic education and that education must never be sacrificed to nationalist goals.

Happiness, however, must not be confused with mere pleasure. Mistaking momentary pleasure for a life of genuine satisfaction and happiness exemplifies the skewing of values that in my opinion has been at the root of the distortions of postwar Japanese society. This mistaken attitude results in liberty yielding to indulgence and self-seeking, peace yielding to cowardice and indolence, human rights to complacency, and democracy to mobocracy.

Consequently, development of personality ceases, and we are left with immature and arrogant individuals, unable to grow out of their childish ways and never listening to others, described by José Ortega y Gasset.⁹

The experience of a truly human life — genuine happiness — can only be realized in the bonds and interactions between people. Herein lies the essence of the Buddhist perspective on human life and happiness. Enmity, contradiction, and discord may seem to

be an unavoidable aspect of relations between humans and our relations with nature and the universe. But it is through the process of persevering in spite of this and transforming these conflicts, restoring and rejuvenating the bonds between us, that we are able to forge and polish our individuality and character.

If these bonds are severed, the human spirit can only roam aimlessly in the pitch darkness of solitude. In psychological terms this might be referred to as a “communication disorder,” a pathology of modern society due to a weakening of the bonds between people.

Antisocial behavior and the increasing viciousness of juvenile crimes are acute manifestations of this social pathology. There is an ongoing debate in Japan about amending the juvenile law, but changing the law will not of itself lead to a solution of the problem. It is the responsibility of adults to patiently restore the ability to communicate by listening to the voices of isolated children calling out for help from the darkness.

There is a famous episode about Socrates in which his influence on youth is described as being like an electric ray that stings those who touch it. He explains that he can electrify others because he is electrified himself. Similarly, a teacher must be constantly creative if he is to evoke creativity in his students. This is an essential quality in an educator.

What is most important is the attitude of the teachers themselves. Human interaction is the key.

Restoring Human Bonds

Creative coexistence is clearly one of the key concepts for the twenty-first century. I also referred to this several years ago in a proposal entitled “A Renaissance of Hope and Humanity.”¹⁰

Communication between humans and the natural environment is also vital. In this respect also, Makiguchi was a man with piercing foresight. At the opening of his book, *The Geography of Human Life*,¹¹ Makiguchi stresses the importance of the influence of the natural environment on the development of personality by citing a work by the renowned educator and reformist Yoshida Shoin (1830–1859): “People do not develop in isolation from their environment, and human affairs are just a reflection of the people. Therefore, to understand human affairs, you first must understand the local context in which the people have developed.” Makiguchi went on to state that you can only foster qualities of compassion, goodwill, friendship, kindness, sincerity and honesty, and cultivate nobility of the heart, within the local community.

The Geography of Human Life was published in 1903, more than half a century before environmental issues such as shortages of natural resources and energy and pollution of the atmosphere and water compelled humanity to reconsider our relationship with

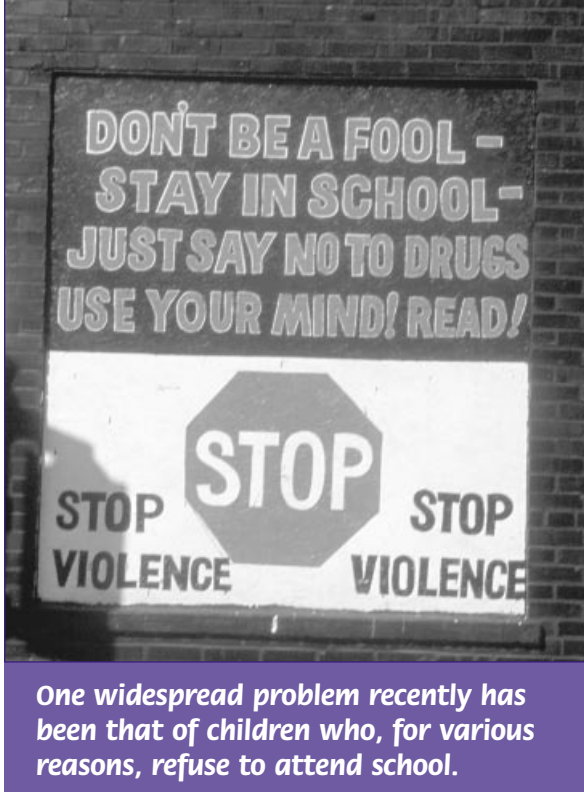


Students' aversion to study, as seen in their dislike of subjects such as mathematics and science, is becoming a problem.

nature. Even then, Makiguchi keenly perceived that a breakdown of communication with nature not only causes humans physical damage but also results in the destruction of virtues such as compassion that are essential to

development of personality.

If the twentieth century was a century when human beings violently destroyed the global environment like rapacious invaders, maintaining communication and contact with nature is absolutely



The Purcell Team/CORBIS

One widespread problem recently has been that of children who, for various reasons, refuse to attend school.

indispensable in the education of our children and the young people who are to take responsibility for the twenty-first century. Just as with communication between humans, we must increase our opportunities to interact directly with nature, rather than with the world of virtual reality. What can virtual reality offer to compare with the real-life sensation of communicating with nature — breathing the same air and basking in the same sunlight as the earth, trees, grass, and animals — the dynamic expanse of life?

I recall a moving passage from an essay by Nobukiyo Takahashi, an authority on forest research.

“The beauty of the evening forest, especially under a full moon, throws into sharp contrast the boundary between the sky and the mountain ridges, as if viewing a wood-block print. It is a world of white and black. It is also a world savored only by those who experience it. Captured in photos or

video, you may be able to discern these images to a certain extent, but you can never feel them in the same way. Because when you are there, it is not only through your eyes that you are touched: your skin senses the temperature and humidity; you smell the evening forest; fleetingly heard sounds that defy definition

flit past your ears. Go out into the night forest, pick up a leaf, examine it front and back. How much beauty you can discover!”¹²

If we are to build a society that serves the essential needs of education in the twenty-first century, we must not become divided or isolated. Rather, we must deepen human bonds that transcend differences of race and nationality and also be in free and full communication with nature. We must give the highest priority to cultivating in young people the strength of character and values that will enable them to take the lead in building a world of creative coexistence.

The Independence of Education

Next, I would like to raise a few specific suggestions regarding reform of the education system.

Faced with the crisis in education, the National Council on

Educational Reform (NCER) was established in March 2000 as the Japanese prime minister’s advisory board to discuss the direction of educational reform together with various Ministry of Education bodies.

While it is natural that education be recognized as a matter of utmost national importance, reform must not be conducted piecemeal by merely looking for remedies for specific problems but should be carried out with a long-term perspective. Since education is inextricably interrelated with society, the process of responding to the changes of the times naturally may entail a degree of trial and error. Frequently, however, the orientation of reform has been strongly affected by the political current of the time or has consisted of myopic countermeasures that are simply reactions to changes in the immediate environment.

This was a problem in prewar Japan, as well. In *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*,¹³ which was published seventy years ago, Makiguchi indicated: “As is the difficulty with any old, long-established edifice, our thoroughly inconsistent educational system has been patched up with an endless succession of stopgap remedial measures. Our schools are unable to respond to the demands of the new era and, as a result, are misdirecting the future progress of the young people who enter them. This is a truly distressing situation.”

Challenging the myopic and superficial nature of contemporary Japanese attempts at educational

reform, he proposed that two new institutions be established to develop an educational vision for a new era, namely, an “educational headquarters” to act as an independent permanent central agency for education and a “national institute for educational research” to assist it. The latter was indeed founded soon after the war, but a central agency as he envisaged it has yet to be realized.

The NCER could potentially fulfill this function, but as this is an ad hoc body, there would be the risk that this important issue might come to be treated in a stop-gap way. This is why I would like to propose the establishment of a permanent central commission for education committed to the long-term reconstruction of the entire framework of the educational system. This should be launched as an independent body that is institutionally insulated from all political influence. Ensuring independence is indispensable as a means to prevent a loss of continuity in educational policies in the event of changes in the administration and also to avoid arbitrary reforms caused by political interference.

I have in the past called for the principle of the separation of powers to be expanded to give education a status and independence coequal to that accorded the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Because education is a profound endeavor that shapes the individuals of future generations, it should be completely independent of political interference. This also was the

spirit of Makiguchi and his close associate and successor, Josei Toda, who both campaigned selflessly during the 1920s and 1930s against the nationalistic education that was pushing Japan on the path toward war.

Such a permanent central commission should then take the lead in setting forth firm principles and long-term directions for reform in education while communicating with organizations such as the National Institute for Educational Research of Japan.

In addition to this vital mission, this permanent central commission would have a broader focus that could enable Japan to open a new path toward international contribution. It is international exchange and cooperation in the educational arena, transcending national interests, that will serve as a foundation for world peace. For this reason I have been promoting a vision, conceived over twenty years ago, for what might be called a “United Nations of Education”¹⁴ in order to work toward making education independent of political interference throughout the world.

If Japan could take on the role of promoting independence of education throughout the world by establishing a permanent educational commission in this way, this would doubtless help create a new identity for Japan as a country devoted to education.

In April 2000, Japan sponsored the first G8 Education Summit, attended by education ministers. I would like to propose

that Japan should actively support the regular holding of international educational summits in the future, promoting a broad range of exchanges not only at the governmental level but also between individuals actually engaged in education. As confirmed at the G8 Education Summit, educational issues are not limited to individual countries. Hence Japan should assume a pivotal role in leading other countries toward international cooperation to open a new horizon for education in the twenty-first century.

Balanced Reform

Next, I should like to mention some points pertaining to reform of education in schools, which has recently become a focal issue in Japan.

The core of this reform has been “structural deregulation.” The intention is that liberalization in the field of education will be promoted by abolishing the exams between junior and senior high schools in the public school system and introducing greater choice of school. The reforms also include a reduction in overall class hours, aiming to provide more latitude for children’s growth by introducing a five-day school week. These measures are presumably a result of recognition of the importance of encouraging competition between schools and in reaction against rote learning.

In the Japanese context, if these reforms are enacted without completely thinking them through and

providing the resources to ensure they work, we may end up asking too much of children's self-motivation. Makiguchi described the impact that the indiscriminate advocacy of "freedom" can have on the educational process: "Mere liberation, unaccompanied by a creative, constructive element, falls into directionless indulgence. When one thinks of the impact on the educational economy of the innocent pupils, it is impossible to regard this with indifference."¹⁵

This warning from the past should not be neglected today. Our communities, our schools, and families need thorough, prudent preparation. As Makiguchi emphasized, methodological reforms must be preceded by unambiguously defining the purpose of education in terms of the happiness of students. Institutional changes that are not guided by clearly defined goals and principles could easily backfire as they have done in the past.

Makiguchi proposed a half-day school system, and of course this would reduce the amount of time spent at school, but he was not motivated merely by opposition to an overemphasis of rote learning as is the case at present. His intention was to achieve spiritually and physically balanced growth, whereby children could experience simultaneously the enrichment derived from learning at school and that derived from practical experience in society.

Makiguchi stressed: "The malady of contemporary education is not so much that there is an overemphasis on factual knowl-

edge, but that educators' approach to the concept of intellectual education is not appropriate."¹⁶ He called for a comprehensive change in Japanese attitudes to education, shifting from an emphasis on factual knowledge alone to the development of intellect and wisdom. He felt that this is the challenge that should be addressed by schools.

Rather than focusing critically on the existing school system, curtailing its functions in such a way as to attack its very foundations, I believe that we should seek a process of reform from the standpoint of restoring our schools' fundamental function as the forum for imparting intellectual education in the true sense of the phrase.

Creativity and Experimentation

If we are to truly change school education, empowerment of teachers must be a component. I would like to propose a transition to an approach which is more decentralized, which gives each school a freer hand and gives more authority to principals through democratization and transparency in the appointment process as well as encouraging the creativity and ingenuity of teachers. Because reforms have in the past been imposed uniformly, I believe it has been difficult for teachers to formulate new ideas as various restrictions lead them merely to perform their part adequately and no more.

Education should be for the sake of children and should not be

under the monopolistic control of the government. In Japan, the government is deeply involved with details such as screening of textbooks and imposition of the curriculum, which means that we have not cultivated the means to nurture autonomy of schools and teachers or the individuality and creativity of children.

Uniform standards should be limited to matters of basic framework, and the independence of the school should be respected in practical matters. At the same time, teachers should encourage one another to enhance the quality of education through a process of trial and error.

In recent discussions on reform, there has been an ongoing debate about the quality of individual teachers, including suggestions that teaching certificates be subject to periodic renewal. What is really needed, however, is for the entire school to unite behind the challenge of enhancing the quality of education across the board. An example of this might be to have all teachers regularly open their classes to observation by their peers, as well as promoting exchanges between teachers of other subjects and from other neighborhood schools for the purpose of research.

The traditional Japanese system is reaching its limits, as seen in the breakdown of the lifetime employment and "promotion by seniority" systems in our companies. Positive competition is required if we are to reinvigorate our society. To enrich school edu-



Roger Ressmeyer/CORBIS

It is now the vital role of education to strive to create the kinds of schools where children can always find the joys of learning and living.

cation, teachers need mutual inspiration and motivation, encouragement and solidarity. Moreover, regular open days for children's families and members of the community as well as exchanges of views between elementary, junior, and senior high school teachers in the same community would be useful in deepening cooperation.

In this context, I would like to propose that new and different types of schools be officially accredited and "experimental classes" be promoted — a shift to decentralization for the genuine, internal transformation of school education in Japan through encouraging the cre-

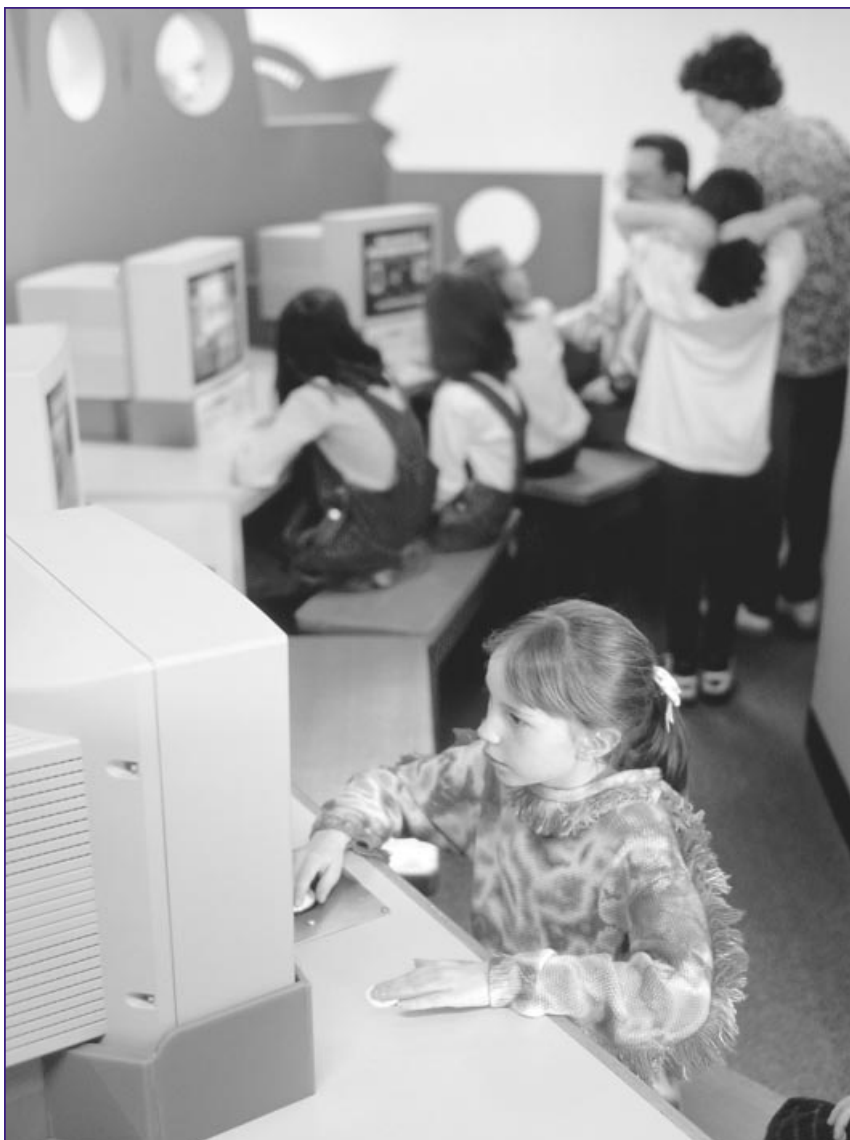
ative energy of educators.

Other countries recognize a variety of schools operating under differing educational approaches — the Steiner schools grounded in a unique educational philosophy, the charter schools in the U.S.A., and "free schools" that enable children to select their own subjects of interest. Japan also needs to have a similar diversity of schools, a fact that many people now recognize. The NCER is deliberating the question of authorizing community schools, a new type of public school established and operated by the community. This is certainly a worthwhile avenue to consider.

To enable creative ideas to be

put into practice, I would like to propose that the criteria for giving approval to new types of schools be relaxed. We also need to encourage experimental classes within the existing system and find ways to disseminate information about innovative measures that have been successfully tried out.

Faced with the problems of bullying, violence and absenteeism, the Soka Gakkai's education division has compiled a collection of records of the practical steps its members have taken as teachers to solve problems. This project has been carried out in response to the proposal on education I made sixteen years ago. I



Sandy Felsenhi/CORBIS

A revised curriculum — one that aims to cultivate children's "zest for living"— will provide latitude for their growth.

was tremendously gratified to hear recently that more than ten thousand such experiences have been compiled, evidence of the painstaking efforts of the teachers over the years. These are precious records and reports on educational methodologies as put into practice in the field and are an extremely beneficial means of sharing teachers' experiences.

Amid growing concern about the "flight from learning," it is now the vital role of education to strive to create the kinds of schools where children can always find the joys of learning and living.

The Ministry of Education initiated this year a policy whereby a school can apply to become a "research development school" with the freedom to determine its

own individual curriculum. The system is open to both public and private schools, and the government will provide financial support. I welcome this system in that it encourages creativity and imagination in the classroom. I also believe that analysis of accumulated results and sharing of information will benefit the educational system as a whole.

Interaction between theory and concrete results from experimentation is a prerequisite, and a good example of this is in the work of the American philosopher John Dewey, who enhanced and deepened his educational theories through the experience gained at the Chicago Laboratory School.¹⁷ In the same way, Makiguchi's *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* and Toda's *Deductive Guide to Arithmetic* (Suirishiki Shido Sanjutsu) were both works that were based on actual practice in the classroom.

Toda, Makiguchi's most loyal supporter and my own mentor, established an elementary tutorial school, the Jishu Gakkan, in 1923 as a place to prove through experimentation the theory of value-creating education. Makiguchi referred to the Jishu Gakkan as a materialization of his own vision for elementary schools, describing it as the greatest proof of his work. Meanwhile, being determined to continue Toda's work, I have founded a system of schools from the elementary to university and postgraduate levels based on Makiguchi's principles of value-creating education.

Volunteer Activities

In addition to establishing a creative learning environment, it is equally important to cultivate humanism in our children through actual experience in society. One well-documented tendency in modern children is egoistic behavior and attenuated human relationships, while the intensely competitive examination system becomes the sole focus of children's lives. In addition, many are so absorbed in the virtual world of the internet, television, and video games that they have become numb to the stimulations offered by the real world.

How can we encourage children to directly communicate with society and nature? One popular idea is experience in volunteer activities. I believe this should be promoted—not merely through occasional field trips but as continuous ongoing activities. To be specific, there should be activities that produce tangible results—work within the community, such as recycling, that contributes to society and provides a sense of fulfillment, as well as planting trees and flowers and conservation activities that generate concrete results.

Recently, children have been becoming more and more violent, and the incidence of juvenile crime is rising. Involvement in constructive, creative activities would lead to the well-balanced physical and spiritual growth of children. After engaging in constructive activities and projects, children would return with health-

ier emotions and peace of mind, bearing out the words of the philosopher William James when he spoke of the need for a “moral equivalent of war”¹⁸ to develop discipline and channel aggression.

In this regard, Makiguchi asserted that, through his vision of a half-day school system, the surplus energy of young people, often directed to antisocial targets, can be used in a way that is of value to society, thus contributing toward both individual happiness and the community at the same time. Experiencing the feeling that one's actions are of use to others gives confidence to the young people and becomes a firm foundation for spiritual growth.

The year 2001 has been designated as the UN “International Year of Volunteers.” Taking this as an opportunity, we should deepen appreciation of volunteer activities throughout society, not just in the limited environment of the school, and pave a path toward a humanitarian society in the twenty-first century.

Fundamental Reform of Universities

Next, I would like to touch upon the university entrance examination system, which is a pivotal issue in educational reform in Japan. Currently, as the already excessive pressure of examinations intensifies, one serious problem is the tendency to turn high schools into nothing

more than a preparatory stage for entrance to universities. Now that family size is decreasing and the pressure for access to higher education is less, Japanese society is presented with a good opportunity to review this system and renew it so it can become one that is truly beneficial to both students and colleges.

What needs to be considered first is diversification of admission processes. I feel there is a need to improve the current university entrance system from a selective screening exam to that of an aptitude test for entrance. The method of university admission should not be limited to written entrance examinations. Broader opportunities should be opened up through diversified processes such as admission on grounds of special talents and merit; all these efforts should respect and encourage the applicant's will to learn.

The beginning of the university academic year should also be moved from April to September,¹⁹ both to facilitate smooth transition for exchange students and those returning from studies overseas as well as to provide graduates of Japanese high schools time and various opportunities after graduation and before university entrance. This period could be used as an opportunity to acquire experience in society, to read extensively, and ponder carefully on life.

Related to this, I would like to touch upon the nature of university education. Most important, there is a need to reconsider our approach to education in terms of

including both specialization and a well-rounded general education. In a rapidly changing society, academic disciplines are likely to become further subdivided and highly specialized, reducing the weight of basic liberal arts subjects in college curricula. This will limit the breadth of education a student can receive. Liberal arts at Japanese universities are currently lacking a clear-cut goal or principle, and I would therefore like to call for a reevaluation of our approach in this crucial area. Simultaneously, we must expand education in specialized fields and ensure coordination with the courses offered at graduate school.

The Contributions of Soka University

It is vital that we define the ideal direction for humanistic education and create a new current of education for the twenty-first century. Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, will open in 2001 as a liberal arts college focusing on providing a well-rounded general education while preparing students to pursue more specialized courses of study, including postgraduate courses. As its founder, I am committed to bold experimentation and full implementation of the ideals of value-creating education.

In all areas of university education, but especially liberal arts, we need to end the tight demarcations between departments and adopt an organic and interdisciplinary approach. For this purpose, fac-



If all that the new invention of information technology brings to human society is a tendency toward materialism, then what use is this revolution?

John Wilkes Shure/COREIS

ulty members should be urged to drastically reform their teaching methods. One reason why many students find the classes unattractive is the outdated contents of the classes repeated year after year. I have already referred to the dysfunction of the school education

innovative teaching methods and also provide students with learning assistance to help them gain the ability to resolve difficulties on their own.

At Soka University of America, meanwhile, every student and faculty member will participate in the

system: the problems faced by universities in this regard have tended to be neglected.

The interim report of the University Council of the Ministry of Education emphasized the need to enhance the teaching abilities of university faculty members. Faculty members must make ceaseless efforts to improve the quality of classes and avoid inertia, to prevent the overall quality of university education from being damaged.

In Japan, Soka University established a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in 2000. The center will support the faculty in various projects to develop

Core Curriculum, a unique series of four courses focusing on central issues facing our world in the twenty-first century:

What is an individual human life?

What is the relationship between the individual and the physical environment in which we live?

What is the relationship between the individual and the human environment in which we live?

Global issues in peace, culture and education.

Each issue will be addressed from a range of perspectives — historical, multicultural, analytical, and experiential — so as to provide the foundation for ongoing learning.

In Japan, too, I believe that a liberal arts education should be the core element of the first half of every university degree course, as it provides a general understanding of humanity. For the second half of the course, we need to make university administration more flexible, namely, to introduce a double-major system and establish a system that allows compatibility in credits and transfers between schools to enable students to move to universities in specialized academic fields.

When choosing universities, students in Japan are inclined to prioritize universities or departments that are easy to enter. If this situation persists, it will never generate positive results for either the students or the universities. To avoid this, universities should cooperate in providing classes in areas that students truly wish to pursue. During their time in uni-

versity, as students' interests develop, they are likely to wish to change courses to a completely different field, which may require moving to a different university. The current system, however, does not allow the transfer of credits and thus discourages this process.

To respond to this, universities in some parts of Japan are starting to form alliances enabling the transfer of credits. These are bold reforms that are of great significance for the benefit of the students. Ideally, universities should allow individual students to study what they want, when they want, and where they want. To achieve this, we need to allow mobility, concentrating on the academic discipline and specialization, not the university. This will form part of the development of a lifelong education system.

Promoting International Exchange

Another task that universities should address, I believe, is opening their doors to international exchange. Japan, in particular, urgently needs to promote internationalization in all institutions of higher learning.

Soka University aims to be a new kind of university based on the principles of humanism. For this reason, ever since it was established, it has actively promoted educational exchanges with universities in other countries throughout the world. It has already signed aca-

demical exchange agreements with more than seventy universities. Through such exchanges, many students have acquired the opportunity to study abroad, and regular exchanges of faculty members have been promoted. We are striving toward globalization of the educational environment through enhancing mutual understanding between cultures.

The high quality of American universities' educational standards in comparison to those of Japanese universities is often mentioned here. I am convinced that the wellspring of the vigor of American colleges lies in the country's spiritual climate that respects diversity and freedom and welcomes educators and students of many different nationalities.

In Japan, teaching staff have basically tended to work abroad only for the sake of career advancement, while students often view overseas study purely in terms of future career opportunities. But from the viewpoint of cultural exchange and enhancement of the quality of education in Japan, we urgently need to find ways to increase the flow of exchange students coming to Japan. Scholarships will be an important means of supporting students studying abroad as well as encouraging foreign students to study in Japan, and creating a fuller scholarship system will therefore be crucial from the standpoint of building an identity for Japan as a country that places the utmost priority on education.

On the same theme, I want to

emphasize the importance of language education, especially English, at an early stage. Even if we make structural preparations for international exchange at the university level, unless we fundamentally break down the language barrier, the range of exchanges will not expand, and these plans will remain “pie in the sky.” Moreover, globalization means that linguistic proficiency is becoming an indispensable ability in life. Language skills can help to bring the world together. Language is a tool which enables us to expand our chances of learning about the lives and differences in values of people throughout the world as well as promoting heart-to-heart exchanges.

As one concrete measure, it is important to actively promote English education in elementary schools. However, this should not consist of just bringing forward junior high school English classes, but rather focus on learning conversation skills in an enjoyable environment that also deepens understanding of culture. (Naturally, we should not neglect the study of Japanese language, history, and culture as well.)

Toward a Century Radiant with the Smiles of Children

Lastly, I would like to reemphasize the global challenge that faces us: the creation of a human society that serves the essential needs of education. When defined as those activities that foster the

talents and character of human beings, “education” is in no way limited to classrooms but is a mission that must be undertaken and realized by human society as a whole. We must now go back to the original purpose of education — children’s lifelong happiness — and reflect upon the state of our respective societies and our ways of living.

What kind of world should we build for our children to inherit? At the threshold of a new century, we have a great opportunity to seriously face these issues — and it is an opportunity we must seize.

The UN has designated the first decade of the twenty-first century (2001–2010) the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. I wholeheartedly welcome this designation since it is a theme I have asserted continuously over the years. UNESCO will be assuming a central role in this campaign, but its success depends on a broad range of popular support and cooperation.

The youth division of SGI-USA has been engaged in “Victory Over Violence (VOV),” a movement to educate people about nonviolence, since 1999. This movement is conducted through promoting dialogue to disseminate the spirit of nonviolence. The overarching goal is to transform the tendency to downplay the sanctity of life that became deeply rooted in the minds of our children during the twentieth century, the century of war and violence. The VOV

movement is developing broadly in U.S. society and receiving support from many human rights organizations, schools, and other educational institutions. Above all, it has become a tremendous source of hope and courage for young people who have suffered the effects of violence.

Like the U.S.A., Japan also needs to address this tendency to devalue life. Sensational coverage of tragic incidents, pointing at the darkness in children’s hearts, will never do anything to solve the problem. It is society’s values that have become inverted. As adults, we must speak out and take action. The Soka Gakkai has consistently emphasized the promotion of peace education on the grassroots level. In line with the UN international decade, I call upon the Soka Gakkai youth division and the education division to play central and active roles in raising awareness of the culture of peace and nonviolence in Japanese society.

I believe that through such engagement we can strive to construct a value-creating society and live truly non-egoistic lives grounded in mutual respect.

Education separated from society can have no vital force; likewise, there is no future for a society that has lost sight of the fact that education is its true mission. Education is not a mere right or obligation. I believe that education in the broadest sense is the mission of every individual. To awaken this awareness throughout society must be the highest priority in all our endeavors.



Central Tower at Soka University, Hachioji, Japan.

Finally, I would like to conclude by pledging that I will devote all my energy to creating a century in which children's lives will shine with happiness and the magnificent promise of education will finally be fulfilled. ☸

1. Daisaku Ikeda, *Buddhism in Action*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: NSIC, 1985), p. 328.
2. *Chuo Koron*, September 1999 issue.
3. 1868–1912. Considered to be the beginning of Japan's modern period.
4. Kyoiku Kihon Ho. Promulgated on March 31, 1947.
5. Kyoiku Chokugo. Issued by Emperor Meiji on October 30, 1890, and remained in effect

until the end of World War II.

6. Glorifying the values of loyalty and filial piety, the Imperial Rescript on Education was used as an absolute guiding principle of education and served as a powerful tool of ideological indoctrination.
7. Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, <<http://www.brc21.org/index.htm>>.
8. Kyushu-Okinawa Summit Meeting 2000 site, <<http://www.g8kyushu-okinawa.go.jp/e/documents/it1.html>>.
9. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1932).
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11. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Jinsei Chirigaku*, The Complete Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1903, reprint, Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1987), vols. 1 and 2.
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Shimbunsha, 1992).

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15. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Kyoiku Taidoron*, The Complete Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1936, reprint, Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1988), vol. 9.
16. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei Gairon*, The Complete Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1930, reprint, Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1984), vol. 8.
17. The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools site, <<http://www.ucls.uchicago.edu/>>
18. "The Moral Equivalent of War," speech given at Stanford University, 1906.
19. Currently, all Japanese educational establishments commence the academic year in April.



Byron Cohen

Linda Kaye and friends from Mid-Valley Chapter (from left to right) Mary Baldwin, Sherry Beall D'Ambrosio, Linda, Pamela Walker, Gisli Bjorgvinsson, and Millie Lee Bunch.

"N8JOY"

Surviving With Pride

BY ALAN RUSKIN, LOS ANGELES

From her decidedly regal bearing, one would hardly guess that as a child Linda Kaye was subjected to humiliating abuse on a regular basis. She lost her biological father through divorce when she was just a year old. Her mother remarried to a man whom Linda describes as a "monster." Beginning at the age of four, she endured verbal, physical and sexual abuse, which continued through her early adolescence.

Her stepfather also beat and demeaned her older brother, who eventually died at 40 of alcoholism and drug addiction, having chosen "to live and die without knowing his own happiness," despite Linda's attempts to introduce him to Buddhism. Her mother was no help. "To this day she claims we were a normal family. She's in total denial of the reality of what happened, which is common for women who are victims of abusers." In the meantime, her father

remarried and had two more sons that Linda never knew growing up. As a teenager, Linda also got into drugs and skipped school for days at a time just to have her own space. Her desperate youth left her, by her own description, a “handicapped person.”

As might be expected, Linda does not relish the re-telling of her horrific experiences. She feels it’s necessary, however, to understand how she became programmed to be the person she grew up to be for much of her life, and the subsequent painful and heroic struggle she has waged based on her Buddhist practice to evolve into the person she is today.

Linda, who has been practicing Buddhism for twenty-six years and is a leader in the San Fernando Mid-Valley chapter of Los Angeles, says, “The last two-and-half years have been a great challenge personally. About a year and a half ago I went through intense therapy, trying to save my marriage as well as understand the root cause of my long-term suffering in relationships.” (Linda had two previous failed marriages). “This process was painful but very enlightening, as I was able to identify my suffering in a very acute manner. It became a question of taking full responsibility and realizing that I would be working to heal myself throughout my life.”

The core of what Linda learned is that as a result of never having a true, caring father, she tended to subconsciously seek relationships with men who were in some way unavailable. “I understood that how I acted was a direct result of the damage done in my childhood, that a child will create coping mechanisms to survive trauma and I was still doing these same behaviors as an adult.” Linda’s therapist, incidentally, is an SGI Buddhist, something for which she is very grateful. She had trouble finding people to confide in who had experienced traumas similar to her own. “I was able to trust my therapist on the deepest level.”

Seeing the flaws in her character, however, was something of a trauma in itself. “When it hit me as to how I was behaving, I could barely speak for two months. When I was going through therapy, much was being unearthed in my inner world. I had the hardest time finding a woman leader who could relate to the myriad of feelings I was having. Somehow I



Byron Cohen

Bottom line for Linda is that she can now see that “all my suffering has been for kosen-rufu, all my victories are to encourage others. As she concludes, “There is simply no gnarly, mutated karma that you can’t change when you truly embrace this Buddhism.”

knew that I was that leader and that I had to have a successful experience because I needed to encourage others who had suffered from child abuse.”

In 1998, Linda met with Matilda Buck, currently SGI-USA women’s division leader and explained her dilemma of not being able to find someone who could understand what she was going through and “who didn’t look at me funny when I burst into tears. She talked to me for over an hour and encouraged me to continue therapy and do the work I needed to do. She told me, ‘you’re a quick study, you can get the point of all of this.’ She said I would need to know what that work was about in order to

help other women. I understood at that moment that I must undertake the task of healing my life. It was my mission to do so.”

Linda continued her therapy and made identifying the root cause of her suffering the focus of her prayers. The result was that her depression began to lift. “My therapist assured me that I didn’t have to own the shame I was feeling, and corrected my self-slander by having me repeat to myself, ‘I am excellent, I am excellent.’ I felt an empowerment I had never felt before, a taste of real freedom inside my life. And guess what? Within two weeks my boss (Linda works as an assistant to a top executive in the music information-technology field) was praising me to the sky! ‘You’re amazing,’ he said, ‘a star! Don’t ever think of leaving us!’ I never had an employer praise me like that.”

As for the effect on her troubled marriage of her gain in self-awareness, the result was perhaps not what she had originally sought. “As I grew, my husband became very insecure because he could no longer control me. Another relationship-nightmare ensued—he even tapped my phone and had me followed. Eventually he asked me to leave because he could no longer deal with what I had to go through to recover from the trauma of my childhood.” Linda stresses that a relationship with a victim of child abuse is no easy matter. “Partners of people who are survivors of child sexual abuse have a struggle. They are dealing with someone who is basically a handicapped person. I view myself this way because I have emotional challenges that I have to deal with all the time. It’s like I’m in the Special Olympics... breaking through my own limitations.”

Linda spent that Christmas alone, but realized that because of her Buddhist practice she was protected every step of the way. Clearly, the marriage she had been struggling to save was not the one that would truly make her happy, and in the process, “I fought very hard to become emotionally stable, and I did. It feels good to be me now.”

Her story would not be complete without relating an event that demonstrated to Linda the wondrous mystic power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. She was meeting with a sales rep, Lisa Mancini, with

whom she had spoken and met before. While supplying some personal information, Linda mentioned that she had just changed her maiden name and created her own last name. The reason, she told Lisa, was that she wasn’t thrilled with her maiden name. As Linda explains, “My maiden name is Kemmerer, but I didn’t disclose that information to Lisa at that moment.” The sales rep responded that her husband wanted to change his last name to her last name because he had a double “er” at the end of his name and he didn’t like it. “I stopped,” says Linda, “and asked her what the name was.”

She said, “Kemmerer, my husband’s name is Marcus Kemmerer.”

Linda’s eyes widened in amazement “He’s my brother!” she said.

“He is not!” Lisa exclaimed in disbelief.

“He’s an architect.”

“Did I tell you that?”

“No,” Linda replied, “and his father’s name is Russ.” (Linda’s biological father. Marcus is Linda’s half brother.)

By this time, as Linda relates the story, the sales rep was screaming and Linda was sitting at her desk in tears. “All of the family revolution I had done, especially in the past two years when I came to grips with the damage done to my life as a result of child abuse, seemed to arrive at a point of closure in this one incredible moment.” It wasn’t long before Linda met Marcus and his family, shared Easter and Thanksgiving with them, and learned that she and her brother shared many similar impressions of their father. “Marcus told me how our father was such a hands-off kind of guy and didn’t participate in his life very much. That made me feel much better about myself because now I could let go of the feeling that my father didn’t want me, since Marcus had experienced the same kind of distant relationship. I was finally purging the root of my repeated self-negating behaviors with men.”

Going back to the beginnings of her Buddhist practice, Linda joined SGI when she was 19 and immediately immersed herself in young women’s activities, finding the warm, supportive family she had never known. “Because I never had a real, lov-

ing father, I very quickly, once I came to understand what he was about, adopted President Ikeda as a father-figure.” Her eyes grow misty and her voice cracks as she adds, “I just knew he would never, ever hurt me. I trusted him completely. Because of him I was able to grow up splendidly.”

As a result of her painful childhood, Linda says becoming a completely happy person is a struggle, “but struggling has become an art, because now I’m really striving toward a lot of goals. It’s almost like a willfully imposed struggle, one I can derive a lot of joy from.” In addition to her high-powered job, Linda is going to school to complete her degree in business management and pursuing other interests that contribute to her growth. “I like to paint and I sing in our company’s rock and roll band. I love to read and usually have three or four books going at a time.” And on top of all that, she’s writing a book on child abuse, as she feels that educating others about this is her special mission. “As a survivor, I want the whole world to know that child abuse is demonic, that it corrupts the world.”

Echoing President Ikeda’s words, “You must not for one instant give up your effort to build for yourselves new lives,” Linda says that she’s creating her own life now — it’s not just happening to her. “Instead of blaming those who caused me pain, I’m recreating my inner landscape, the blueprint of my life. I call it my gardening project.”

But Linda is quick to add, “It can’t be just about myself. I have too many members in my chapter. I can’t have the luxury of feeling sorry for myself. I have to fight very hard for the happiness of others. I want to encourage people through my experience, show through my victories that it’s impossible to lose when you do this practice correctly.”

Bottom line for Linda is that she can now see that “all my suffering has been for kosen-rufu, all my victo-



Byron Cohen

Mary Baldwin, Linda and Millie Lee Bunch at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California.

ries are to encourage others. As she concludes, “There is simply no gnarly, mutated karma that you can’t change when you truly embrace this Buddhism.”

There is a term in the English language called “synecdoche,” (pronounced sin-EK-do-key), which means showing a part of something to represent the whole. For example, in a movie, a close-up shot of a hand making a particular motion or gesture might be used to indicate the emotional state of the whole person. In Linda Kaye’s case, her e-mail address, n8joy@yahoo.com pretty much says it all. ☸



David Tsel/CORBIS

Facing our angry nature is not easy. To recognize if we have problems with anger in our lives, we must pay attention to ourselves and our environment with a minimum of self-delusion.

TRANSFORMING OUR ANGRY NATURE

BY ROXANNE RAE, LCSW, BCD AND DOUGLAS K. PRYOR, PH.D.

“He makes me so angry!”

“My boss makes me so mad!”

“My kids are driving me nuts!”

How often have you heard, or even said, statements like these? Our language reflects our underlying beliefs and thoughts. In our culture, we tend to project blame onto others. In this case, they are the reason we feel angry or frustrated.

The difficulty with this perspective is that in order for our anger to change, the other person who is “making” us angry has to change first. If we have to wait for another person to change, we may be waiting for a very long time. In other words, when we blame, we give away our own personal power. We aren’t taking responsibility for our own life condition or expe-

Roxanne Rae LCSW, BCD and Douglas K. Pryor, MFT, Ph.D. are a husband and wife team that has a private practice together in counseling and psychotherapy in Sacramento, California. Together, they train other therapists and teach parenting classes. Douglas is Associate Faculty for National University, Sacramento/Stockton Campus and is the school psychologist at Galt High School in Galt, California.



Roxanne and Douglas in their office. In their practice, they use the sand tray technique that allows their clients — particularly children — to express themselves non-verbally with sand in a tray, water and miniature items. Behind them are some of the items they use in their practice.

riences. After all, who is the person who is feeling angry, mad, or enraged? Who is in control of what we feel and who has the power to change it? In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism we discover that everything we experience is a product of dependent origination — an interaction of an external cause (stimulus) and internal cause (angry nature).

There are a variety of definitions of anger. One definition is that it is “a violent, vindictive passion, sudden and strong displeasure, as a result of injury, opposition, or mistreatment.”¹ From a Buddhist perspective, anger is an expression of the fourth of the ten worlds or life conditions. It is one of the four evil paths, a state dominated by a selfish ego. People in this state value themselves, but hold others in contempt. They are attached to the idea of their own superiority and cannot bear to be inferior to others. It is also noteworthy that Buddhism acknowledges that anger can function as both good and evil.

In the field of psychology, there are a wide variety of definitions of anger. We have chosen to share two with you that we find to be the most helpful as a foundation to consider anger and its transformation in our lives. Harriet Lerner, Ph.D., describes anger as a signal. It “may be a message that we are being hurt, that our rights are being violated, that our needs or wants are not being adequately met, or simply that

something is not right. Our anger may tell us that we are not addressing an important emotional issue in our lives, or that too much of our self — our beliefs, values, desires, or ambitions — is being compromised in a relationship. The pain of our anger preserves the very integrity of our self.”² Dr. Lerner recognizes that anger is a real experience that may have a purpose.

Hendric Weisinger, Ph.D., defines anger as having four components. He describes it as an emotion which is “physically arousing and has unique physiological correlates; secondly, as a feeling which impacts the way we experience life; thirdly, as a communicator of information and lastly as a cause.”³

We particularly want to emphasize that there are aspects of our angry nature that can give us information about our life and environment if we choose to pay attention to them. We cannot change something about which we are not aware. Transforming ourselves takes mindfulness and effort.

Anger is a function of life and the theory of three thousand realms in a single moment of life explains how the life condition of anger is linked to all of the other ten worlds from hell to Buddhahood. Anger may appear to emerge only as an effect, but because of the simultaneity of cause and effect, this is only a part of what the moment of anger holds. At the same time it is a cause. Therefore, the choices we make in

our lives as the experience of anger wells forth determine the future as well.

Anger has both positive and negative qualities. Anger can be disruptive when it leads to confusion, impulsiveness, or aggression. It is often used to cover up other feelings that we may believe to be less socially or personally acceptable, such as embarrassment, hurt, or anxiety. The more we use anger in this way, the less self-knowledge is available to us. The positive qualities of anger include giving us information that something is threatening or unjust, that it is time to take action, deal with an issue, or make a change. The welling up of anger can help us express our discomfort when a situation needs to change. This energy can provide a sense of control during a difficult or threatening event, helping us to take necessary action. One of our goals in offering this article is to assist people in diminishing the negative qualities of anger in their lives and increasing the use of the positive ones.

People tend to use the words anger and aggression interchangeably in our society. More recently, they have been distinguished as separate experiences. As stated above, anger is the word we use to describe a set of uncomfortable experiences which are associated with a set of thoughts, beliefs, or ideas which result in reactions that might be verbal, facial, or the like. Aggression, on the other hand, refers specifically to the motor activity, or acting out, of behavior that hurts someone or something through physical contact.

In understanding, dealing with, and transforming our anger, it is very important to comprehend the difference between these two words and experiences. Additionally, it is necessary to appreciate that anger does not cause aggression, but rather adds to an aggressive response. It is not necessary to be angry to be aggressive, or to be aggressive from your place of anger. It is common for people to feel angry with their family, boss, or other drivers on the road. This may be expressed by a look or in words, yet no physical action is taken. An example of not being angry, but aggressive, would be that of a contract killer, who might bear no anger toward his victim, but is simply doing his job. Another example of this is seen in football players who are stimulated by their coaches to be charged up to play aggressively,

but not necessarily to feel anger toward the other team members or to intentionally hurt them.

Confusing and joining the meanings of these two experiences, or conditions will, however, make the transformation of your own anger immeasurably more difficult. Verbal abuse usually comes from anger and is directed toward another with the intent to hurt. However, it is not physical, and is therefore not aggressive. An aggressive response to verbal abuse will only escalate the problem, increasing the likelihood that the situation will get out of control.

When Anger Is a Problem

Once we accept the reality of anger as an aspect of human life, how do we recognize when it is a problem for us? In evaluating this, we need to consider the reactions we receive from others and honestly review patterns of our own thoughts, words, bodily reactions and choices of actions.

In his *Anger Workout Book*, Dr. Weisinger presents clear guidelines to assist a person in doing this. Consider how often you feel angry. If your anger is frequent or serves no useful purpose, then it is more likely to be a problem. The same holds true for anger that is overly intense or lasts too long for the immediate situation. Anger is always a problem when it leads you to take unsafe or aggressive action. Striking out more often complicates a situation, making it more difficult to resolve. If your anger interferes with personal relationships or work, it is a problem. Some people use anger as a defense to keep an emotional distance from others, creating an uncooperative work environment. When people are so distracted by anger that they can't concentrate or are spending a lot of time verbally venting to co-workers, they are not contributing to their workplace. We would like to add to Dr. Weisinger's guidelines that anger also becomes a serious difficulty when it leads to medical problems. It is now understood that anger plays a role in the development or exacerbation of heart disease, high blood pressure, chronic muscle tension, irritable bowel syndrome and other conditions.

Due to the complex workings of the human mind, we may need help assessing the above points. Facing

our angry nature is not easy. To recognize if these problem areas are at work in our lives, we must pay attention to ourselves and our environment with a minimum of self-delusion. In the July 2000 *Living Buddhism*, four categories of action to overcome the fundamental darkness within our lives are discussed. The third category, to “look within our lives to identify the causes of our suffering”⁴ correlates with one function of psychotherapy. It includes efforts to recognize problems, seek advice, and study toward their resolution.

The Function of Perception

The function of our perception has significant impact on anger in our lives. Consider the following examples:

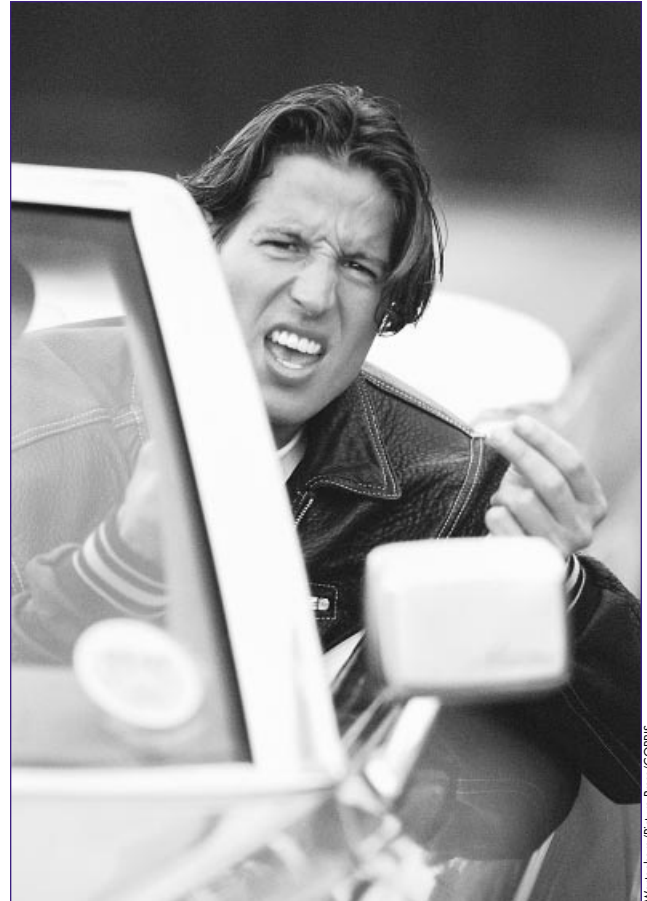
Sally has promised to present important information at the discussion meeting. You are the designated person in charge of the event. You know that she is prepared and the two of you have discussed it thoroughly. She will be picking up another meeting participant on her way. At 4:30, you receive a message that she cannot make it. You are unable to reach her by phone. You might have one of several responses:

- 1** You get angry and slam down the phone when you cannot reach her.
- 2** You feel sad and discouraged. You feel like crying and give up hopes of having a good meeting.
- 3** You feel disappointed, but recognize that something urgent may have come up for Sally. You make time to call others to try to arrange a ride for the member Sally can't pick up and present the needed information in Sally's absence.

We all have patterns of response to our experiences that are habitual. Often we do not pay attention to these patterns and allow ourselves to be swept along in life by them. The thoughts we tell ourselves in our own minds are pieces of these patterns. In psychology, we call this “self-talk.”

Let's look at some possible patterns of self-talk for the above examples:

- 1** You are angry because Sally could not participate at the last minute. You are full of negative thoughts such as, “Sally is a flake and cannot be depended upon. Forget her! She is trying to make it hard for the members to advance. She really doesn't care. Others



Wentzenberg/Picture Press/CORBIS

Our anger may be aroused by the actions of someone who had no intention of hurting us. It may be useful to examine our perception of the situation so that we can respond in an accurate manner.

will think that the meeting is poorly planned.”

- 2** You are discouraged and sad. You think Sally does not value the group or think it is worth the effort to come. Your thoughts might be, “I'm not a good leader. I can't do anything right.”
- 3** You are disappointed. However, you say to yourself, “I've had urgent things come up and had to miss meetings before.” You may feel concerned enough for Sally to go chant for her. You may also realize that Sally's absence could provide an opportunity for another member to grow.

Note that the situation is the same in each example. What is different is the perception, which is the basis for subsequent action.

Righteous or Not So Righteous Anger

Dr. Lerner states, “Anger is something we feel. It exists for a reason and always deserves our respect and attention. We all have a right to everything we feel — and certainly our anger is no exception.”⁵ However, it is important to be mindful of our anger patterns. Due to the simultaneity of cause and effect, anger may seem to emerge only as an effect. In the same moment, it is a cause, as well. What we choose to do, say, and think as our anger emerges will determine our future.

Therefore, it is important to examine our anger to determine if it is justifiable or not. In the SGI, purposeful, justifiable anger is referred to as righteous anger and considered an expression of compassion. It is our compassion that leads to anger at injustice and evil. This type of anger means that you have the right, and often the responsibility to confront what you regard as a grievance. One way to examine this is to consider if most other people would be angry in a similar situation.

Many times we may find that our anger is not justifiable. It may be evoked by the actions of someone who had no intentions to injure us. Dr. Weisinger’s useful suggestion to determine the difference between these two types of anger is the question, “Is my anger directed toward someone who has knowingly intentionally and unnecessarily acted in a hurtful manner?”⁶ Purifying our perceptive abilities through our Buddhist practice can help us respond to this question in a more accurate manner.

In society today, it is common to assume that another person’s actions are a threat to our own needs or wants, without examination. This type of anger is most often an expression of egoism, referred to as a sense of entitlement. Unjustifiable anger includes: when someone accidentally steps on your foot, a group member does not want to talk at a meeting or when members are late to a meeting because of traffic problems. Whereas, examples of righteous anger include when someone embarrasses you in front of others, or you are physically, sexually, or emotionally abused.

When our anger is justifiable, we have an opportunity to use its positive aspects to challenge or change an unfair situation or evil. When our anger stems from egoism it is more likely to function as a destructive force. Once we recognize this we can choose to change it. However, even if our anger is appropriate, that does not mean that the way we choose to confront the situation is automatically appropriate. In fact, a poorly considered expression of anger can detract from the perceived validity of a justifiable grievance. As practitioners of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, we often need to chant for the wisdom to most effectively address the situation for the best resolution for everyone involved.

The Impact of Life Condition and Wisdom on Anger

One of the major differences in our response to a situation, such as the example of Sally we previously described, is what we call life-condition. This refers to the ten worlds, or ten conditions of life from Hell to Buddhahood. This is easily defined by Ted Morino, SGI-USA Study Department Senior Advisor, who states, “Like an elevator in a 10-story building, we go up and down among the Ten Worlds between the lowest and the highest — from Hell, where our suffering and rage envelops us and drains our energy, to Buddhahood, where joy, compassion, wisdom and courage are commonplace.... Our character is just like the constant width of a river. The change in our life condition is something like the river’s waters changing — from impure to pure, or shallow to deep.”⁷

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda states that one’s happiness is determined by one’s state of life. “Even though they dwell in the same environment, people feel different degrees of happiness and unhappiness depending on their state of life. The practice of faith is a continuous effort for self-development that enables one to limitlessly broaden and expand one’s state of life.”⁸

One benefit of challenging ourselves in our Buddhist practice is wisdom. Knowledge is neutral

and has no value. We need wisdom to use knowledge correctly. The wisdom we uncover through our Buddhist practice is to find the value in our own life. Many people lack confidence in their own potential, their own life's power. One major goal of our practice is to uncover the great capacities from within our own life. Through these challenges we create a strong character that is not swayed, and is a foundation for the development of a strong sense of joy.

The wisdom we generate from a determined practice has many facets. At a Florida Nature and Culture Center lecture on *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, several points were described that we will share with you.⁹ The first point is patience. It is derived from wisdom, as one must have a certain perspective to support a patient response. The second is the wisdom of transformation. This is the ability to perceive life from a positive instead of negative viewpoint, thus creating more value in our process of human revolution. As an example, we will share our friend's experience. John has had the dream of building his own home for all the years we've known him; he already owns the property on which to build. However, he had a rent-free house in which he was living. Suddenly, he was forced to move out of this comfortable arrangement when that property was sold. John can choose to stay angry about having his comfort disrupted or he can choose to challenge himself to create his dream house. Should he do the latter, he will have transformed the disruption of moving and his anger about the circumstances into an impetus to fulfill a long-held desire.

The third point is the wisdom of alternative choice. This is the ability to discover new and different ways of meeting needs, overcoming obstacles, and accomplishing goals. When people approach life with a victim stance, they are giving away their own life force and power. Usually they do not perceive that this is occurring and continue to seek happiness from external sources, without lasting results. Someone in this condition is externally focused and does not use their power of choice to take responsibility for their situation or the necessary steps to change it. An example of this is the following colloquial story.



Wortenberg/Picture Press/COBBIS

One definition of anger is that it is a violent vindictive passion. From a Buddhist perspective, anger is an expression of the fourth of the ten worlds.

One very rainy and stormy night a horseback rider came rushing to the valley warning the residents of a small town that the dam at the head of the valley was about to burst and that they all needed to get to high ground for safety. He went to one house and advised the homeowner of this. The man looked at the rider and stated, "I put my faith in the Lord, He will care of me." The rider hurried on with his warning. Some time later, the dam had indeed burst and the water was rising and had begun to flood the valley. A man in a boat was steering through the turbulent water to again advise and rescue those who hadn't yet left their homes. He came upon this same homeowner. He was now standing on the table in his dining room with water swirling around his ankles. The man in the boat begged the homeowner to get in before the water rose any further. Again the man demurred stating, "I put my faith in the Lord, He will take care of me." The boatman left to tend to others. Later, a helicopter was flying through the valley to rescue those who had not heeded the earlier warnings. It came upon this same homeowner who was now standing on the peak of the roof of his house with water to his knees. The pilot asked that he come aboard the helicopter, but once again the man said, "No, I put my faith in the Lord, He will

take care of me.” The helicopter left. Some time later, this same homeowner found himself at the Pearly Gates. He was stunned and amazed that he’d died. Just then, God arrived and the man gushed, “Here I am at the Pearly Gates! I’ve died! It’s not that I mind being here in Heaven, but I trusted You to take care of me!” God looked at the man for several minutes and then boomed, “I did try to take care of you! I sent a man on a horse, a man in a boat, and a helicopter!” The point of this story is that we must learn to attend to what is going on around us to be able to use the wisdom of alternative choice.

How to Transform Anger Patterns

It is important to remember that we are the focus of change, not others. It is not the purpose of our Buddhist practice to change other people or make them do what we want. In fact, when changing others becomes the focus of our efforts, it is more likely that we are disregarding our responsibility for our own life or the efforts we need to make to improve it. It is our responsibility to communicate our desires, beliefs, thoughts and feelings to others in an effective and respectful manner. One author states, “The more I learn to communicate with others, the less I trigger their anger and the less they respond in ways that might trigger my own anger.” He also says, “The more often I see that there are other feelings that I can choose in a situation, the less often I choose anger.”¹⁰ These are statements of personal responsibility that support President Ikeda’s assertion that “From our standpoint, Buddhism is a philosophy for helping people become self-sufficient. It is a teaching that explains how people can develop themselves through their own effort.”¹¹

In psychological literature, there are many suggestions for changing angry patterns. We have distilled them into five common points:

- 1.** Be clear about my true source of anger and consider its many aspects.
- 2.** Learn to correctly observe my own non-productive patterns of anger and interrupt them.
- 3.** Learn communication skills.



Rick Rappaport/CORBIS

It is important to remember that we are the focus of change. It is not the purpose of our Buddhist practice to change other people or make them do what we want.

4. Recognize that others in my environment, who are used to my angry habits, may resist my attempts to change them. When I take responsibility for my anger it makes it clearer to others which part of the interaction is theirs.

5. Practice and visualize new response behaviors.

Through our own study and practice as Buddhist practitioners, we have developed some ways to approach the above points:

1A. Face the Gohonzon with a sincere willingness to see my anger clearly and to see my part in creating this in my life.

1B. Be willing to challenge myself when what I believe does not match with my thoughts, feelings and actions.

2. Chant to develop my wisdom to be a clear observer of my own life’s process and have the courage to make necessary changes.

3. Chant to become a true master of heart-to-heart

dialogue. Study President Ikeda's guidance's on this topic as well as other materials. Develop the wisdom to use what I know appropriately.

4. Chant to remain mindful in my daily life.

Effectively use my wisdom (patience, transformation, and alternative choice) to stay out of old habit patterns and create healthy new ones.

5. Chant joyous, victorious daimoku. Allow myself to see my own compassionate Buddhahood at work in my life. Do not dwell on all my past mistakes and negativity. Focus on the person I am becoming.

In changing our anger patterns with the power of our own faith and practice, we need to develop a correct perspective of our own Buddha nature, determination, and courage. Please remember that change occurs in thought, word, and deed.

Our Buddha Nature, Determination and Courage

It is important to remember that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism empowers each one of us to bring forth the Buddha nature that already exists in our life. When we train ourselves to have confidence in our Buddhahood we can more easily develop joy in, and appreciation of, our own Buddha nature. President Ikeda has often reminded us that both joy and appreciation are catalysts for our own happiness. One guidance states "limitless belief gives rise to limitless wisdom."¹²

Keeping this in mind we can chant to bring forth our Buddha nature and transform our anger into compassion. We can chant to use our patience, the wisdom of transformation, and the wisdom of alternative choice so that we are less likely to be limited by our own ego-thinking minds. Another guidance states, "First of all let's tear down any walls existing within our own minds. For it is often the case that we ourselves determine our limits."¹³

Determination is an essential factor in creating change. The time to transform our lives comes "only when we pray to the Gohonzon and manifest determination and awareness of our mission of kosen-rufu (the Buddhist concept of world peace). We have to make a determination, pray, and take correct

action."¹⁴ This kind of determination is not as likely to be hindered by our own self-doubt and fear.

Courage is an absolute requirement for change. If we lack courage, we will waver in our determination and be unable to persevere. The courage to do our practice each day, the courage to ask for help when we feel we can't go on, the courage to seek guidance when we feel stuck, are all aspects of this point.

There are many aspects to consider in the process of transforming our angry nature. With our Buddhist practice as a foundation we can use concepts from modern psychology to assist us in our change. Buddhism's focus is the present moment and now is the only moment we can make a transformation. Daisaku Ikeda states "A change in a person's moment of life fundamentally changes everything."¹⁵ In another writing he notes, "How you orient your mind, the kind of attitude you take, greatly influences both you yourself and your environment. The Buddhist principle of a single life-moment encompassing three thousand realms completely elucidates the true aspect of life's inner workings. Through the power of strong inner resolve, we can transform ourselves, those around us and the land in which we live."¹⁶ 🌀

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Seeing

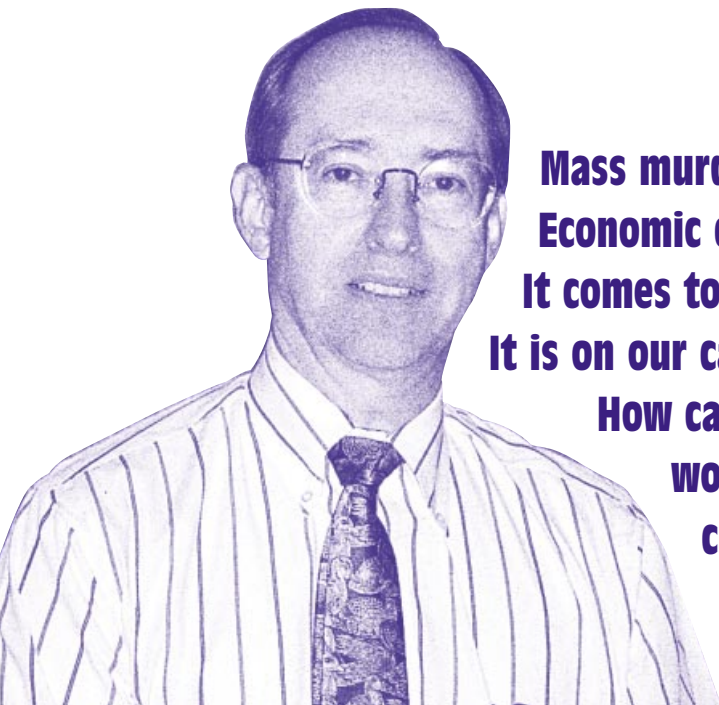
the World Through the Eyes of the Buddha:

RECONCILING THE NEWS

WITH OUR BUDDHIST VIEWS

WITHOUT SINGING THE BLUES

BY GEOFF ROHDE, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA



**Mass murder! Mass starvation! Epidemics!
Economic chaos! And it is all televised!
It comes to our doorstep each morning!
It is on our car radio on our way to work!**

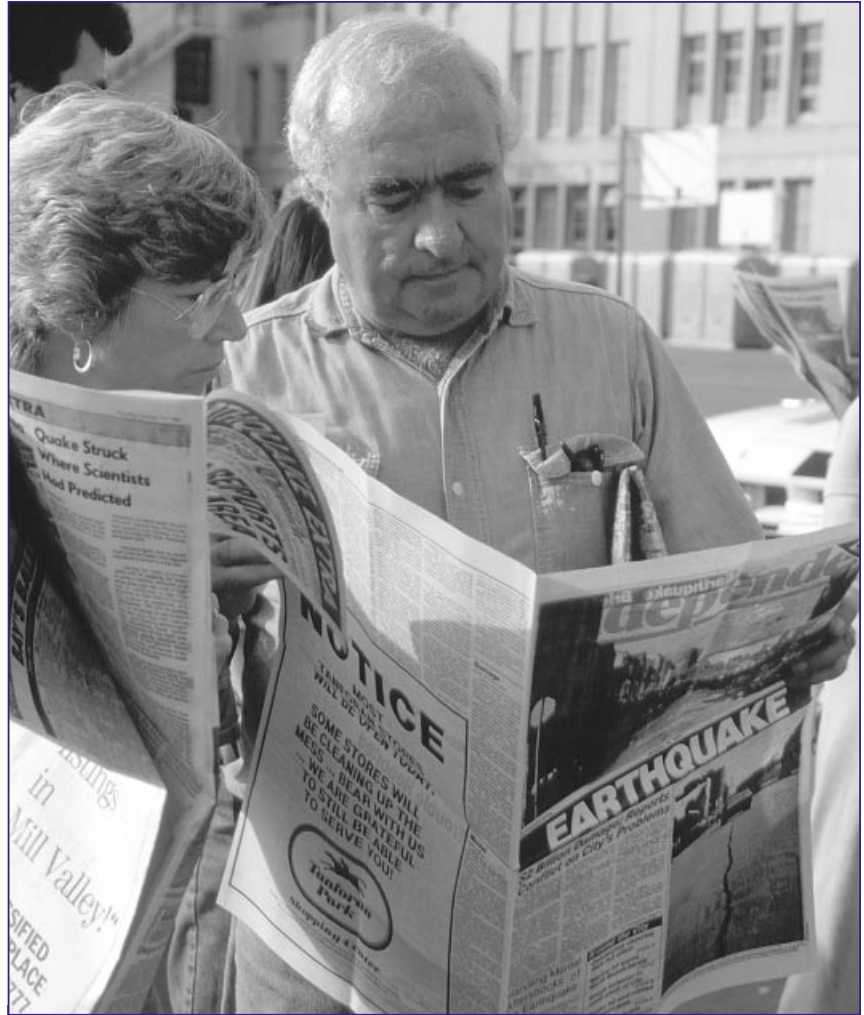
**How can responsible citizens keep up with
world events and not get depressed? How
can well-informed Bodhisattvas in the
Latter Day of the Law not get the blues?**

*Based on a presentation at the Northern California Study
Conference in San Ramon, California, July 15–16, 2000.*

Before we discuss the news and the blues, let's first talk about a Buddha's "views," that is, the ability to see much more of, and more deeply into, the world than we can imagine. "In Reply to the Lay Priest Soya" Nichiren Daishonin states: "Hungry spirits perceive the Ganges River as fire, human beings perceive it as water, and heavenly beings perceive it as *amrita* [sweet dew]. Though the water is the same, it appears differently according to one's karmic reward from the past" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 486). And in a letter titled "New Year's Goshō" he says, "We ordinary people can see neither our own eyelashes, which are so close, nor the heavens in the distance. Likewise, we do not see that the Buddha exists in our own hearts" (WND, 1137).

Religious traditions from around the world all use terms like Transcendent, Eternal, the One, Divine, Universe, or Ground of Being to describe every facet of existence, from heaven to hell and all stops in between. Nichiren Daishonin is in agreement with such views:

"The mystic principle that is the essential nature of phenomena possesses two aspects, the defiled aspect and the pure aspect.... These two aspects, the deluded and the enlightened, are indeed two different phenomena, and yet both are workings of the one principle, that is, the essential nature of phenomena, or the true aspect of reality" ("The Entity of the Mystic Law," WND, 417).



Jim Sugar Photography/CORBIS

"All the news that's fit to depress" seems to be the credo of today's news media. People are hard put to keep abreast of current events and keep a sunny disposition at the same time.

How is it possible to witness all the suffering and evil in the world and remain happy? Nichiren Daishonin, Shakyamuni and other sages have met this exact challenge and we can, too. In the opening lines of the Daishonin's thesis, "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land," we read that famine and pestilence affected every corner of Japan. Oxen and horses lay dead in the streets and the bones of the stricken crowded

the highways. Over half the population had already been carried off by death and in every family someone grieved. Amidst such grim reality, he writes:

"When great evil occurs, great good follows. Since great slander already exists in our land, the great correct Law will spread without fail. What could any of you have to lament? Even if you are not the Venerable Mahakashyapa, you should all perform a dance! Even if



Bob Krist/CORBIS

In choosing the images that come into our homes, the approach of most newscast seems to be “if it bleeds, it leads.” Which leads Geoff Rohde to address these questions: “How can we develop the life-condition and wisdom to view things through the eyes of the Buddha? How can we watch, read and listen to so much bad news without becoming depressed or angry?”

you are not Shariputra, you should leap up and dance!” (“Great Evil and Great Good,” WND, 1119).

So how can we develop the life-condition and wisdom to view things through the eyes of the Buddha? How can we watch, read and listen to so much bad news without becoming depressed or angry? I have a few suggestions. First, we need to rid ourselves of any obsession with the news. Nichiren Daishonin states in many places that we must be the masters of our mind. If there are those of us who cannot step away from the news “cold turkey,” then we can cut back gradually. But we need to take control!

Second, if we strengthen our faith, practice and study of

Buddhism, we will develop a more robust, resilient life-condition. We can recognize obstacles that threaten our happiness for what they are and refuse to be frightened, influenced or defeated by them. There is wisdom in the famous “Serenity Prayer,” that says we should manifest the strength to change what we can, the patience to endure what we cannot and the wisdom to know the difference.

If being a news junkie makes us and our cheerful practice of Buddhism ill, why continue to watch, read or listen to so much news? Our fixation on the news could be a manifestation of inner devils hindering our practice and leading us to a state of hopeless-

ness. We all must face and overcome our own demons. For some it is illness, poverty, anger or substance abuse. For others, obstacles may come from children, parents, spouse or career. The news—the immense misery afflicting the human race—can also obstruct our happiness.

If we feel overwhelmed by the suffering of those on the other side of the globe, why not bring happiness to those closest to us—at home, at work or even on the highways? It only takes a few moments, a bit of attention and a dash of courage to practice random acts of kindness and selfless measures of compassion. That such actions almost always go unnoticed and unacknowledged

by others makes them all the more important and rewarding. I recall a scene from President Ikeda's novel, *The Human Revolution*, in which the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, is riding a streetcar shortly after World War II. He overhears fellow passengers discussing ways to fashion pots and pans out of bomb shards. Rather than bemoan the devastation all around him, he praises their creativity and encourages them to do their best. Toda's cheerful banter and hearty approval lifts the spirits of everyone within earshot. We can do the same. Bodhisattvas seek out every opportunity to encourage others.

President Ikeda writes in *Faith Into Action*: "It is important that we live cheerfully. With a strong spirit of optimism, we need to continually direct our minds in a bright, positive, beneficial direction and help those around us do likewise. We should strive to develop a state of life where we feel a sense of joy no matter what happens" (p. 135).

"The purpose of life is to be happy. We should not be pessimistic. Let us live always with optimism—joyful, strong and bright. That is why we practice the Daishonin's Buddhism" (p. 9).

"Much human misery arises from people despairing over things that despair cannot help. We should not worry about things that no amount of worry will resolve. The important thing is to build a golden palace of joy in our hearts that nothing can disturb—a state of life like the clear blue sky above the storm" (p. 134).



Gregory Nakauji

The goal of the SGI is the happiness of all humankind — not relative happiness, but absolute joy originating in the depth of life. This state of life is the result of an inner transformation that will lead to a transformation of society. The source of all misery lies within life itself and so does the solution to such misery.

If we establish and guard our own happiness first, we can lead the way for others. If we succumb to despair, we cannot help anyone, including ourselves. In "Happiness in This World," Nichiren Daishonin says: "Though worldly troubles may arise, never let them disturb you. No one can avoid problems, not even sages or worthies. Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law? Strengthen your power of faith more than ever" (WND, 681).

Developing strong faith, consistent practice and studying Buddhist teachings stabilizes our lives and brings forth wisdom. We

can achieve such a sense of self-assurance, of confidence in ourselves to overcome any obstacle, that nothing will disturb our sense of well-being, contentment and joy.

Attaining this ultimate benefit is our human revolution. But it is not possible if we cheat or take short cuts through Nichiren Daishonin's "Life Improvement Program." The "complete package" really does consist of applying the basics. That is morning and evening prayers, abundant chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to our spiritual satisfaction and a seeking mind to study and understand the Buddhist life philosophy through Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, the writings of President Ikeda and other fine books. I have found, for example, that works by Seneca, Joseph Campbell, Adam Smith and oth-

ers enhance my understanding of Buddhism. And it is vital to teach others to the best of our ability, either directly or indirectly by our persistent good cheer and compassionate behavior.

To experience an inner transformation — a human revolution — requires effort. The practice of Buddhism requires self-discipline both physically and spiritually. The Daishonin writes that continuing faith leads to Buddhahood. In my experience, only those who practiced wholeheartedly were able to continue in the face of obstacles and frustrations. That is how we can train our deluded minds and eyes to view things from a Buddha's perspective. President Ikeda states: "Viewing events and situations in a positive light is important. The strength, wisdom and cheerfulness that accompany such an attitude lead to happiness. To regard everything in a positive light or with a spirit of good will, however, does not mean being foolish or gullible and allowing people to take advantage of our good nature. It means having the wisdom and perception to move things in a positive direction by seeing things in their best light while all the time keeping our eyes firmly focused on reality" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 13).

In other words, the benefit of our practice is the ability to enjoy life, no matter what. Obstacles constantly beset Nichiren Daishonin, and he was witness to great suffering. But he never let anything discourage him. In fact, the greater the challenges facing



Belman/CORBIS

If we were to view humanity as it is portrayed in the news media, we would indeed fall into despair. The practice of Buddhism enables us to perceive the potential of Buddhahood in all people providing us with great hope.

him, the greater the delight he felt. Such strength of character only comes through a total commitment to, and total confidence in, faith. In a letter titled "The Mongol Envoys" he states, "While all the people of Japan lament, I, Nichiren, and my followers rejoice amid the grieving" (WND, 629).

In "The Eight Winds" he tells us: "Worthy persons deserve to be called so because they are not carried away by any of the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor

grieved by decline. The heavenly gods will surely protect one who is unbending before the eight winds" (WND, 794).

Socially engaged Buddhism is dedicated to the belief that the best way to change the external world is by changing the internal world. The solution lies within the lives of each of us as expressed in President Ikeda's foreword to the novel, *The Human Revolution*: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." ❁



Seikyo Press

SGI President Ikeda meets with Dr. Jules Brassner and his wife, SanLee, May 3, 1999, in Tokyo. SanLee was born in Korea and was a successful businesswoman when she met Dr. Brassner in New York.

Unforgettable

FRIENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

In this series, SGI President Ikeda has recorded his impressions of the many friends he has made in his travels for peace. In his New Year's poem in the January issue, he states: "I will continue to knock on the doors/Of diverse cultures

and civilizations, /Seeking out the humanity that is vibrantly alive/At the heart of each, /Believing that sincere dialogue/In search of our shared humanity/Will build a rainbow bridge linking the world."

Dr. Jules Brassner — An Entrepreneur Committed to Working for the Good of Society

Gracing the Main Auditorium of Soka University in Tokyo are three statues — those of Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy and Walt Whitman. When Dr. David L. Norton, late professor of philosophy of the University of Delaware, saw the figures of these three world literary giants, he declared: "How wonderful! Now I see how open Soka University and the Soka Gakkai International are to the world, how sincerely

they pursue values common to all humanity. Surely no other university can compare. I see here a great broadness of spirit. These statues are an expression of the magnificent spirit of Soka — value-creation — a spirit that transcends the comprehension of those Japanese who are narrow and closed-minded."

It is our dear friend Dr. Jules Brassner who donated these statues to the university.

Dr. Brassner is a successful American business-

man. When he first visited Soka University, he said, “The auditorium is the symbol of the university. I would like to contribute something to the students that gives shape to the ideas of the university’s founder.” And noting the frequent appearance of

Tolstoy, Hugo and Whitman in my speeches, he decided to have statues made of these great men to adorn Soka University’s auditorium. At the same time, he presented a statue of Marie

Curie to Soka Women’s Junior College.

Dr. Brassner lives with the spirit to always ask himself what he can do to contribute to others.

When the statues were being cast, Dr. Brassner, accompanied by his wife SanLee, regularly visited the artists’ workshop to see how the work was progressing. “Education,” he said, “is the most important endeavor, and I wish to present President Ikeda, who has devoted his life to education, with works of the finest craftsmanship.”

Also, when the Makiguchi Memorial Garden, named after the founder of Soka education, was completed adjacent to Soka University, he said,

“People from all over the world will visit this garden, so I would

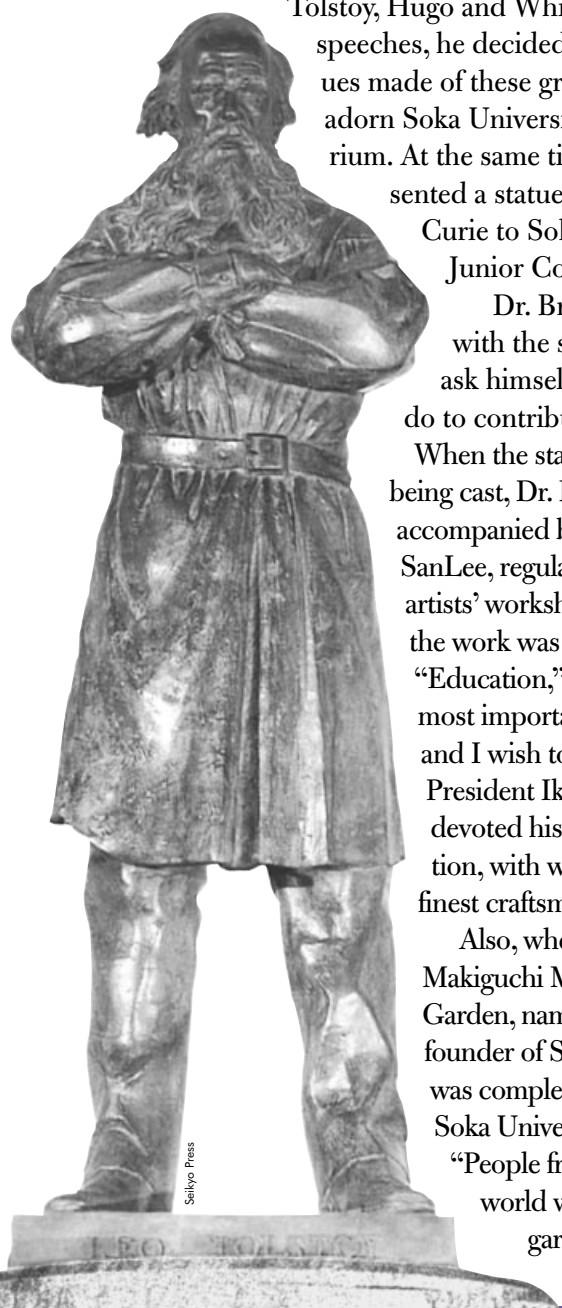
like to present you with a statue that will give them courage

and inspiration.” And he commissioned a statue of Napoleon Bonaparte for the garden.

At the time, a Napoleon foundation in America asked him to join their board as a director, but he declined, saying that his interest in Napoleon was a reflection of his desire to assist and support us in our educational endeavors.

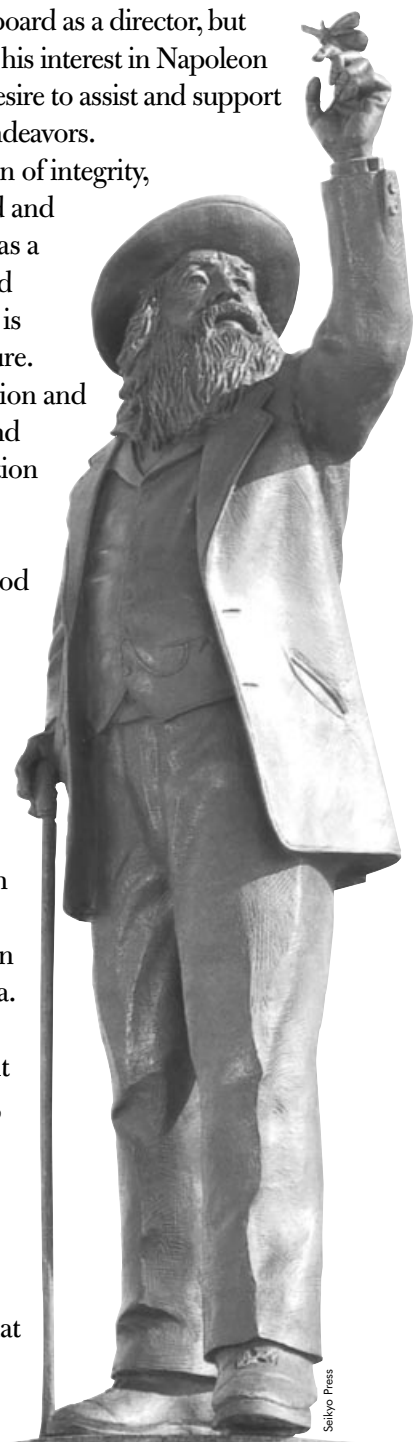
Dr. Brassner is a man of integrity, sharp wits, strong mind and great intelligence. He has a tremendous interest and curiosity in people. He is able to see the big picture. He is a man of swift action and evaluates the validity and accuracy of all information with penetrating thoroughness. Perhaps because he is such a good businessman, there is something about him that reminds me of my mentor Josei Toda. His unabashed practicality and dislike of wasting time and resources on that which is meaningless is also something that he has in common with Mr. Toda.

While exceedingly generous, he will go out of his way, for instance, to choose a restaurant where he can get the best value; he will not pay more simply for trimmings and no substance. I understand that he was surprised and angered at the high price of neckties in Tokyo, where



Saitoyo Press

The statues of the three giants of literature given to Soka University by Dr. Brassner include Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)—the great Russian novelist.



Saitoyo Press

Walt Whitman (1819–92) — The uniquely American poet.

designer brands remain year-round favorites. He loves the roasted sweet potatoes that street vendors sell here in winter, a real “down-home” Japanese treat.

Dr. Brassner is seventy-eight. He is kind enough to have said that his encounter with me was a turning point in his life.

Dr. Brassner was born and raised in New York, the son of a factory owner. He pursued a career as an engineer. Serving in the navy during World War II, he was assigned to a research facility. He worked on eliminating the black smoke that issued from the submarines when they submerged and surfaced. After the war, he was a success in business. But wealth did not necessarily bring happiness in life. There was a feeling of emptiness in his heart that he could not dispel. He had questions: What is the purpose of wealth? What is the purpose of life?

But, as Napoleon said, “A talented man will fly out of any fetters that may bind him.”

One day, Dr. Brassner decided to cast aside all he had done so far and accept the challenge of a new life — a second life. One of his friends at this time was the American industrialist Dr. Armand Hammer (1898-1990), who had played such an important role as a bridge between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. When Dr. Hammer and I held a discussion in Los Angeles in 1990, Dr. Brassner sat quietly in the background, listening intently to our exchange.

“At that time, I keenly felt and resolved that I, too, must contribute something to others,” Dr. Brassner later said to me. “It was clear to me that the SGI was not an organization of empty rhetoric. I resolved, then, to work together with you, President Ikeda, for peace, culture and education.” In the spirit of a

practical businessman, this decision led quickly to action. He commissioned a statue of Victor Hugo and presented it to the SGI’s Victor Hugo House of Literature in Bièvres on the outskirts of Paris shortly before its opening, along with photos and handwritten manuscripts of the French author.

He is a dedicated man. When the Kobe-Osaka earthquake struck in January 1995, he was in South America. But, learning of the disaster on television, he immediately made a sizable financial contribution to the victims.

Half-hearted efforts are the root of many evils. Dr. Brassner is never half-hearted. He always devotes his full energies to a project. He is strong. He is a fighter. As Walt Whitman writes, “O the joy of a manly self-hood! / To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known or unknown.” (“A Song of Joys”)

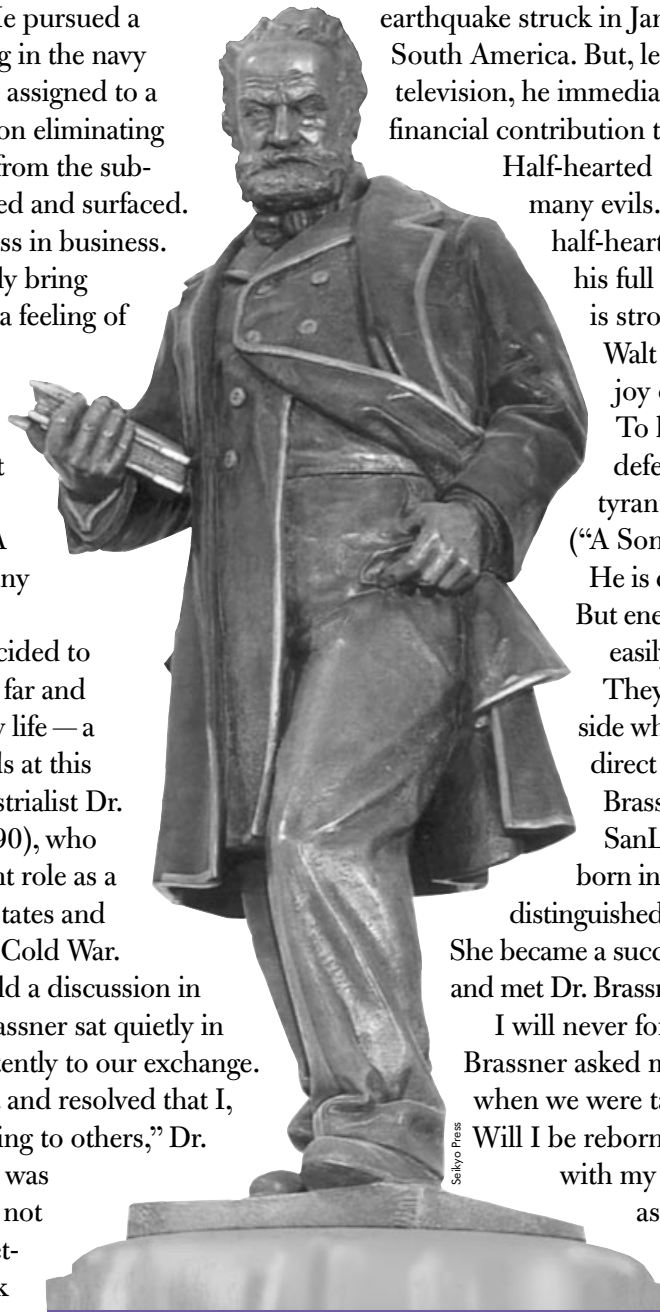
He is dynamic and decisive. But energetic individuals can easily overextend themselves.

They need a partner at their side who can moderate and direct their energies. Dr.

Brassner has that in his wife, SanLee. Mrs. Brassner was born in Korea, descended from a distinguished family of the Yi dynasty. She became a successful businesswoman, and met Dr. Brassner in New York.

I will never forget something that Dr. Brassner asked me once most earnestly when we were talking: “Is life eternal? Will I be reborn in my next life together with my family? The reason I ask is that I can’t imagine having a better wife than I do now. My family is the best imaginable.”

“If you pray for



**Victor Hugo (1802–85) —
French novelist, poet and playwright.**

that,” I said, “you will surely be reborn together. Even should you be reborn as parent and child, you will still be together.” When I spoke to Dr. Brassner of the eternity of life throughout the three existences of past, present and future, tears glistened in his eyes.

Pledging to be united with his loved ones throughout eternity, Dr. Brassner dedicates his days to working for humanity. There is no longer any emptiness inside him. He has won for himself a truly wonderful life.

There is an old saying of the East, “The wealthy are not benevolent, and the benevolent are not wealthy.” But Dr. Brassner proves that wrong. He is a man of wealth and benevolence. All Soka University students are grateful to him and are praying for his good health and long life.

His name will live on forever at Soka University. ☸



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Polish-born physicist, Marie Curie (1867–1934) was renowned for her research into radioactivity and was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize. She shared the prize for physics in 1903 with her French husband Pierre. In 1911, two years after her husband’s death, she won the Nobel Prize for chemistry. Dr. Brassner presented a statue of Curie to Soka Women’s Junior College.

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(Continued from inside front cover)

- ❖ Work together with other religions to resolve issues affecting humanity
- ❖ Respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange
- ❖ Encourage the protection of nature and the environment

What We Do...

The principle activity for SGI-USA members is the neighborhood discussion meeting. These informal gatherings, held in members' homes, bring people together to practice Buddhism, to study Buddhist principles and discuss how they can best be applied to the challenges of daily life.

In addition, through youth activities, educational seminars and exhibits, we address urgent issues facing individuals and humanity. Non-sectarian activities have included:

Victory Over Violence: A grass-roots campaign to raise awareness about violence, its causes, and solutions. The program is expanding to schools and community organizations.

Religious Tolerance Through Dialogue: SGI-USA sponsors and participates in a number of local and national inter-religious conferences and symposia, including the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies (SBCS).

Education for a Culture of Peace: SGI-USA traveling exhibits are recognized for their ability to inform and to evoke a sense of responsibility toward important issues facing our planet. These have recently included exhibits on global children's rights, the environmental crisis, nuclear disarmament, and on the life of the great scientist and pacifist Linus Pauling.

The Earth Charter: SGI-USA members have sponsored more than thirty conferences involving some 1,800 participants to educate the American people about the international Earth Charter project, and participates in the Earth Charter USA Network, the project's national coordinating group.

Friendship Through Knowledge: An SGI-USA educational project that collected and shipped more than 14,000 books to schools and colleges in Ghana.

A Modern Heritage...

The founding Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a Buddhist and an educator who asserted that the purpose of education should be development of people's ability to create "value" (i.e.,

improvement, beauty and social good) in their daily lives. The word *soka* means value creation. In pre-war Japan, where education focused on the training of workers and soldiers for the nation's growing military-industrial machine, Makiguchi's humane, student-focused views often brought him into conflict with the authorities. Arrested with other top Soka Gakkai leaders during World War II as a "thought criminal" for his unyielding opposition to Japanese militarism and government oppression of religion, Makiguchi died in prison of malnutrition and mistreatment at the age of 73 in November 1944.

Makiguchi's close disciple, Josei Toda, survived the ordeal and was released from prison in July 1945, just weeks before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Determined to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, Toda developed its membership from less than 3,000 families when he assumed the presidency in 1951 to more than 750,000 before his death in 1958. The Soka Gakkai's remarkable early growth stemmed from its commitment to helping people overcome suffering in the postwar chaos. Toda confirmed the Soka Gakkai's pacifist stance in 1957 by taking a strong, pioneering, public position against the use of nuclear weapons.

On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Within six months, he established chapters in the United States and South America, followed a year later by organizations in nine European countries. He continues to provide leadership for the global SGI organization, which now includes members in half the countries of the world. Mr. Ikeda has founded a number of educational and cultural institutions, including Soka University, which seek to foster the values of peace, culture and education.

For more information visit our web site at www.sgi-usa.org

SGI-Affiliated Institutions

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century
www.brc21.org

Toda Peace Institute for Global Peace and Policy
Research www.toda.org

Soka University of America www.soka.edu

Soka University of Japan www.soka.ac.jp

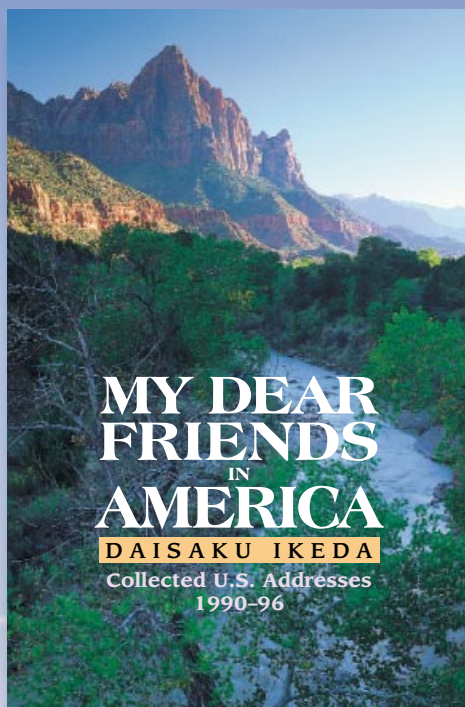
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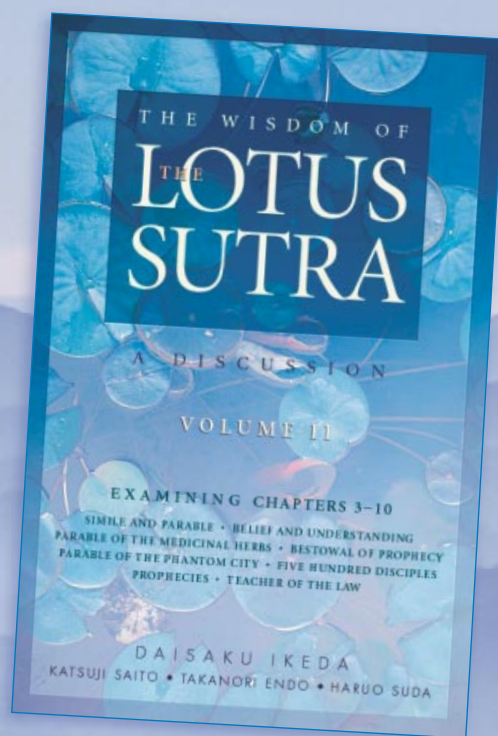
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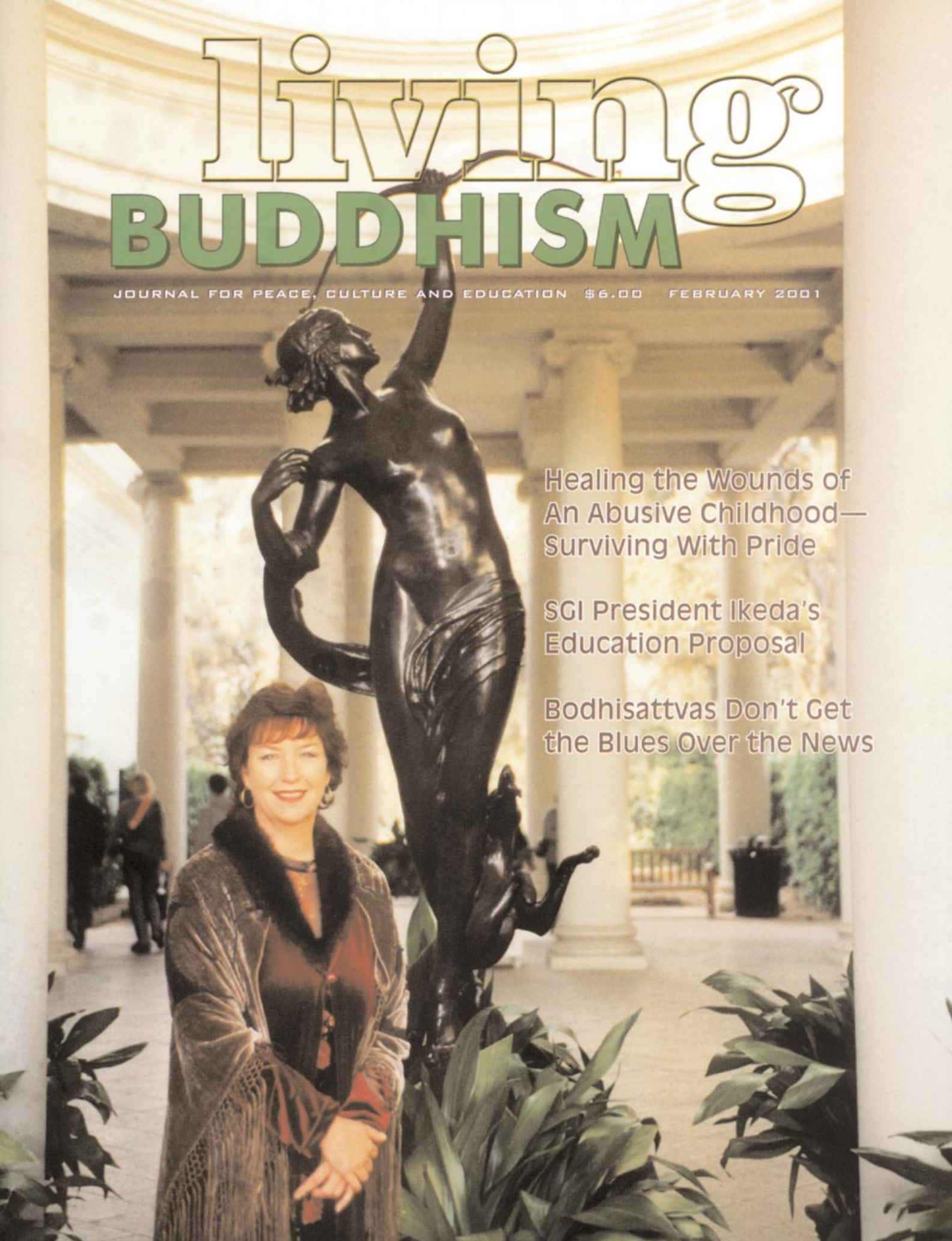
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Living

BUDDHISM

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A woman with short brown hair, wearing a dark, fringed shawl over a dark top, stands in the foreground, smiling. Behind her is a large, dark bronze statue of a muscular, nude male figure in a dynamic, athletic pose, holding a spear or staff. The setting is a grand, classical building with white columns and a high ceiling. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting an indoor or well-lit outdoor space. The overall mood is one of cultural richness and personal connection.

Healing the Wounds of
An Abusive Childhood—
Surviving With Pride

SGI President Ikeda's
Education Proposal

Bodhisattvas Don't Get
the Blues Over the News



What Is the SGI & 'Living Buddhism' Magazine?

Building a Culture of Peace...

Living Buddhism is the monthly journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist association that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Buddhism. With seventy-one centers throughout the United States, SGI-USA is affiliated with the worldwide SGI organization, which has twelve million members in 163 countries, with its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Our members reflect a broad range of ethnic and social backgrounds, representing the diversity of our American society.

An Ancient Tradition...

The origins of SGI-USA's philosophy can be traced to the teachings of the Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is present day India. Born Gautama Siddhartha, he abandoned his sheltered, princely life and sought instead to understand the inescapable sufferings all people share — birth, aging, sickness and death — and the means by which these sufferings could be overcome. He achieved at age 30 an awakening to the nature of life and the solution to these sufferings, and then traveled throughout India for 50 years, sharing the wisdom he had discovered. Shakyamuni's intuitive realization of a universal Law (Skt: *Dharma*) eternally permeating all life is most succinctly articulated in the Lotus Sutra, widely considered his most definitive teaching. Here the existence of the innate and universal reality, an essential enlightened nature, is revealed as being inherent in all life. The Lotus Sutra affirms that the realities of daily living provide both motivation and opportunity for spiritual transformation.

One of the most significant proponents of the Lotus Sutra was the 13th-century Japanese reformer, Nichiren Daishonin, who, the late religious scholar Masaharu Anesaki wrote, "stands almost a unique figure in the history of Buddhism, not alone because of his persistence through hardship and persecution ... [but also as] an eloquent speaker, a powerful writer, and a man of tender heart."

In one of his earliest writings, Nichiren Daishonin

declares both the purpose of his teaching and its conclusion: "If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and attain supreme enlightenment in this lifetime, you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life."

Nichiren taught all the workings of the universe embody a single principle or Law, a "mystic truth," which he expressed as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He set forth a Buddhist practice of chanting this phrase to place one's life into harmony with that universal principle. In this way, he taught, people can unlock boundless hidden potential and transform the inevitable sufferings of life into sources of growth and fulfillment.

What We Believe...

Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, writes, "Our task is to establish a firm inner world, a robust sense of self that will not be swayed or shaken by the most trying circumstances or pressing adversity. Only when efforts to reform society have as their point of departure the reformation of the inner life — human revolution — will they lead us with certainty to a world of lasting peace and true human security."

Our Buddhist philosophy is expressed in the concept of "human revolution," a process of inner transformation arrived at through Buddhist practice. It is a process by which we develop character; cultivate wisdom, courage, and compassion; and come to live and act for the happiness of others and the betterment of society as well as for personal fulfillment.

The SGI Charter, adopted in 1995, voices our beliefs and aims. These are to:

- ❖ Promote an understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism
- ❖ Contribute to peace, culture and education within society
- ❖ Safeguard fundamental human rights and eliminate discrimination
- ❖ Respect and protect freedom of religion and religious expression

(Continued on inside back cover)