

# living BUDDHISM

November • 2001 Vol. 5 • No. 11

### 3 General Director's Message

*The Answer Lies in Faith, Practice and Study*

5



### 5 The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin— The Kalpa of Decrease

*Study material for December study meetings. The world declines as a result of human delusion. As the three poisons increase, progressively higher teachings are needed to check their influence.*

16



### 16 The Challenge Facing the Twenty-first Century

*SGI President Ikeda addresses the problem of religious conflicts and the terrorist attacks in America on September 11. He writes about Veena Sikri—Former Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. From the “Wonderful Encounters” series.*

### 24 Renewing Our Faith in Humanity and Reflections on the Terrorist Attacks

*Statements on terrorism by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.*

26



### 26 Nuclear Contamination of the Human Spirit

*SGI President Ikeda recounts his visit with Dr. David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Once accustomed to abnormal circumstances, people no longer tremble at their extreme situation. From the “Wonderful Encounters” series.*

### 36 August 15: The Dawn of a New Day

*This poem by President Ikeda, written on August 14, expresses his personal ordeal as a teenager during World War II and the effect the war had on his family. His opposition to war is rooted both in his Buddhist faith and first-hand experience.*

42



### 42 Curiosity, a Knock on the Door and a New Life

*The story of how a friendship changed the lives of three women. Evie and Elisabeth were two young actresses in Vienna and best friends. Then Evie moved to the United States, leaving Elisabeth alone and sad during her pregnancy with daughter, Valerie. But when Evie found Buddhism and the SGI, it changed the lives of all three.*

**COVER:** First-year student Valerie Melichar and her mother, Elisabeth Melichar-Augustin, at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, California. Photo by Jean Pritchard.

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# From Our Readers

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## WALKING THE WALK

I found Shawn Threadgill's article ["Living by Example Versus Spreading a Method," September issue] on how he promotes this practice to be an utter relief. Both my spiritual backgrounds (Judaism and 12-step recovery) insist upon being practices of attraction, not promotion. In other words, if you are walking the walk, then that talks the talk for you.

Kosen-rufu is not about dragging someone to chant. It is about being the chant in action, the Buddha in our own shoes and people feeling encouraged to walk with us. My practice has made me a better person and friend and family member, not because I've gotten my extended world to chant but because I've chanted and am a lot nicer in my extended world.

*Claire Olivia Moed, New York City*

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### Editor's Note:

We received several comments objecting to the photos on page 15 of the September issue. We regret that we were insensitive to the depiction of evil by the black performer portraying the character of a devil and the depiction of good by the white choirboy. We apologize if we offended anyone.

### Correction

The cover photo of the October issue was of SGI-USA members, Chrys Ruybal and daughter Stephanie Cohen. We apologize for the misspelling.

**CORRECTED ON CD-ROM**

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**Editor in Chief:** Ted Morino

**Managing Editor:** Dave Baldschun

**Staff Writers:** Alexis Trass, Stephanie Celano

**Publications Translation Department:** Jeff Kriger, Shin Yatomi

**Art Director/Designer:** Stephanie Sydney

**Research:** Erica Ogihara

#### WRITTEN/ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS:

Send all written, photographic or fine art submissions to Living Buddhism, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: [LivingB1@aol.com](mailto:LivingB1@aol.com)

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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*, by Burton Watson: *LS*, followed by the chapter and page number.

# The Answer Lies IN FAITH, PRACTICE AND STUDY

**M**any of us are still reeling from the shock of September 11 and the reality that our nation is now involved in military action against terrorism. In the days and months to come, it is important that all of us gain a deeper understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and engage in heart-to-heart dialogue with people around us. By developing conviction and a more profound perspective, we as SGI members can gradually transform the fear and despair that fill the hearts of so many. Our earnest efforts can ignite a light of hope that will illuminate our path in the days to come. Therefore, I want to discuss how it is even more crucial right now that we strengthen the three essential aspects of the Daishonin's Buddhism: faith, practice and study.

We may be feeling insecure and anxious, but we cannot allow our confidence in our Buddhist practice to be shaken. We all share the same concerns of freedom and security for everyone. In "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin states, "The single character of faith is the sharp sword to cut through the fundamental darkness" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751). This sentence sums up why it is important to develop faith right now. Everyone possesses fundamental darkness that can manifest itself at any time. Faith allows us to banish from our lives that which leaves us feeling hopeless and powerless. The solution to the evil of terrorism lies in faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism.

If our Buddhist practice is the foundation of our lives, then to leave doubts unchallenged makes us susceptible to fear. The deeper our faith, the happier we are. Faith is more than belief. It means to have a flexible spirit, an open mind and a pure heart. SGI President Ikeda has said that faith will dispel the dark clouds of doubt, anxiety and regret and

open our hearts toward something great.

Faith is believing in our Buddha nature, and further, that all people possess a Buddha nature. It is a conviction that we can change our perception and see the equality of all people. When we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we gain the wisdom to take appropriate action, which is a manifestation of our faith. When we change the environment, that is faith. When we go through human revolution, that is also faith. As the Daishonin says: "To have faith is the basis of Buddhism. The fourth volume of Great Concentration and Insight states, 'Buddhism is like an ocean that one can only enter with faith'" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832).

In 1981, President Ikeda wrote a poem, "To My Beloved Young American Friends." In it, he talks about faith:

Faith is —  
to fear nothing  
to stand unswayed  
the power to surmount any obstacle.  
Faith is the source from which  
all solutions flow  
Faith is the engine that propels us  
in the thrilling voyage of life,  
a life victorious and transcendent  
(*Songs for America*, p. 69).

There is much we can do to eradicate terrorism by way of our practice. In the fourth silent prayer of gongyo, we "pray that the great desire of kosen-rufu be fulfilled." This is a broad prayer that spurs us to think of ways we can make world peace a reality. One of the ways to bring about world peace is to consider how each of us can make a positive impact on our families, friends, co-workers and neighbors. A change

**“Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasure of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one’s body and life. Even the treasures that fill the major world system are no substitute for life”**

in each of us brings about a change in the environment. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is a powerful means to open up our lives to possibilities for change that we might not have considered. In order to make a difference, we have to start with ourselves.

Nichiren Daishonin understood how essential the practice of Buddhism is, and he encouraged the hypothetical questioner to whom “The Selection of the Time” is addressed by saying: “Therefore, I say to you my disciples, try practicing as the Lotus Sutra teaches, exerting yourselves without begrudging your lives! Test the truth of Buddhism now!” (WND, 583–84).

Global citizens think of other people — not only the people in their immediate environment, but also people all over the world. This is where our practice for others makes a difference. When we help others unlock their potential and become happy, a far-reaching effect is created. The SGI exists in 177 countries and territories in the world. Even though we number only 12 million members, if each of us has the conviction that what we do is significant and that we should help others see their potential for enlightenment, think of how many more millions of lives we will impact.

November is the month we hold district general meetings to celebrate the founding of our organization. We can use these meetings to expand our circle of friends who also dedicate themselves to attaining world peace. Let’s make our meetings a “garden of dialogue” where our ideas for peace can take root in the hearts and minds of our members and guests. It is our grass-roots work that will create a harmonious society, eventually changing its destiny.

In order to make a difference in the world and build our conviction, we must study the Daishonin’s Buddhism thoroughly. Studying gives us a fresh perspective and refreshes the way we practice. Study is an aid to our faith and practice. When we understand how our lives work and why things happen the way they do, we will not waver in times of crisis. With study, we can overcome doubts and dispel the

devilish functions inherent in human life.

President Ikeda often talks about the importance of study and why we should do it. In a speech he remarked: “What is the purpose of study? It’s to enable us to gain some practical ability or knowledge so that we can contribute to society and to the happiness and welfare of many people” (*Faith into Action*, p. 168). Contributing to society and the welfare of others has always been our mission. Our understanding of Buddhism makes it easier to discuss our philosophy with others. President Ikeda further says, “Leaders who are genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu will read the Gosho every day, even if only a line or a paragraph, and make it a living part of themselves” (May 5, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 8). We are all leaders when it comes to the realization of kosen-rufu. Study is one of the best ways to express that pledge.

By strengthening our faith, practice and study, we will transform feelings of despair to feelings of hope and joy. Our philosophy puts us on the correct path of human revolution. At this crucial time, we can do so much to establish the absolute dignity of life. We should engrave in our hearts Nichiren Daishonin’s words: “Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasure of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one’s body and life. Even the treasures that fill the major world system are no substitute for life” (WND, 1125).

Let’s all grow together based on our faith. Please enjoy your district general meetings with the knowledge that your efforts will make a difference in the world.

Daniel K. Nagashima



SGI-USA General Director

The Buddhism practiced by the Soka Gakkai International was founded by Nichiren Daishonin in thirteenth-century Japan. His teachings are contained in a compilation of his theses and letters, translated into English as *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. Studying these teachings is part of the practice to obtain maximum results from Buddhist faith.

# The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin

## *“The Kalpa of Decrease”*

*(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 1121–122; Goshō Zenshū, p. 1466–467)*

In this letter, Nichiren Daishonin explains that the world declines as a result of human delusion. As greed, anger and foolishness increase, progressively higher teachings are needed to check their influence.

The following is an excerpt from “The Kalpa of Decrease,” the study material for December study meetings in the SGI-USA.

**N**ow in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing than in connection with the doctrines of the religious world.

When people today, who are unaware of this, endeavor to cultivate roots of good, events that lead to the ruin of the world occur all the more. Although superficially it may seem to be an act of good to provide support to the priests of the Tendai, True Word, and other schools of the present age, in reality it is a great evil surpassing even the five cardinal sins<sup>1</sup> and the ten evil acts.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, in order that peace reign in the age, if a wise man existed in the world with wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and if he met with a worthy ruler like King Sen’yo<sup>3</sup>; and if together they devoted themselves to putting an end to these acts of good and committed the great evil of

censuring, banishing, cutting off alms to, or even beheading those persons of the eight schools<sup>4</sup> who are thought to be men of wisdom, then the age may be pacified to some extent.

This is explained in the first volume of the Lotus Sutra where it says, “The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas.” In the phrase “consistency from beginning to end,”<sup>5</sup> “beginning” indicates the root of evil and the root of good, and “end” indicates the outcome of evil and the outcome of good. One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha. T’ien-t’ai stated, “Life at each moment is endowed with the Ten Worlds.”<sup>6</sup> Chang-an stated, “The Buddha intended these as his ultimate teachings. How could they ever be easy to understand?”<sup>7</sup> Miao-lo added that

“this principle is the ultimate revelation of his [T’ien-t’ai’s] final and supreme teaching.”<sup>8</sup> The Lotus Sutra states, “[The doctrines that they preach ...] will never be contrary to the true reality.”<sup>9</sup> T’ien-t’ai commented on this, saying that “no worldly affairs of life or work are ever contrary to the true reality.”<sup>10</sup> A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed.

When the Yin dynasty became corrupt and the people were suffering, T’ai-kung Wang<sup>11</sup> appeared in the world and beheaded King Chou<sup>12</sup> of the Yin, bringing an end to the people’s misery. When the Second Emperor of the Ch’in dynasty<sup>13</sup> caused the people to taste bitterness, Chang Liang<sup>14</sup> appeared and restored order to the world, enabling them to know sweetness. Though these men lived before the introduction of Buddhism, they helped the people as emissaries of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. And though the adherents of the non-Buddhist scriptures were unaware of it, the

wisdom of such men contained at heart the wisdom of Buddhism.

If there were a ruler of outstanding wisdom in the world today, at the time of the great earthquake of the Shoka era, or at the time of the great comet of the Bun’ei era,<sup>15</sup> he would surely have heeded me, Nichiren. Or even if that had not happened, when strife broke out within the ruling clan in the ninth year of Bun’ei (1272), or when the Mongols attacked in the eleventh year of the same era, he would have welcomed me as King Wen of the Chou dynasty welcomed T’ai-kung Wang, or sought me out as King Kao-ting<sup>16</sup> of the Yin dynasty sought out Fu Yüeh from seven *ri*<sup>17</sup> away. Thus it is said that the sun and moon are not treasures to one who is sightless, and that a worthy man will be hated by a foolish ruler. Rather than go on at length, I will stop here. The heart of the Lotus Sutra is just as I have explained. You should not think of it as otherwise. Great evil portends the arrival of great good. If all of Jambudvipa<sup>18</sup> were to be thrown into chaos, there could be no doubt that [this sutra would] “be widely propagated throughout Jambudvipa.”<sup>19</sup>

1. The five most serious offenses in Buddhism. Explanations vary according to sutras and treatises. The most common version is: (1) killing one’s father, (2) killing one’s mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) injuring a Buddha, and (5) causing disunity in the Buddhist Order.

2. Killing, stealing, unlawful sexual intercourse, lying, flattery (or random and irresponsible speech), defaming others, duplicity, greed, anger, and foolishness (or the holding of mistaken views).

3. The name of Shakyamuni in a previous existence. According to the Nirvana Sutra, the king Sen’yo was the ruler of a great kingdom and a believer in the Mahayana sutras. When five hundred Brahmans slandered the Mahayana teachings, he had them put to death. Because of this act, he was never thereafter in danger of falling into hell. This story is not meant to condone killing of slanderers but rather to demonstrate the gravity of slander and the importance of protecting the Law. Sen’yo is the Japanese rendering of his name; his Sanskrit name is unknown.

4. The eight major schools of Buddhism in Japan before the Kamakura period (1185–1333). They are: the Dharma Analysis Treasury (Jpn Kusha), Establishment of Truth (Jojitsu), Precepts (Ritsu), Dharma Characteristics (Hosso), Three Treatises (Sanron), Flower Garland (Kegon), Tendai, and True Word (Shingon) schools. The first six schools flourished in the Nara period (710–794), while the Tendai and True Word

schools rose to prominence during the Heian period (794–1185).

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2. This phrase concludes the passage describing “the true aspect of all phenomena.” The full passage reads, “The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.”

6. *Great Concentration and Insight*.

7. *The Annotations on “The Treatise on the Observation of the Mind.”*

8. *The Annotations on “Great Concentration and Insight.”*

9. Lotus Sutra, chap. 19.

10. *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*.

11. T’ai-kung Wang was teacher and adviser to Hsi Po, the Earl of the West (later known as King Wen of the Chou dynasty). His strategies are said to have enabled Hsi Po’s son, King Wu, to overthrow the Yin dynasty and establish the Chou dynasty.

12. The last ruler of the Yin (Shang) dynasty, which ended in the eleventh century B.C.E. Infamous as an oppressive ruler, together with King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty, he is regarded as the epitome of tyranny. He was prone to drunkenness and debauchery, and was encouraged in his evildoing by his favorite concubine, Ta Chi. Because of his corruption and cru-

ely, the feudal lords and people of the kingdom eventually turned against him. He was finally defeated by King Wu of the Chou dynasty.

13. The Second Emperor of the Ch'in dynasty refers to Hu Hai (229–207 B.C.E.). A puppet ruler, he was controlled by the eunuch official Chao Kao, who eventually forced Hu Hai to commit suicide to further his own ambitions.

14. (d. 168 B.C.E.) A statesman and strategist who assisted Liu Pang, or Emperor Kao-tsu, in the overthrow of the Ch'in and the establishment of the Former Han dynasty of China.

15. References are to a major earthquake that leveled much of Kamakura in 1257 and to a large comet that appeared in 1264.

16. Kao-ting was the twenty-second ruler of the Yin dynasty. According to *Records of the Historian*, he sought to revive the declining Yin dynasty, but was unable to find capable advisers. At length he learned of Fu Yüeh, and

though he had been living in retirement, Kao-ting appointed him his minister. Because of Fu Yüeh's counsel, Kao-ting was able to revive the dynasty.

17. (Jpn) A unit of linear measurement. The exact definition of *ri* (Chin *li*) differed in China and Japan, and from era to era. In Japan at different times it equaled about 450, 545, or 655 meters. In China it equaled about 250, 400, or 530 meters.

18. One of the four continents situated in the four directions around Mount Sumeru. Jambudvīpa is located to the south and is the place where the Buddhas appear. It is often used in the sense of the entire world.

19. The Daishonin alludes here to a passage from chapter 28 of the Lotus Sutra that states, "After the Thus Come One has entered extinction, I will cause it to be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa and will see that it never comes to an end."

## Background

Neither the date nor addressee of this letter is known. Judging from the concluding paragraph, Nichiren Daishonin may have sent it via his disciple Acharya Daishin to someone in the clan of the late lay priest Takahashi Rokuro Hyoe, a believer who lived in Kajima in Fuji District of Suruga Province. In the opening statement the Daishonin says, "The kalpa of decrease has its origin in the human heart." He then explains that the world declines as a result of human delusion, and that, as the greed, anger and foolishness of people's hearts intensify, progressively higher teachings are needed to check that influence. In the present time, the Latter Day of the Law, those three poisons are so pervasive that the provisional teachings not only fail to restrain them, but aggravate them all the more. In this age, the Daishonin explains, the worst evils actually arise, not from secular misdeeds, but from attachment to the doctrines of the various schools of Buddhism, whose practice no longer leads one to salvation. Citing the passage from the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra "The true aspect of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas," the Daishonin explains that only the Buddhas' wisdom is capable of discerning the supreme truth that will bring about peace in the world. He also explains that a person of true wisdom is not one who carries out the Buddhist practice in isolation from the world,

but who thoroughly comprehends the principles by which the world may be governed. This is in keeping with the Lotus Sutra's teaching that the ultimate reality is manifest in all phenomena. In this sense, the wise ministers who helped bring peace to their dynasties in China in the ages before the introduction of Buddhism may be said to have grasped a portion of the Buddhist Law.

Though the ruler of Japan did not heed the Daishonin's admonition that only faith in the Mystic Law could restore peace to the land, the Daishonin nevertheless was convinced that his teaching would one day flourish. As suggested by the title of this letter, the disasters besetting society in his time were viewed by the Daishonin from one perspective as stemming from human delusion and attachment to inferior teachings.

However, as indicated by the statement "Great evil portends the arrival of great good," the Daishonin also interpreted them from another perspective as heralding the rise and spread of the supreme Law.

## Commentary

**"Now in this latter, evil age, great evil arises less from secular wrongdoing than in connection with the doctrines of the religious world. When people today, who are unaware of this, endeavor to cultivate roots of good, events that lead to the ruin of the world occur all the more...."**

The perversion of religion is often a cause for much violence, destruction and misery in the world. Since religion forms the basis of human activity, dogma that disregards the dignity of life or a teaching originally founded upon the humanistic principles that is perverted by irrational zealots will debase human life into a means for selfish ends. Here, Nichiren Daishonin explains that in the Latter Day of the Law, erroneous interpretations of Buddhist doctrines will actually bring more suffering and unhappiness upon the people than will secular wrongdoing. Because people can easily recognize secular wrongdoing, such as stealing or killing, as bad, they usually avoid committing such acts. However, because actions based on erroneous interpretations of religious doctrines often appear on the surface to be sincere acts, many people may inadvertently go against the true, humanistic purpose of religion despite their good intentions. Such perversion of religion, furthermore, provides a psychological context in which believers rationalize “secular wrongdoing” and ultimately the irrational disregard for human life, as some terrorists invoke the “holy war” to justify the killing of innocent citizens. The debasement of religion into authoritarianism is not only the greatest harm done to religion itself, but also undermines the absolute dignity of life.

This is why the Daishonin encourages us time and again to develop keen intellect in order to discern what is good and what is evil — that is, what empowers human life and what enfeebles human life; what encourages the freedom, reason and independence of an individual and what discourages those essential human qualities; and ultimately what leads people to happiness and what leads them to suffering. The standard for good and evil is often confused in a self-righteous, sectarian debate of ideology and religion. In “The Kalpa of Decrease,” however, the Daishonin points out that people’s happiness is the cornerstone of Buddhist wisdom and the ultimate good.

One way to discern good from evil in interpreting Buddhist teachings is to examine everything from the perspective of the fundamental purpose and spirit of Buddhism. Buddhism recognizes the poten-

tial for the supreme life-condition of Buddhahood in all people — as Shakyamuni addresses one of his leading disciples in the Lotus Sutra, “Shariputra, you should know / that at the start I took a vow, / hoping to make all persons / equal to me, without any distinction between us...” (*The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson, p. 36). The Lotus Sutra recognizes the essential equality of all people based on their potential to reveal themselves as Buddhas. The fundamental posture of Buddhism toward life, therefore, is respect for the dignity of each person’s life, regardless of social status, race, sex or beliefs. In other words, the fundamental spirit of Buddhism can be called humanism as it encourages the revelation of each person’s highest potential.

Unfortunately, as the Daishonin cautions us in the above passage, Buddhism is not exempt from the misinterpretation of its intent and teaching that has also plagued many other religions. The tendency to deviate from the original spirit of Buddhism is noted especially in the clergy, the Daishonin points out. Because they tend to practice apart from the ordinary people, they easily lose sight of the purpose of their practice — the happiness of the people. The ultimate purpose of Buddhism, or any religion, must exist in the happiness of people. When the freedom and integrity of individuals are subordinated to ideology or dogma, great suffering results. Such distortion of religion takes place so subtly that it often escapes the attention of most people, and people’s devotion to such perverted religion could appear only as a sign of sincerity and piety. This is one of the reasons why some religions in the world have been used as an instrument of, rather than the solution to, violence and misery. Keenly aware of religion’s tendency toward corruption, the Daishonin is reminding us of this danger.

**“For this reason, in order that peace reign in the age, if a wise man existed in the world with wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment, and if he met with a worthy ruler like King Sen’yo; and if together they devoted themselves to putting an end to these acts of good and committed**

**the great evil of censuring, banishing, cutting off alms to, or even beheading those persons of the eight schools who are thought to be men of wisdom, then the age may be pacified to some extent.”**

**R**ecognizing that authoritarian ideology and dogma lead people to suffering, here the Daishonin explains the importance of developing wisdom and taking concrete steps to prevent the spread of misleading religion. The Daishonin’s solution to the confusion and misery of society lies in the building of the solidarity between “a wise man” and “a worthy ruler,” that is, the establishment of humanism as one’s spiritual basis and the establishment of government capable of actualizing humanism in the political and economic reality of the ordinary people. Judging from the context of the letter, it is clear that “wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment” refers to the Buddhist wisdom to recognize the dignity of life in all people and “a worthy ruler” to a government that encourages people to actualize their innate dignity in their personal and social life.

In the above passage, the Daishonin speaks of “beheading those persons of the eight schools.” His intent behind this seemingly violent expression is rhetorical and symbolic, rather than literal. As decapitation was the punishment his society meted out for the offender of most heinous crimes, the Daishonin here impresses the gravity of the offense committed by those who pervert religion into a dogma that enslaves and enfeebles people. Furthermore, the beheading of corrupt priests symbolically signifies the prevention of corrupt priests from further spreading their authoritarian dogma.

As a realistic measure to prevent the spread of erroneous Buddhist teachings, the Daishonin emphasized the cessation of financial support for corrupt priests. In “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” the Daishonin explains the meaning of the Nirvana Sutra that describes the killing of slanderous monks. The Daishonin writes: “My only hatred is for the act of slandering the Law. According to the Buddhist



***Protesters march against government policies on global warming. Buddhism offers the means to put human life in harmony with the environment and also develop the wisdom to solve the problems caused by human civilization.***

teachings, prior to Shakyamuni slanderous monks would have incurred the death penalty. But since the time of Shakyamuni, the One Who Can Endure, the giving of alms to slanderous monks is forbidden in the sutra’s teachings. Now if all the four kinds of Buddhists within the four seas and the ten thousand lands would only cease giving alms to wicked priests and instead all come over to the side of the good, then how could any more troubles rise to plague us, or disasters come to confront us?” (WND, 23).

As he clearly explains in this passage, the Daishonin’s prime focus is on clarifying people’s attachment to misleading teachings so that they may establish a correcting understanding of life. So long as people support a corrupt religious authority, financially or otherwise, with good intent or out of ignorance, they not only remain blind to the supreme truth of Buddhahood, but also commit the same offense of destroying Buddhism from within.



Stephanie Meze/CORBIS

**The continuing destruction of the natural environmental stems from the uncontrolled greed of human nature. Buddhist practice is the means to bring the negative forces of life under control.**

**“One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha.... A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed.”**

In this paragraph, the Daishonin explains what type of understanding is necessary if we are to distinguish good from evil and establish peace in the world. He calls this in the previous paragraph the “wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment.” The Daishonin, furthermore, issues a strict warning against the clergy of his day that religious leaders must remain involved with the lives of ordinary people and society, for Buddhism is an *engaged* religion that does not exist apart from the lives of ordinary people.

Citing the phrases from the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin says, “One who is thoroughly awakened to the nature of good and evil from their roots to their branches and leaves is called a Buddha.” The concept of good and evil is often confusing because standards used to distinguish good from evil seem to change constantly in history. A similar use of physical force, for example, could be deemed courageous or cowardly, noble or ignoble, depending on the circumstances. One’s service to the nation could be regarded as

patriotism or fanaticism. As mentioned earlier, Buddhism simply explains that *good* means happiness or positive value for human life and that *evil* means unhappiness or anti-value for human life.

The “root of evil” refers to the fundamental cause of unhappiness and suffering, which Buddhism calls the “fundamental darkness” or the innate human tendency to ignore or deny one’s supreme potential of Buddhahood. “The root of good” indicates the fundamental cause of happiness, which Buddhism identifies as the “fundamental enlightenment,” the “Dharma nature,” or the “Buddha nature.” When these “roots” of good and evil manifest themselves in both our individual lives and society as “branches and leaves,” we will experience them as either happiness or suffering.

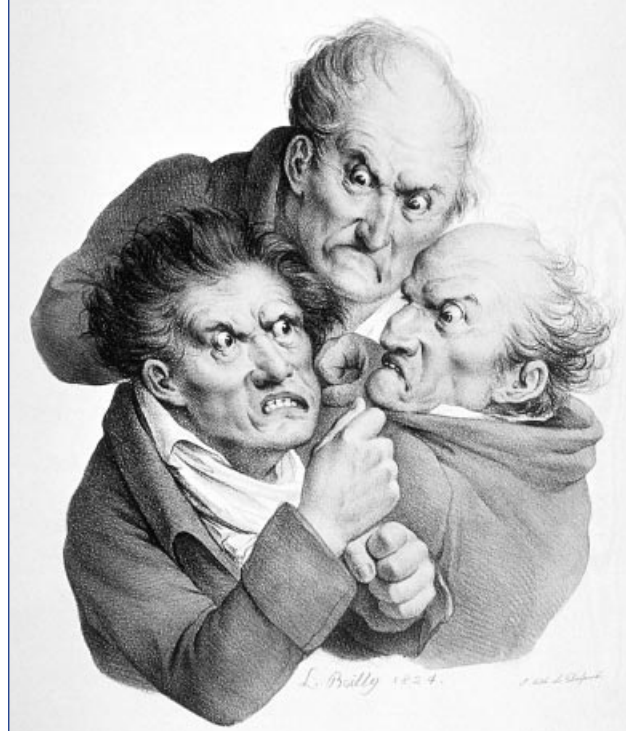
The true aspect of all phenomena is the law that permeates the universe, the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Because Buddhas understand this fundamental law of life and the universe, they can also perceive the consistency between causes (“beginning”) and effects (“end”). In this sense, the Buddha’s wisdom can be called the ability to discern the fundamental cause of suffering. It may be relatively easy to trace the sequence of events back to a superficial cause of a problem, such as traffic accidents or illness; however, it is rather difficult to deeply understand the fundamental cause of suffering, that is, our ignorance of Buddhahood. The mere intellectual understanding of our Buddhahood lacks the ability to influence our action. Only when such an idea is deeply felt and becomes the foundation of our personal belief will the idea be capable of manifesting the reality it represents. It is through our sincere prayer that we can experience and appreciate the greatness of our Buddhahood. So, when we face obstacles, instead of disparaging ourselves, we should summon forth our courage to believe in the strength of our innate Buddhahood. Our prayer, in this sense, is a process of our self-affirmation, not of self-denial; it is a struggle to challenge our tendency to disregard life’s dignity.

Next, referring to T’ien-t’ai’s famous passage, the Daishonin teaches us that a person of wisdom is one who thoroughly understands the various aspects of

society and uses wisdom to actualize the Buddhist ideal of humanism within society. “A person of wisdom,” in this sense, specifically refers to the Daishonin himself. When the Daishonin taught his followers the profound Buddhist teachings, he made it easier for them to understand by using examples from many aspects of society, such as politics, foreign diplomacy, literature, history and, most importantly, people’s actual daily living. Wisdom in the Daishonin’s teachings is never merely an accumulation of knowledge and information; it is the power of intellect and character that enables one to use knowledge and information for the sake of people’s happiness.

In the phrase, “wisdom like that of the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment,” the World-Honored One, one of the ten honorable titles of a Buddha, means an awakened one, endowed with great wisdom and virtue, who can naturally win the respect of all people. From this, we can also understand that a person of wisdom is one who can benefit all people and earn their respect by respecting them equally. The Buddha’s wisdom goes far beyond mere knowledge of worldly affairs to include using that knowledge to serve the well-being of people.

In “The Mongol Envoys,” the Daishonin states, “One who can, in accordance with the time, discern without the slightest error what is important both for oneself and for the country is a person of wisdom” (WND, 628). Considering the condition of today’s world, what is vital to ourselves as well as to humanity? The wide-ranging issues — such as terrorism and war, environment and human rights, and a sense of powerlessness that plagues people not only in developing nations, but also developed, democratic societies like ours — are critical to the safety and happiness of the people worldwide. In this light, our challenge as “persons of wisdom” is to tackle these global, local and personal issues confronting us today through empowering our own lives by our Buddhist practice and spreading the Buddhist ideal of life’s sanctity, based on our thorough understanding of “the principles by which the world is governed.” From this perspective, we can better understand our SGI activities to promote peace, culture and education as concrete expres-



CORBIS

**Aggression is rooted in the world of Anger. An individual’s internal disharmony is manifested in relations with others.**

sions of the Buddha’s wisdom that the Daishonin teaches in this letter.

**“Though these men lived before the introduction of Buddhism, they helped the people as emissaries of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. And though the adherents of the non-Buddhist scriptures were unaware of it, the wisdom of such men contained at heart the wisdom of Buddhism.”**

**N**ichiren Daishonin emphasizes that Buddhism is an engaged religion that is open to society. Buddhism does not exist apart from our mundane existence. Rather, it is the role of Buddhism to influence society so that all aspects of society — such as politics, economics, culture, science and technology — may function to help people become free and happy.

When we look at today’s society, so many institutions created by people — such as government, business, church and even culture and fashion — tend to enslave their own creators, rather than serving their happiness. People are working for the companies and the nations, not the other way around. People are serving religion, instead of religion serving peo-



Stephanie Sydney

**An imbalance with nature is rooted in a misunderstanding of the Law of life. The city of Venice is believed to be in danger from rising seas due to global warming.**

Shakyamuni Buddha” because their efforts represent the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and “the Thus Come One’s work.” In the same letter, however, the Daishonin condemns the corrupt priests of other Buddhist sects, although they were regarded as religious experts at that time, for not understanding the intent and purpose of Buddhism. Praising non-Buddhists as Buddhists for their humanism and con-

ple. Since Buddhism is a religion that seeks to relieve people of their fundamental sufferings (i.e., the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death), we as Buddhists have a great role to play in society and should always strive to find out what people are seeking and how we can help them to attain happiness. Since this is the fundamental spirit of Buddhism, those who genuinely work for people’s happiness share the spirit of Buddhism, regardless of their faith or their actual knowledge of Buddhism. So it is vital for us to forge the bonds of trust and friendship with those who believe in life’s sanctity and work for the improvement of human life beyond the difference of religion, for such solidarity represents a spread of Buddhist wisdom.

In the above paragraph, the Daishonin praises T’ai-kung Wang and Chang Liang, who understood the people’s hearts and worked to relieve them of suffering, as “emissaries of Shakyamuni Buddha” despite their ignorance of Buddhism. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni states: “If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One’s work” (LS, 162). The Daishonin calls those who work for the people’s happiness the “emissaries of

demning Buddhists as non-Buddhists for their authoritarianism — in these contrasting attitudes, we can see the Daishonin’s broad and tolerant perspective on humanity, transcending a narrow, religious sectarianism. The Daishonin here seems to encourage us to overcome any dogmatic or self-righteous attitude to discriminate against non-Buddhists as well as other Buddhists who practice outside the SGI. At the same time, we must maintain our strict watch against any form of authoritarianism both within our own lives and in our environment.

In this sense, our Soka Spirit movement lies in the efforts to cultivate our compassion so that we may embrace all people transcending any difference and, at the same time, challenge any influence on people that denies their dignity, freedom and happiness. It is important to understand that those seemingly conflicting aspects of our tolerance toward humanity and our challenge against authoritarianism stems from the same root of compassion and respect for humanity. Without compassion, our tolerance of others would become a selfish attitude of detachment from others, literally *tolerating* others despite our fundamental contempt toward them. Without love and respect for humanity, our challenge against authoritarianism would become a contest of ego, solely driven by the desire to prove our superiority. Through the Daishonin’s own example, we can learn that true tolerance for humanity and intoler-

ance toward injustice are one and the same at the root of compassion.

**“Great evil portends the arrival of great good. If all of Jambudvīpa were to be thrown into chaos, there could be no doubt that [this sutra would] ‘be widely propagated throughout Jambudvīpa.’”**

In the paragraph that contains the above passage, the Daishonin explains that he is a person of wisdom who is needed to bring peace to the troubled world. Observing the people’s suffering caused by repeated disasters, such as the great earthquake of the Shoka era, the Daishonin identified the cause of people’s misery as their ignorance of their innate Buddhahood and offered faith in the Lotus Sutra as a solution. He repeatedly remonstrated with the shogunate government to save the people from their current plight. His voice, however, fell on deaf ears. As he had predicted in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” the disasters of internal strife and foreign invasion soon became a reality.

In February 1272, Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half-brother of the regent Hojo Tokimune, was killed for plotting a revolt against his younger brother. In October 1274, the Mongol forces, in massive numbers, swept through the islands of Tsushima and Iki, and struck Kyushu in the southern part of Japan. Through the Daishonin’s efforts to remonstrate with the authorities and the fulfillment of his prophesies, it should have been obvious to the Japanese military government that he was a sage whose wisdom could bring peace to society. On the contrary, instead of heeding his advice, the military government severely persecuted the Daishonin. As he explains in this letter, “A worthy man will be hated by a foolish ruler.” The government officials, who were only concerned about the preservation of their power, could not understand the Daishonin’s wisdom for the sake of people’s happiness.

Toward the end of this paragraph, the Daishonin, faced with great crises in society, affirms that the Mystic Law will spread and bring peace throughout



Larry Lee/CORBIS

**Buddhism views the cause of global crises, such as industrial pollution, as arising from pollution of the spirit.**

the entire world, saying, “Great evil portends the arrival of great good.” During the Daishonin’s time, the people in Japan were suffering from repeated violence and war, widespread pestilence and famine. Today we are also facing great crises — continuous violence and conflicts such as the indiscriminate destruction of human life we witnessed on Sept. 11. We also continue to face environmental destruction, disease and troubled economies on a global scale. Through this passage, the Daishonin encourages us to take these global crises as an opportunity to bring peace to the world based on the Buddhist ideal of humanism and life’s absolute dignity.

In many writings, the Daishonin views the crises of Japanese society at that time from two perspectives. First, the Daishonin identifies the crises as the effect of people’s slander of the Lotus Sutra, which expounds the universality of Buddhahood. In other words, the Daishonin explains that people are suffering because they, overcome by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness, do not grasp the absolute dignity of life.

From another perspective, however, the



Bettmann/CORBIS

**Charlie Chaplin in a scene from the movie *Limelight*. He encourages a ballet dancer who has lost hope by reminding her of the innate power she possesses.**

Daishonin considers the tragic disasters of his time as an omen of the spread of the Mystic Law, of the humanistic philosophy of Buddhism. Regarding these two different viewpoints, in “On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins,” the Daishonin writes: “Question: With regard to the great earthquake of the Shoka era, in your remonstrative letter ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,’ which you entrusted to the lay priest Yadoya for submission to His Lordship, the late lay priest of Saimyo-ji, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month in the first year of the Bunno era (1260), with the cyclical sign *kanoe-saru*, you stated your opinion that heaven and earth had become angered because the people of Japan were destroying Buddhism by their reliance on Honen’s *Nembutsu Chosen Above All*, and that this error would bring about rebellion within the country and invasion from countries abroad. But now you say that the earthquake was an auspicious omen of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. How do you explain the discrepancy between these two views?”

“Answer: That is a very good question. The fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, ‘Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?’<sup>20</sup> And in the seventh volume, referring again to the time ‘after his

passing’ when things will be much worse, the Buddha says, ‘After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambudvipa.’<sup>21</sup> So we see that the hatred that abounds after the passing of the Buddha will come about in the last five-hundred-year period when Myoho-rence-kyo will spread. And immediately following the above passage, the Buddha warns of dangers from ‘evil devils, the devils’ people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas, and kumbhanda demons’” (WND, 441).

Quoting from the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin, in the above passage, states that we should regard the Latter Day of the Law, that is, our present age, as the time of *kosen-rufu* and exert ourselves in spreading the Mystic Law. Although we face many hardships and obstacles, he explains, we should regard the present time most positively as the auspicious omen of the worldwide spread of the humanistic ideal of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

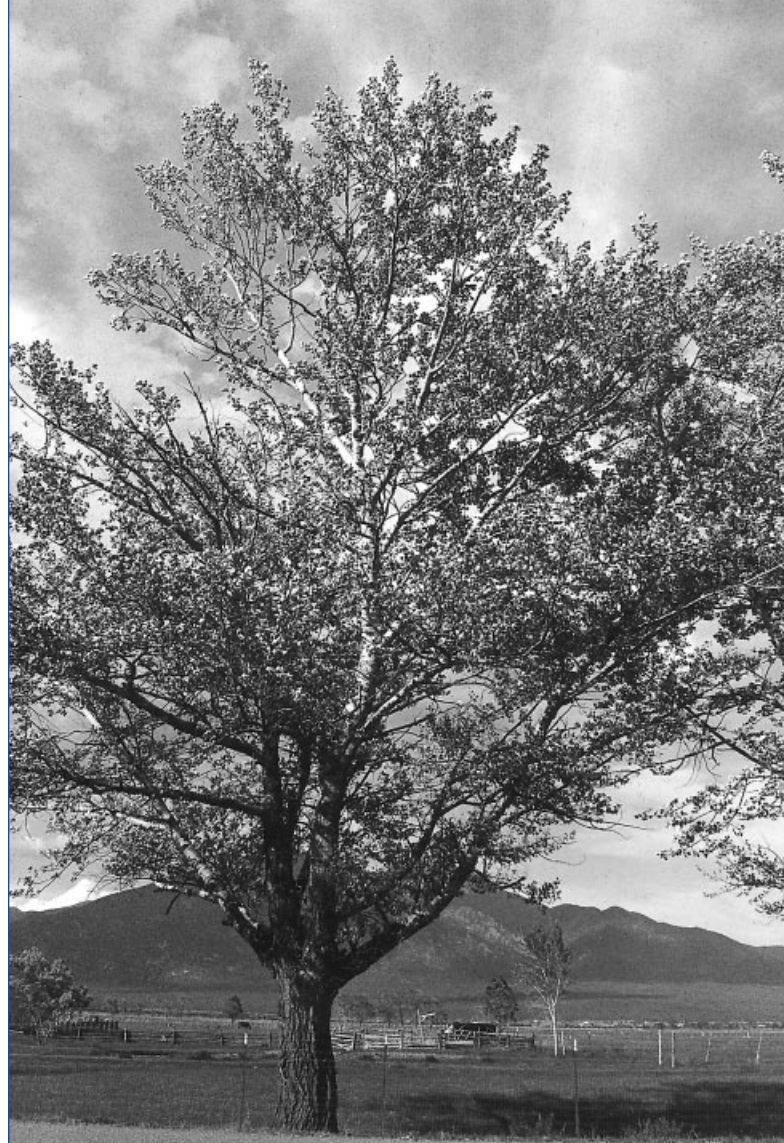
Essentially, all phenomena are effects that have causes. In our lives, therefore, it is important to understand the causes of our suffering in order to find correct solutions. But if we stop here, all we do is just recognize our problems and their causes—doing nothing to change our suffering in reality. Sometimes the magnitude of our problems discourages us from taking further action. For this reason, it is important to respond to our personal problems as well as to our global issues with a determination to create value for the future. In this process, it is crucial for us to have faith in our strength to improve our situation, that is, faith in our own Buddhahood. The process of overcoming an obstacle—whether it is personal or global—is our challenge to overcome a feeling of powerlessness; it essentially depends on the strength of our faith to make a meaningful change in our lives as well as in society.

The Daishonin understood the cause of people’s suffering, but he did not stop there. Understanding people’s inner strength to change their lives and society, the Daishonin viewed the crises in Japanese society as an omen of peace and harmony, further strengthening his resolve to spread the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra. In this regard, it is most impor-

tant to approach an obstacle in the most positive manner, just as the Daishonin did, to create value for the future. Sometimes when we face our deeply rooted negative karma, we feel incapable of changing it and lose hope. In this passage, however, the Daishonin teaches us to use our innate Buddha wisdom to look at our problems positively so that we may continue to challenge them until we overcome them. This is not merely positive thinking. This kind of powerful, optimistic attitude comes from our strong conviction in our Buddhahood.

There is a scene in the movie *Limelight* where an old, shabby comedian, played by Charlie Chaplin, encourages a young ballet dancer who has lost hope because of her disabled legs, saying: “Think of the power that’s in the universe — moving the Earth, growing the trees. And that’s the power within you. If you only have courage and a will to use it!” In another scene, Chaplin says to the ballet dancer: “I’m an old weed. The more I’m cut down, the more I spring up again.” Some scientists hold that living creatures display their maximum potential under “sub-optimal” conditions. In this letter, the Daishonin is saying to us that a crisis is the best condition to bring forth from our lives the great wisdom, courage and compassion of a Buddha.

The greater the suffering we face, the more profound the wisdom we can tap within our lives and the more hope and courage we can summon forth. In this regard, Carl Hilty, a Swiss philosopher, commented, “Unhappiness is essential to happiness” and “Through our victory over cares, comes the most essential part of human happiness” (*Happiness: Essays on the Meaning of Life*, trans. Francis G. Peabody, p. 119, p.104). The source of wisdom, hope and courage to overcome unhappiness is our faith in the Gohonzon, that is, our faith in our innate Buddhahood. Expressing joy and hope in the face of the great persecutions and obstacles, in “Great Evil and Great Good,” the Daishonin says: “Great events never have minor omens. 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



Stephanie Sydney

**The roots of good and evil in both our individual lives and society manifest as "branches and leaves," which we experience as happiness or suffering.**

Mahakashyapa, you should all perform a dance. Even if you are not Shariputra, you should leap up and dance. When Bodhisattva Superior Practices emerged from the earth, did he not emerge dancing?” (WND, 1119).

With such profound optimism displayed by the Daishonin, let us continue our efforts for kosen-rufu, no matter how disheartening the situations around us may look. Let us not forget that a crisis is a chance to tap our greatest courage and hope from within. ☸

*By the SGI-USA Study Department*

20. Lotus Sutra, chap. 10.

21. Ibid. chap. 23.



*SGI President Ikeda's Essay Series*  
**WONDERFUL ENCOUNTERS**

SGI President Ikeda meets with Director General Veena Sikri of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) at the Seikyo Shimbun building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo (May 19, 1990).

THE CHALLENGE FACING THE  
 TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY IS  
**Not Between  
 Civilizations  
 nor Religions,** **but Between  
 Violence  
 and  
 Nonviolence**

*Veena Sikri — Former Director General of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)*

*“Wonderful Encounters” is a series by SGI President Ikeda recounting his meetings with people from a variety of fields and their discussions on issues of common interest. We have published two installments in this issue because of their relevance to current events.*

At the risk of his life, Gandhi waged a desperate struggle in India to stop the fighting between Hindus and Muslims. In this article, SGI President Ikeda addresses the problem of religious conflicts and the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

*I don't want toys or chocolate. All I want is peace and freedom. People of Europe, people of the world, please find the humanity in your hearts and put an end to this war!*

*—A young girl of the former Yugoslavia*

I was visiting Raj Ghat in India, where the great Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) was cremated. Director General Veena Sikri of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was with me on that day (February 7, 1992). Somewhere a bird sang. The green forest was nearby. Squirrels were running through its thickets. The area was a spacious, well-tended shrine to nonviolence.

As I offered flowers before the black marble platform that constitutes Gandhi's memorial, I bowed my head and thought of Gandhi's brilliant spirit. I thought of his dauntless struggle to extinguish the fires of hatred with the pure waters of love for humanity. And I thought of how alone he was in his quest.

## On the Side of Humankind

Gandhi tells us not to retaliate against the Muslims! Is he taking their side? I can't forgive them. They killed my family. My son was only five years old...."

"Is he telling us to endure the attacks of the Hindus? Doesn't he know how much we Muslims have put up with for so long? Gandhi's a Hindu himself, after all."

The elderly sage hurried to regions where followers of Hinduism and Islam were mired in an endless cycle of bloody conflict and urged them to stop killing each other. But crazed by hate, they did not listen. They told him to leave and to stop his hypocritical do-gooding. They demanded to know whose side he was on. But he wasn't on either side. And at the same time, he was on both sides. All people are brothers and sisters. How could one stand by and watch them kill one another?

Gandhi was willing to be cut in two if that was what people wanted, but not for India to be cut in two. What good could ever come from this mutual hatred? If hate was returned with hate, it would only grow more deeply rooted and widespread. This was Gandhi's view.

Suppose someone sets fire to your home, and you retaliate by setting fire to theirs — if everyone operates on this mentality, soon the whole city would be in flames! Burning down the original perpetrator's house won't bring yours back. Violence

doesn't solve anything. By engaging in tit-for-tat retaliation, you ultimately only hurt yourself.

But no matter how urgently Gandhi called out to the people to listen to reason, the fires of hatred raged on. He was outnumbered by those who fanned the flames.

## Fire Cannot Extinguish Fire

Ten days before Gandhi was assassinated, on January 20, 1948, a handmade bomb was hurled at him during a meeting. This act of terrorism was carried out by a Hindu youth. Fortunately, it did not succeed, and the youth was arrested.

The next day, several Sikh followers came to visit Gandhi and assured him that the culprit was not of their religion. Gandhi rebuked them, saying that it mattered nothing at all to him whether the assailant was a Sikh, a Hindu or a Muslim. Whoever the perpetrator might be, he said, he wished him well. Gandhi explained that no doubt the youth had been taught that Gandhi was an enemy of the Hindu cause, and hatred had been implanted in his heart. The youth believed what he was taught, and was so desperate, so devoid of all hope, that he thought he had no choice but to assassinate him. Gandhi said that he felt only pity for the young man. He also told the outraged chief of police not to harass his assailant but make an effort to convert him to right thoughts and actions.

This was always Gandhi's approach. No one abhorred violence more than he, but he also knew, far better than anyone else, that only nonviolence could rid the world of violence. Fire is extinguished by water, and hatred can be defeated only by love and compassion. Some criticized Gandhi as being soft on terrorism. Others scorned his conviction, calling it sentimental and unrealistic.

Gandhi was alone.

Many revered his name, but few truly shared his beliefs. For Gandhi, nonviolence was an overflowing love for all humanity, a way of life that permeated the very marrow of his being. He could not have lived a moment without it. But for many of his followers, nonviolence was a political strategy, a tactic for winning India's independence from Britain.

Gandhi was alone.



**SGI President Ikeda visits the monument to Mohandas K. ("Mahatma") Gandhi in Raj Ghat (February 7, 1992). The SGI leader writes in the visitor's book at the memorial: "Your great and noble spirit will shine eternally as a sun of the people, radiating hope and salvation. May your golden spirit continue to cast its golden light."**

His love for humanity grew ever stronger as his religious faith deepened, making it impossible for him to divorce himself from the politics that shaped the reality of the people's lives. And his growing encounters with various political realities only served to reaffirm for him the vital importance of love for humanity.

His involvement in politics placed him, however, in the position of being denounced simultaneously by religious figures who accused him of harboring personal political ambitions and by political leaders for what they saw as his ignorance of political realities. Because he walked the Middle Way — humanity's supreme path — his beliefs and actions seemed one-sided to those on the two extremes.

## Putting an End to Terrorism

The September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States were savage beyond words. Our fellow SGI members and friends were among the victims. "Such wanton killing must never happen again!" — this was the reaction everywhere.

How long will humankind continue with this kind of barbarism? What crime did the innocent people who were killed commit? No matter what reason the terrorists might give for their actions, who could ever sympathize with them, who could accept their arguments?

Even if, as it is reported, they believed they were acting based on their religious faith, their acts do not deserve the name "martyrdom." Martyrdom means giving one's own life, not taking the lives of others. Such self-sacrifice is made to save others and bring them happiness; one who kills others is merely engaged in destruction.

The time has come for all humanity to join together to put an end to terrorism. The problem is, how can this be achieved? Can it be done through retaliatory military action? Such action is certain to stir up more hatred. It will only add fuel to the fire, and possibly even grow into an all-consuming global conflagration.

Since a strong and widespread anti-U.S. sentiment in the Arab world provides a backdrop to this terrorism, military retaliation by the United States would be like tossing a lighted match into a room filled with gas. And if, for argument's sake, the immediate "enemy" could be brought under control, would that result in true peace? The long-accumulated hatred would only burrow even deeper underground, making it impossible to predict where next in the world it might burst forth. Such a development would only bring greater anxiety and unease to the entire world.

At this time I am reminded of the simple wisdom of the famous Aesop's fable "The North Wind and the Sun." The North Wind tried to make a traveler remove his coat by assailing him with icy gusts, but the harder the North Wind blew, the tighter the traveler pulled his coat around him.

Peace that is based on the forceful suppression of other nations' voices and concerns is a dead peace, the peace of the grave. Surely that is not the peace that humanity is seeking.

Military action invariably makes victims of innocent civilians as well. In military parlance, this is referred to by the cold, inhuman term *collateral damage*.

The people of Afghanistan have already been

reduced to the most desperate straits through prolonged civil war and drought. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warns that retaliatory strikes on the country will aggravate food shortages, and one-fourth of the population — some six million people — will face starvation.

No one has the right to inflict such suffering. It cannot be termed *justice*, nor dismissed as *collateral damage*.

## Tolstoy's Letter to Gandhi

I recall a moving episode that the Russian author Leo Tolstoy included in a letter he wrote two months before his death. The letter, dated September 7, 1910, was addressed to Mahatma Gandhi.

The episode went something like this. There was a test on the subject of religion in a certain girls' school in Moscow. A bishop had come to the school and was quizzing the girls one by one about the Ten Commandments. When he came to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," the bishop asked: "Does God forbid us to kill under all circumstances?" The girls each answered as they had been taught by their

teachers. "No, not under all circumstances. We may kill in war or as legal punishment."

"Yes, that's right! Correct!" said the bishop.

But then one of the girls, her face flushed with indignation, replied: "Killing is wrong under all circumstances!"

The bishop was flustered and marshaled all his rhetorical skills to convince the girl that there were exceptions to the commandment against killing, but to no avail.

"No," she replied stalwartly. "Killing is a sin under all circumstances. It says so in the Old Testament. Moreover, Jesus not only forbade killing but taught that we must do no harm to our neighbors."

In the face of the girl's assertion of truth, the bishop's authority and verbal skill were of no use whatsoever. In the end, he could only fall silent. Tolstoy wrote proudly that the girl was victorious.

In the midst of the struggle for India's independence from British rule, Gandhi also declared that genuine practitioners of the true spirit of Christianity would never colonize other people's lands or wage war on others.

## "This is not the way to save Hinduism."

*The following account of an assassination attempt on Mahatma Gandhi is from the book The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, by Louis Fischer (Harper and Row, Publishers, New York, 1950, p. 503).*

A handmade bomb had been thrown at Mahatma from a nearby garden wall.

The next day Gandhi, having walked to the prayer meeting, told the worshippers that congratulations had poured in on him for remaining unruffled during the incident. He said he deserved no praise; he had thought it was a military practice. "I would deserve praise," he asserted, "only if I fell as a result of such an explosion and yet retained a smile on my face and no malice against the doer. No one should look down on the misguided youth who had thrown the bomb. He probably looks upon me as an enemy of Hinduism."

The young man, Gandhi continued, should realize that "those who differ with him are not necessarily evil." He urged supporters of such young people to desist from their activity. "This is not the way to save Hinduism. Hinduism can only be saved by my method."

Sikhs visited Gandhi and assured him that the would-be assailant was not a Sikh. "What does it matter," Gandhi asked, "whether he was a Sikh or a Hindu or a Moslem? I wish all perpetrators well."

An illiterate old woman had grappled with the grenade-thrower and held him till police came. Gandhi commended "the unlettered sister on her simple bravery." He told the Inspector General of Police not to molest the young man. Instead, they should try to convert him to right thinking and right doing. Nor should the worshippers be angry with the "miscreant." "You should pity him," Gandhi said.



Selkya Press

**SGI President Ikeda welcomes Sonia Gandhi, wife of the late Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, and others to the “King Ashoka, Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru — Healing Touch” Exhibition held at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in Hachioji, Tokyo (Oct. 18, 1994).**

## Lessons of the Twentieth Century

Let us amplify the words of that brave young girl — “It is wrong to kill, even in war!” — and broadcast them around the world: “It is wrong to kill!” The twentieth century was a century of war. Hundreds of millions died in its battles. What has humanity learned from that tragedy? In this new century, the twenty-first century, we must make the principle that killing is not acceptable or justified in any circumstances the fundamental ethos of humankind.

Unless we can widely spread and deeply implant among all peoples the principle that violence can never be condoned as a means of advocating one’s beliefs, humanity will have learned nothing from the lessons of the twentieth century. The real struggle of the twenty-first century will not be between civilizations, nor between religions. It will be the struggle between violence and nonviolence. It will be the struggle between barbarity and civilization in the truest sense of the word.

## Humanity at a Crossroads

More than half a century ago, Gandhi spoke out against the unremitting violence that wracked his times. What distinguishes us from brute beasts, he said, is our continuous striving for moral self-improvement. He declared that humanity was at a crossroads and had to choose between violence, the law of the jungle, or nonviolence, the law of humanity.

The world in fact now has an unprecedented opportunity. We have the chance to open a new page in human history.

It is precisely the time to make the following declaration:

**We regard the recent terrorist attacks in the United States as a challenge to the law of humanity. As a result, we refuse to follow the law of the jungle upon which the attacks were based. We declare our determi-**

**nation to find a solution not by military means but through the initiation of extensive dialogue with the Arab world. Instead of pouring oil on the flames of hatred, we choose to douse those flames with a great flood of dialogue that will enrich and benefit all humanity.**

**This terrible tragedy took place in the first year of the twenty-first century; we will mark that event by making 2001 the first year of a new era of dialogue with the Arab world. This is the best and only choice to assure that such horrors are never repeated, and we believe it is the most fitting way to honor the memory of all those who lost their lives in the attacks.**

Such a declaration, put into action, would certainly be met with the unstinting praise of future historians.

When great evil occurs, great good follows. But great good does not come about on its own. Courage is always required to accomplish great good. Now is the time for us to demonstrate the courage of nonviolence, the courage to engage in dialogue, the courage to listen to what we don’t want to hear, the courage to control our desire for revenge and follow reason.

## The International Rule of Law

**A**n international judicial system capable of trying terrorists should be established through the initiative of the United Nations.

If a murder occurs within a country, the offender will be arrested, tried, sentenced and punished according to the laws of that country. The aggrieved are not allowed to take revenge directly on the criminal. Killing in revenge is treated as another murder.

This is the rule of law that has been developed through humanity's painstaking efforts over the long course of history. This is the way people behave in a legally constituted state. Why does there continue to be a tacit acceptance of "an eye for an eye" retribution in international settings?

Efforts are being made to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a permanent tribunal to try those responsible for crimes that are a grave offense to the international community, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, including those committed in internal conflicts, and crimes of aggression, etc.

The ICC will exercise criminal jurisdiction over individuals while the existing International Court of Justice will continue to be responsible for adjudicating legal disputes between states.

I have expressed my support for the ICC in the peace proposals I issue each year on January 26 commemorating the establishment of the SGI. Once again, I strongly urge that it be established as quickly as possible.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted in 1998. It requires the ratification of sixty states in order to enter into force. The Netherlands became the thirty-seventh country to ratify the Statute in July 2001. Currently, neither Japan nor the United States has done so.

[Editor's Note: Since July 2001, five more countries have ratified the Statute: Yugoslavia (September 6), Nigeria (September 27), Liechtenstein (October 2), Central African Republic (October 3), and the United Kingdom (October 4).]

## It Is Possible To Create a Nonviolent State

**I**n her graceful sari, ICCR Director General Sikri said to me: "Nothing is more important for good relations between countries than mutual understanding between their peoples." That is the very reason that the Indian Council for Cultural Relations was established. It is an institution dedicated to cultural exchange. Many of our past SGI youth delegations to India are immensely indebted to Mrs. Sikri for her assistance. She even personally went to the airport to greet the delegations and to welcome each member with a handshake.

A young woman who encountered the ICCR director general on one of these occasions was very moved by her kindness, saying that Mrs. Sikri literally shone: "Wherever she goes, she seems to brighten the atmosphere with her light."

Those who work with Mrs. Sikri say she is always smiling and self-controlled. She is a very talented woman who went directly from the University of Delhi into India's foreign ministry, and she is now serving as India's high commissioner to Malaysia.

In my discussions with Mrs. Sikri, I spoke of my desire to bring the light of India, a land of immense spiritual heritage, to people in Japan. This wish was eventually realized in the form of the "King Ashoka, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nehru — Healing Touch" Exhibition, which was held in Japan in 1994.

King Ashoka was a wise monarch of ancient India (around the third century B.C.E.). After being struck by the cruelty of war, he converted to Buddhism, deciding that he would base his rule not on military force but on the Dharma, or the principles of Buddhism. When Gandhi was asked whether a nonviolent state was possible, he replied that indeed it was, and he pointed to Ashoka's reign as an example, asserting that the ancient king's achievement could certainly be repeated. Mrs. Sikri also noted that Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence originated in Buddhism.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, was Gandhi's direct disciple.

When he visited Japan in 1957, he lamented the increasing violence in the world, saying in one of his addresses that the only truly effective response to the hydrogen bomb was not a bomb of even bigger destructive capacity but a spiritual “bomb” of compassion. This was just one month after Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, made his own declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

## Peace Is Born From a Willingness To Listen

As preparations for the “King Ashoka, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nehru” Exhibition got under way, some of the Japanese staff at first had a hard time appreciating the “healing touch” theme that our cooperating parties in India were emphasizing. This may have been partly because *healing* in the broader sense was not as familiar a term in Japan at that time as it has since become. But no theme could be more relevant to the practice of nonviolence. Violence is born from a wounded spirit: a spirit burned and blistered by the fire of arrogance; a spirit split and frayed by the frustration of powerlessness; a spirit dry and parched by a thirst for meaning in life; a spirit shriveled and shrunk by feelings of inferiority. The anger that results from injured self-respect, from humiliation, erupts as violence. The culture of violence that delights in crushing and subduing others by force spreads throughout society, often amplified by the media.

American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a student of Gandhi’s philosophy, said that a person whose spirit is in turmoil cannot practice nonviolence. It was my hope that the light of India — known in the East in ancient times as “the land of the moon” — would help spread the spirit of peace just as the moonlight brings soothing relief from the maddening heat of the day. From a healed, peaceful heart, humility is born; from humility, a willingness to listen to others is born; from a willingness to listen to others, mutual understanding is born; and from mutual under-

standing, a peaceful society is born.

Mrs. Sikri declared at a symposium on environmental issues in 1992: “The key to solving these problems is respect for the environment, and humility as human beings.”

Nonviolence is the highest form of humility and the highest form of courage. Prime Minister Nehru said that the essence of Gandhi’s teachings was fearlessness. The Mahatma taught that the strong are not vindictive and that it is the brave who are able to engage in dialogue.

## The Future Belongs to Women

As a representative of the Nehru family, Sonia Gandhi attended the opening ceremony of the exhibition. She is the widow of Rajiv Gandhi, the late prime minister of India and grandson of Nehru. Rajiv Gandhi, whom I had the opportunity of meeting in Tokyo (in November 1985), was also a victim of terrorism, killed by a suicide bomber. As I spoke to Mrs. Gandhi of her husband’s commitment to peace, I was happy to see that she had inherited and was bravely carrying on his legacy. Her smile seemed to have grown even more gentle and embracing since our first meeting in India.

Many women, including Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Sikri, were of assistance in mounting this exhibition. I see a deep significance in this. Mahatma Gandhi predicted that, since violence is the law of beasts and nonviolence the law of humanity, the future would belong to women.

In a discussion I had with ICCR officials and other parties in connection with preparations for the exhibition in 1992, Director Fatima Rasheed Al-Talib of INSHA Associates, an Indian publishing company, remarked that it was due to the influence of King Ashoka’s wife that the monarch underwent a 180-degree conversion from an advocate of military force to an advocate of peace and culture. She went on to say that Ashoka’s wife converted to Buddhism prior to him and, according to traditional accounts, she influenced him. It was due to his wife that Ashoka thought about peace and nonviolence for the first time.

## Tagore's Warning

In closing, I would like to write about Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore's warning to Japan, partly because Tagore's spirit is, I believe, one of the sources of inspiration for the work of the ICCR. When Tagore traveled to China in 1924, one of his Indian friends asked a Japanese fellow traveler why Japan did not cultivate friendly relations with China. Instead of answering directly, the Japanese asked a German passenger also present if he could conceive of Germany and France uniting in bonds of friendship.

Tagore was shocked by the Japanese man's attitude. Did he think that whatever Western nations did was automatically right? This episode clearly underscored for Tagore that the Japanese did not think for themselves, they simply learned by rote the texts they received from their Western "teachers." They parroted the words and mimicked the actions of their "teachers," including their devotion to force. And if they could answer correctly, get high marks and a pat on the back, they were very proud of themselves.

Tagore deplored the fact that the Japanese had abandoned the pacifist traditions of Asia to become the unthinking pupils of the West. He had hoped that they would join with him to help awaken the West from its delusions.

The Japanese were so desperately trying not to miss the Western bus, not to be left out. As a result, they didn't think about what was happening to their country or the world!

Lamenting the Japanese man's response and his evident satisfaction with being able to make an analogy between Japan's relationship with China and that of two great European powers, Tagore sounded a warning that strikes a chord even today: "He failed



The performers of SGI-India's Grand Cultural Festival held in February 1992.

Seikyo Press

to realize the fearful implications of the hostility that furiously drove Germany and France toward ruin, in a vicious circle of mutual destruction."

Nine years later, Hitler came to power in Germany, by which time Japan, too, had embarked on the course of war. ❁

*(Translated from the September 23, issue of the Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)*

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# Renewing Our Faith

BY SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

**SGI President Ikeda wrote the following essay in response to the tragedy of Sept. 11.**

**I**n the aftermath of the terrible shock of the tragic events on Sept. 11, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected. From the bottom of my heart, I pray for the victims, and I pray that their families may find inner strength, healing and, eventually, renewed happiness.

It is impossible not to be outraged at the senseless loss of so many lives. And yet it is not the numbers that make this tragedy so horrific. Every single person lost was irreplaceable and immensely precious — a much-loved sister, father, son, mother or friend. Each individual's life contained infinite possibilities waiting to be realized. In the most terrible manner imaginable, we have been reminded of the immense value of human life.

In all its teachings, Buddhism stresses how sacred and precious life — especially human life — is. One scripture reads: "A single day of life is worth more than all the treas-

ures of the universe." Terrorism, which so cruelly robs people of life, can never be excused or justified by any reason or cause. It is an absolute evil. And when such acts are committed in the name of religion, it demonstrates the utter spiritual bankruptcy of the perpetrators.

As human beings sharing a common home, we have all been impacted by this terrible deed. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We must unite across differences of nationality and faith in order to create a world free of injustice, violence and terror.

I call for a just and equitable international tribunal to be established to try those responsible for acts of terrorism and other crimes against humanity.

But the struggle against terrorism requires more than short-term international cooperation. It requires a profound reexamination of the nature of human civilization. For much of our history, humanity has been trapped in vicious cycles of hatred and reprisal. We must redouble our efforts to

## Reflections ON THE TERRORIST ATTACKS

BY DR. DAVID KRIEGER

**T**he plunging airliners, commandeered by terrorists, ripped gaping holes in more than the towers of the World Trade Center. They ripped away the veneer of security that we believed surrounded us. We in America can never again feel secure in the same way.

We were vulnerable before the hurtling planes crashed into the World Trade Center, but we never stopped to think that this could happen to us. Now we understand our vulnerability, and our lives will never be the same.

What madmen seek to kill us? Are the plans for the next attacks already set in motion? Are there more suicidal

phantoms, coiled like cobras, in our midst? We remain apprehensive with good reason.

Some Americans are calling for vengeance. But we are fighting phantoms, and our military power is not sufficient to assure an end to future threats. It will not be so easy to find these terrorists and bring them to justice.

The best of America is on display. Heroism abounds. Americans are coming together to mourn their losses, to grieve, to comfort and care for each other, and to begin rebuilding. All Americans have a piece of that gaping hole in their hearts.

Justice must be done, and we need to find those respon-

# in Humanity

break this cycle and transform distrust into trust. I believe that this is the most effective and fundamental antidote to terrorism and its repugnant worship of violence.

It is the function of evil to divide; to alienate people from each other and divide one country from another. The universe, this world and our own lives, are the stage for a ceaseless struggle between hatred and compassion, the destructive and constructive aspects of life. We must never let up, confronting evil at every turn.

This attack was an ultimate manifestation of evil and shows us the vilest depths to which human nature can sink. In the end, the evil over which we must triumph is the impulse toward hatred and destruction that resides in us all.

Unless we can achieve a fundamental transformation within our own lives, so that we are able to perceive our intimate connection with all our fellow human beings and feel their sufferings as our own, we will never be free of conflict and war. In this sense, I feel that a “hard power” approach, one that relies on military might, will not lead to

a long-term, fundamental resolution.

I believe that dialogue holds the key to any lasting solution. Now, more than ever, we must reach out in a further effort to understand each other and engage in genuine dialogue. Words spoken from the heart have the power to change a person’s life. They can even melt the icy walls of mistrust that separate peoples and nations. We must expand our efforts to promote dialogue between and among civilizations.

I am utterly convinced that we were not born into this world to hate and destroy each other. We must restore and renew our faith in humanity and in each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we can still make the twenty-first century an era free from the flames of war and violence — an era in which all people may live in peace. To this end, we must strive to make a profound reverence for life the prevailing spirit of our times and our planet. I believe that this is the greatest and most enduring way to honor the memory of the victims of this enormous tragedy. ☸

*September 22, 2001*

**David Krieger is the president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. An interview with him appeared in the August issue. More information on this and other critical issues of peace may be found at the Foundation’s Web site: [www.wagingpeace.org](http://www.wagingpeace.org).**

sible for the crimes committed. But our response to those crimes must be legal under international law, moral in not causing the deaths and injuries of more innocent people, and thoughtful in asking why this has occurred and what can be done to end the cycle of violence.

Vengeance may reassure some that our power matters. But vengeance will not protect us. It will only create more who despair and hate, more who are ready to rip at the heart of America.

Until all are secure, none will be. The violence could grow even worse because the weapons in our world can kill so massively. Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological

weapons all hover around us. Will we take the necessary steps to end these threats?

There are deeper issues that we must explore. These include questions about who we are and what we are doing in the world and to the world. In the end, our only way out is to climb through the hole in our hearts until we find our full humanity.

The only way we can mend our hearts is to recognize our oneness with all humanity. For better or worse, we share a common shadow and a common fate. We cannot change the past, but we can begin building a more peaceful and decent world today. ☸



Seikyo Press

SGI President Ikeda meets with Nuclear Age Peace Foundation President David Krieger and his wife, Carolee, at the Okinawa Training Center in Onnason, Okinawa (February 26, 1998).

*SGI President Ikeda's Essay Series*  
**WONDERFUL ENCOUNTERS**

# ***Nuclear Contamination of the Human Spirit***

***ONCE ACCUSTOMED TO ABNORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES,  
PEOPLE NO LONGER TREMBLE AT THEIR EXTREME SITUATION***

*"Wonderful Encounters" is a series by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda recounting his meetings with people from a variety of fields and their discussions on issues of common interest.*

*Dr. David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation*

*If politicians had to fight the wars,  
they would find another way.*

*Peace is not easy, they say.*

*It is war that is too easy —*

*too easy to turn a profit, too easy  
to believe there is no choice,*

*too easy to sacrifice  
someone else's children.*

(From *War Is Too Easy*, by David Krieger)

**S**piritual paralysis is a terrifying thing. People can grow accustomed to even the most abnormal of circumstances; once accustomed, they no longer tremble at their extreme situation.

By conservative estimates, there are some 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. In 1945, the first of those weapons was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantly engulfing all living things in a horrific inferno. The presently existing stockpiles of warheads possess 300,000 times the destructive power of those two bombs! This is enough force to wipe out the human race ten times over — not to mention all other life on this planet.

## A Succession of Terrifying Mishaps

**M**oreover, there have also been many incidents of nuclear weapons-related mishaps. According to a report released by the environmental group Greenpeace, from 1950 to 1993 an estimated fifty-one nuclear warheads belonging to the United States and Russia have accidentally been lost at sea. Most of those warheads have never been recovered. Among these incidents is the case of a thermonuclear bomb that sank nearly 200 miles off the coast of Okinawa in 1965.

Of course, as the number of nuclear weapons increases, so does the danger of nuclear weapons-related mishaps, along with the possibility of terrorists hijacking a nuclear device.

In 1979, duty officers at four U.S. command centers were mistakenly alerted that the United States was undergoing a full-scale Soviet missile attack.<sup>1</sup> They quickly proceeded with preparations for retaliatory strikes. Fortunately, the commanders quickly realized the error. Nonetheless, the world was within a hairbreadth of disaster. A similar false alert occurred in the following year as well. In this instance, the fault lay with a computer malfunction.<sup>2</sup>

Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and I have spoken about peace on many occasions, and we completely agree that humankind has no need for nuclear weapons. What motivated Mr. Gorbachev to advocate the abolition of nuclear weapons? When he became the top leader of the Soviet Union, he recognized the potential danger of some failure within the command and control systems that could result in the actual launch of nuclear weapons!<sup>3</sup> It is only by sheer luck that we have not yet witnessed an accidental nuclear attack.

The use of nuclear weapons was a considered option during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War. It has been rumored that India and Pakistan have come dangerously close to actually using nuclear weapons against each other. Doubtless many other nuclear weapons-related crises have occurred without the public's knowledge. These incidents directly involve the very survival of billions of people, yet politicians, military leaders and officials attempt to conceal this information.

Those who have brought humankind to such a predicament would say, "Nuclear weapons guarantee peace." This is the theory of nuclear deterrence. Its adherents consider "peace" to be a situation in which opponents aim horrific weapons of mass destruction at each other's throats, with each side too terrified to move. This is like shaking someone's hand while sticking a gun in his ribs with the other hand! Can leaders of nations who buy into such a dependence on violence tell their citizens and children that violence and killing are wrong and still expect to maintain any credibility? What hypocrisy! What immorality!

I call this the "nuclear contamination" of the human spirit.



Seikyo Press

*Sunflowers, whose seeds were donated by Dr. Krieger, bloom near the world peace monument at the Okinawa Training Center (1997).*

## Learning From Hiroshima and Nagasaki

**D**r. David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, has devoted his life to the cause of eliminating nuclear weapons. As an American, he was taught in school that the war with Japan was brought to an end because the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Raised in this environment, how did he come to be a person who denounces nuclear weapons? He underwent a dramatic conversion that led to his opposition to nuclear weapons and violence in general. The turning point occurred with the indescribable shock he received on visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1963, at the age of twenty-one.

In 1998, he revisited those cities for the first time in thirty-five years. On what was his second visit to

the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, he suddenly stopped in front of one of the exhibits. It was the same display that had made such a strong impression on him more than three decades before. "This is it," he said. "This is what moved me to take my stand for peace." He was looking at the bones of a human hand encased in glass that had been melted by the incredible heat of the atomic blast.

It is important to know the facts. It is important to make them known to others. We of the SGI have continued to present to the world our anti-nuclear weapons exhibits "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" and "War and Peace." Last year, Dr. Krieger's organization sponsored a U.S. showing of the "Message of Peace: Hiroshima/Nagasaki Exhibition," a traveling exhibit from the peace museums of those two cities.

## A Conscientious Objector

Returning to the U.S. in 1964, having vowed in Japan to work for peace, the young Dr. Krieger planned to join the Peace Corps. However, he instead found that he had been drafted into the army reserves! In 1968, while a graduate student at the University of Hawaii, he was called into active duty with the U.S. Army Reserve's 100th Battalion/442nd Infantry. On the other side of the Pacific, the Vietnam War dragged on. "I suddenly found myself a second lieutenant and part of the military machine," he recalls. "But my new position made me a more active protester. I opposed the war with all my being and knew I would never take part in it."<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Krieger became a conscientious objector. From the day he made that declaration, he refused to touch a weapon, and thus began his struggle with the army. He was prepared to go to prison, if need be. It was an age when those who refused to fight were attacked and harshly denounced as being cowardly and unpatriotic. Dr. Krieger faced criticism from many quarters. No one understood his convictions better than his wife, Carolee, who stood by him throughout the ordeal.

The army refused to grant the young peace activist conscientious objector status, so he took them to U.S. federal court. If he lost his case, he would be court-martialed and sent to prison, but to him that was preferable to killing Vietnamese people. In the end, Dr. Krieger finally gained his freedom from the military when his unit was deactivated and he was honorably discharged.

Since that day, he has devoted his life to waging peace.

## We Can Choose Hope

The blue skies over Okinawa on February 26, 1998, were breathtaking. The sun was so bright that it seemed as if the Okinawa summer had come even earlier than usual. On that day, I met David and Carolee Krieger at the Okinawa Training Center. It was about six months after our previous meeting at the Soka Gakkai World Youth Peace Music Festival in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

Outside the window, we could behold azure skies and a cobalt sea, with not a cloud in sight. It was a heavenly scene so typical of Okinawa. Dr. Krieger said that in his opinion people could choose despair, or they could also choose cynicism and anger. He stressed, however, that only when we choose hope will blue skies, blue seas and a new world stretch out before us.

On that occasion, Dr. Krieger and I agreed to publish our dialogue under the title *Choose Hope* (Kibo no Sentaku), the Japanese publication of which was realized this summer.

## Cold War Thinking Continues

In the years following the end of the Cold War, I had felt a sense of impending crisis due to what I saw as people's marked loss of interest in the threat of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that this threat remained unchanged. Around the world, there was a mood of momentary relief once the Cold War concluded. The nuclear age and the Cold War period seemed to be one and the same, but actually although the Cold War ended, the nuclear age continued — the reason being that the force of habit of "Cold War thinking" had not changed. Changes in awareness had not kept up with changes in the times. Had humanity lost its golden opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons?

Our situation can be compared to people who live in a house that is teetering on a cliff in a dangerous state of disrepair. The residents of this house suddenly come into great wealth, but instead of rebuilding their dwelling they simply redecorate it. In other words, after living for long years in a state of imminent danger, we received the unexpected boon of the end of the Cold War. However, instead of ridding ourselves completely of the danger posed by nuclear weapons, we have only made the cosmetic change of minor reductions in nuclear arms.

Furthermore, according to Dr. Krieger, far from feeling relief at the end of the Cold War, we should be aware that the dissolution of the Soviet Union has in fact increased the threat of nuclear disaster. "The world has reached a crossroads," he asserts, "where either we eliminate nuclear weapons or



*Dr. and Mrs. Krieger visit the world peace monuments in Chugoku Peace Memorial Cemetery Park in Hiroshima (February 22, 1998).*

Shelby Press

they will proliferate to many other states and possibly to terrorists as well.”

## Moving From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace

**N**on-nuclear weapons states may look at nuclear proliferation in this way: “Why should the nuclear weapons states have exclusive possession of ultimate destructive power? What gives them the right to do so? Moreover, if the assertion that nuclear deterrence does indeed secure peace, then for the sake of deterrence and peace, why shouldn’t other states possess these weapons as well?”

The self-serving argument that nuclear weapons bring peace invariably leads to the proliferation of these weapons, as the above example illustrates. The nuclear tests in Pakistan and India are prime examples of this point.

In other words, we either abolish nuclear weapons entirely or else face the extreme danger of further proliferation. We either eliminate nuclear weapons or else we, the human race, will be eliminated.

Of course, reducing nuclear weapons is naturally an important step in the right direction. But that alone is not enough unless our goal is to remove them altogether. Simple reduction is absolutely insufficient. Why?

Think about it. If you take a bottle of alcohol away from an alcoholic, isn’t it just a temporary solution? Unless you cure his dependence on alcohol, he is bound to find another bottle somewhere else.

In the case of abolishing nuclear arms, the only solution is to remedy the prevailing culture of violence, to cure people of their dependence on violent weapons.

Some assert that even if we abolish nuclear weapons, the technology to build them will not disappear, and that whatever agreements are made, there will always be someone who breaks the rules, thus making complete abolition impossible.

However, the technology for manufacturing chemical weapons, just like that for nuclear weapons, will not disappear. And it is far easier to conceal the presence of chemical weapons than nuclear weapons. Still, international society has adopted a complete ban on chemical weapons.

Strict monitoring will be necessary to prevent violations. However, just because we possess the know-how and ability to produce something doesn’t necessarily mean that we will. Even if we have the knowledge and technology, the guiding values of the age will determine those that are used and those that are not.

Dr. Johan Galtung, the noted peace researcher, has made a similar point. When the pyramids of Egypt were built, they were the quintessence of high

technology for their time, yet who is interested in building pyramids today? In the same way, when a culture of peace governs the age, no doubt we will look back on the nuclear age as a time of insanity, just as we now look upon the witch-hunts of centuries ago as madness.

It is crucial, therefore, that we abolish and dismantle not just nuclear weapons but the war system itself. We must move from a culture of violence to a culture of peace. The existence of nuclear weapons calls into question whether humanity can elevate itself to a level truly worthy of being called human.

For some, possession of nuclear weapons today is regarded as a symbol of national prestige. It is imperative to change people's awareness so that the possession of nuclear weapons becomes a symbol of the barbarism of those who would wantonly endanger the lives of humanity. We must make people see that the possession of nuclear weapons is a badge of shame.

Our challenge is to shift people's thinking and perceptions, to change their focus from brute force to wisdom, and from material possessions to life.

The examples of courageous women holding flowers out to armed soldiers during the anti-war protests in the United States and the People Power movement in the Philippines serve as an inspiration to us all.

## Putting Funds Allocated for Military Spending to Better Use

**T**he Soka Gakkai's Okinawa Training Center is located on the site of a former nuclear missile base. I wanted to transform the site into a base for transmitting the message of peace, to show the truth that a change in our way of thinking can make a 180-degree change in the world.

Let's consider military spending, for example. According to one account, the United States alone has spent \$5.8 trillion (in constant 1996 dollars) on nuclear weapons in the fifty-six years from 1940–96. Stacked on top of one another, these dollars would reach the moon and nearly back.<sup>5</sup>

The world today annually spends approximately \$1 trillion on military expenditures. By comparison,

it would cost \$8 billion a year to teach each of the 275 million illiterate children in the world to read and write. This is only three days' worth of global military spending.

The World Health Organization (WHO) spent \$313 million to eliminate smallpox. That's just three hours' worth of global military spending. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is trying to raise \$207 million to protect children around the world from starvation, contagious diseases and compulsory military service. This is only two hours' worth of global military spending.

My friend, the futurologist Hazel Henderson, writes in her book *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics* that if for ten years a mere one-fourth of the world's military expenditures were devoted instead to such world problems as poverty, population growth and environmental destruction, they could all be ameliorated. Isn't this, I ask, the best possible security? She says that if only 0.25 percent of those military expenditures — twenty-two hours' worth — were made available, 250,000 children could be saved from blindness, and 607 million children could be vaccinated and spared an early death.<sup>6</sup>

Given these facts, one can only conclude that the human race has completely lost its sense of reason.

Enough! The time has come to stop spending money on slaughter and to start spending money on enhancing life! We must shift from a military economy to an economy that addresses true human need.

## The Fallacy of Nuclear Deterrence

**I**t is not only a question of wasted money. Dr. Krieger notes that at the height of the Cold War, more than half the world's physicists were engaged in military research. And what did they produce after assiduously accumulating all of their funding, knowledge and technology? Nuclear weapons, capable of annihilating the human race many times over. What absurdity! What an incredible waste of human resources!

Various difficult and complex doctrines have been developed around the theory of nuclear deterrence, such as "flexible response," "mutual assured destruction" and "non-proliferation," in order to



Seikyo Press

*SGI President Ikeda is interviewed at the opening ceremony of the exhibition "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" held in Moscow (May 25, 1987).*

justify this colossal folly. But no matter what fine arguments they may use to defend this theory, it is still completely hollow.

Have nuclear weapons really prevented war? In fact, in the nuclear age following World War II, there have been more than 150 conflicts, in which some 25 million people have died. How many more people need to die to prove that nuclear weapons do not prevent war? And what of the hundreds of thousands of people who have become victims of radiation poisoning due to exposure to radioactive fallout from nuclear testing or radioactive waste materials?

## Placing People First

It is not my intention here to engage in an in-depth doctrinal debate over the nuclear puzzle and the theory of nuclear deterrence. Nor do I feel it is necessary. "One of the great problems we face today is the perception that issues related to nuclear weapons

are too complicated for average people, who therefore willingly defer to governments in connection with them," said Dr. Krieger. But in fact, the truth is quite clear and simple. True scholars know this.

In the contentious debate surrounding the Vietnam War, the eminent historian Dr. Arnold Toynbee said that he made it a policy to always look at complex political issues from a human perspective. With regard to Vietnam, he said, his first consideration was the people of Vietnam, whose nation had been turned into a battlefield, and that whichever ideology governed the country after it was unified was of secondary concern to him.

Cannot the same be said of the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons? Seen from the perspective of humanity and life, we can see the fallacy of the theory of nuclear deterrence, which calls threatening other countries peace. It is clear that this is a contemptible policy on the part of nuclear weapons

states, which attempt to maintain their own national security by taking the entire world hostage.

*Nuchi du takara* — “Life is a treasure.” Dr. Krieger smiled in agreement when I shared with him this phrase expressing the Okinawan spirit of cherishing the sanctity of life.

## Japan Must Take the Lead in the Anti-Nuclear Movement

**T**he continuing protest against nuclear weapons by the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki derives from this same profound recognition of the preciousness of life.

“I doubt that any other people oppose nuclear weaponry as fiercely as the Japanese rightly do,” states Dr. Krieger. Nonetheless, he laments: “On the issue of nuclear weapons abolition, it is impossible for the Japanese government to be true both to the Japanese people and to the U.S. government. The Japanese government seems to believe that the American nuclear umbrella enhances Japanese security, when in fact, it makes the Japanese people accomplices in threats to destroy whole cities, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed.

“The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have made many eloquent pleas for the elimination of all nuclear weapons from Earth. The government of Japan, however, has shut its ears to these pleas and has gone on playing coy mistress to the United States,” he says.

Dr. Krieger continues: “In my view, the Japanese government’s position is unacceptable; and the people of Japan must demand that their government’s policies conform to the popular will. If they demand this and succeed in changing official Japanese nuclear policies, they could exert a powerful effect on the policies of the United States as well. I hope the people of Japan will take the lead in making these demands because their leadership might inspire Americans to demand changes from their government, too.”

If the United States were to change its nuclear policy, it goes without saying that the rest of the world would dramatically change as well.

## The Trust of Asian Neighbors

**A**mong Japan’s Asian neighbors, there is a strong belief that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought about the end of the war and that Japan merely received just retribution for its invasion of their homelands. These beliefs have been a very strong impediment in the fight against nuclear weapons.

In order for Japan to take the lead in the movement to abolish nuclear weapons, it must courageously and directly face up to its responsibility for its wartime aggression against its Asian neighbors.

Moreover, some 40,000 North and South Koreans also died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many of them had been brought to these cities as forced laborers. In the midst of the hell resulting from the nuclear detonation, an even more painful hell awaited them. Those of Korean descent who survived the blast were the last to receive medical treatment, only after all Japanese had been attended to. Their dead were buried last as well. In the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, there is a photograph of a crow picking at one such abandoned corpse, a heartrending testament to this tragic discrimination even in death. I heard that this picture also caused Dr. Krieger to stop and contemplate it for a long time.

How dreadful! To be discriminated against at a moment of life and death, and even after death! We Japanese must never forget the desperate cries that rang out over the scorched earth of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We must find the courage to confront this. Only when we do, will the message of peace from Hiroshima and Nagasaki reach the hearts of our fellow Asians and spread out to the rest of the world.

Just as many Japanese would like to try to ignore their country’s past history of aggression against their Asian neighbors, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a painful thorn in the sides of many Americans, something they would like to forget. But Dr. Krieger bowed his head deeply before the victims of the atomic bombings and said that as an American he wished to offer his deepest apology for what he called the “crime against humanity” that took place there.



Saihyo Press

**Hiroshima's Youth Division members promote the Abolition 2000 campaign, a global movement to eliminate nuclear weapons. Soka Gakkai youth gathered and submitted 13 million signatures to the UN Headquarters (October 1997).**

## Nuclear Weapons as a Violation of International Law

**D**r. Krieger founded the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in 1982 in Santa Barbara, California. He initiated the Abolition 2000 campaign and has been an active leader among the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working to abolish nuclear weapons.

In my proposal to the Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament in June 1982, I urged the non-nuclear weapons states to unite and move toward creating a global net of peace around the United States and the Soviet Union. Dr. Krieger and his foundation have been devoted to the same goal.

Dr. Krieger is also a steering committee member of the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), an anti-nuclear advocacy group. Last year, with backing from non-nuclear weapons states, MPI played an important role in securing for the first time a clear commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons from the nations that possess them.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is not permitted under international law, and Dr. Krieger worked hard in the action leading up to that declaration.

Ultimately, it is just as Dr. Krieger states: "There

are many reasons to oppose nuclear weapons. They are illegal, undemocratic, hugely expensive, and they undermine rather than increase security. But by far the most important reason to oppose these weapons is that they are profoundly immoral."

The only reason nuclear weapons have not been abolished is that the nuclear weapons states have not been motivated to do so. World leaders are quick to gather together when the purpose is for economic growth, yet when it comes to the issue of nuclear weapons they are decidedly reluctant to move. It is simply a problem of a

lack of political will.

What influences political will? Public opinion. The apparently huge and immovable military-industrial-academic complex can only exist because each individual citizen accepts this state of affairs. The only course, therefore, is to change public opinion. It is necessary to create a global network of people for the abolition of nuclear weapons. "If the people lead, politicians will follow," says Dr. Krieger.

The alliance of the people will be the new superpower of the twenty-first century.

## Nationalism Leads to the Escalation of Violence

**J**apanese society has recently been rocked by a succession of shocking violent crimes. I believe this upsurge in violence is related to the growth of nationalism in Japan. As Dr. Krieger stresses: "A culture that infuses education with militarism and nationalism is a failed culture."

Nationalism places the nation above human life. From a nationalistic perspective, people exist to serve the nation, rather than the nation existing to benefit its people and humanity as a whole. The lives of people of other nations may be sacrificed and the lives of the nation's own citizens may be used as a means to achieve "national interests." It is not in the least surprising that people's hearts become callous and vio-

lence escalates in a society where such disregard for life prevails. Those who go about inciting nationalistic sentiments have much to answer for.

Dr. Krieger states: “The only worthy education is one that teaches young people the sacredness of life — a gift we share with nearly 6 billion other human beings and many other species inhabiting our planet. With understanding of life’s sacred nature comes individual and collective responsibility for nurturing and protecting it.”

Peace will come when we educate young people to pledge their loyalty not to the nation but to humanity. Dr. Krieger highly praised the Soka Gakkai youth’s petition drive in support of the Abolition 2000 campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons, not only because the youth collected 13 million signatures, but because the drive itself was an important lesson in being a global citizen. The collected signatures represent a unified chorus of 13 million people demanding: “Abolish nuclear weapons now!”

## Sowing the Seeds of Peace, Hope and Courage

**D**uring our meeting in Kanagawa in 1997, Dr. Krieger presented me with sunflower seeds, and at our meeting in Okinawa he and his wife wore sunflower badges on their clothing. Why sunflowers?

In June 1996, in celebration of Ukraine’s official completion of nuclear disarmament, the defense ministers from the United States, Russia and Ukraine planted sunflower seeds on land that had once been a nuclear missile base.<sup>7</sup> From that time on, sunflowers have been a symbol of the nuclear weapons abolition movement. They are a symbol of the struggle for life against nuclear weapons that represent death, and a symbol of hope for humanity to counter the mistrust fomented among people by nuclear weapons.

If one plants sunflower seeds, sunflowers will grow. If one plants the seeds of violence, putrid violence will grow. The fruit of peace can never grow from the seeds of violence. Increasing our military armaments will never bring peace. That is why we

must sow the seeds of peace, the seeds of hope, and the seeds of courage infused with the conviction that we can change the world. We must sow seeds of vision that inspire the creation of a new society.

We will never give up. We will never give in. Peace is a contest between hope and resignation, a contest between powerlessness and the belief that you can succeed.

Whatever obstacles he encounters, Dr. Krieger always maintains a bright countenance. “I believe in people. I believe in humanity,” he says.

***Someday it will not be this way.  
Someday we will teach our children***

***that they must not kill,  
that they must have the courage***

***to live peace, to stand firmly  
for justice, to say no to war.***

***Until we teach our children peace,  
our ugly ritual of war will go on.***

(From *War Is Too Easy* by David Krieger) ☸

1. On November 9, 1979, duty officers at NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) Headquarters, the SAC (Strategic Air Command) Command Post, the Pentagon National Military Command Center, and the Alternate National Military Command Center simultaneously received false alerts reporting a full-scale Soviet missile attack. For six minutes they carried out emergency preparations for retaliation, which included the launching of various aircraft, before identifying the source for the false alert: an exercise training tape running on the main computer system.
2. Alan F. Phillips, “20 Mishaps That Might Have Started Accidental Nuclear War,” *www.wagingpeace.org/articles/accidental.html* (September 1, 2001).
3. Jonathan Schell, “The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons — Interview with Mikhail Gorbachev,” *The Nation*, February 2 & 9, 1998, double issue.
4. Dr. Krieger’s quotes in this article are from his dialogues with President Ikeda.
5. Stephen I. Schwartz et al., *Atomic Audit: The Costs and Consequences of U.S. Nuclear Weapons Since 1940* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1998).
6. Hazel Henderson, *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995).
7. In June 1996, Ukraine shipped to Russia the last of 1,900 strategic nuclear warheads, completing a three-year process to give up the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the Soviet Union. The defense ministers of Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S. (Pavel Grachev, Valery Shmarov, and William Perry, respectively) symbolically planted sunflower seeds at the site of a former Soviet missile silo to mark the achievement.



This poem by President Ikeda, written on August 14, expresses his personal ordeal as a teenager during World War II and the effect the war had on his family. His opposition to war is rooted both in his Buddhist faith and first-hand experience.

There was much controversy in the media this summer about Japan's current prime minister visiting a war memorial shrine because of the fact that some war criminals are also buried there. This incident is also mentioned in the poem.

## August 15: The Dawn of a New Day

*By Shin'ichi Yamamoto [the name SGI President Ikeda uses for his character in The Human Revolution novels]*

August 15 —  
The day that Japan,  
Led astray by arrogant, foolish leaders,  
Fell in defeat.

A day that marked the start  
Of a new age,  
A day people's hearts  
Began to leap with joy once more,  
Toward a new future!

A day of remorse  
Coming at the end  
Of the senseless deaths  
Of so many millions of loved ones  
On the battlefield.

It was a day of eternal parting  
From sweethearts and lovers;  
It was a day of tears for mothers  
Who would never again see  
Their beloved children;  
It was a day of hopeless regret,  
Knowing that young sons,  
Seen as future pillars of their families  
And promising leaders of society,  
Would not return.  
That day  
Was one of anguished grief,  
When fathers, too, shed bitter tears!

The 15th day of August —  
Ah, August 15!

During the war,  
 Countless people  
 Seen frantically fleeing  
 Amid the inferno of the air raids,  
 Only to be mowed down  
 By a terrifying hail of lead from on high.

Who was responsible  
 For plunging the people  
 Into such hellish suffering?  
 Who would pay  
 For condemning the people  
 To this terrible fate?

Untold numbers of innocent civilians  
 Lost their lives  
 In the air raids.  
 As I ran helter-skelter  
 From the fierce flames,  
 Inexpressible sorrow and anger  
 At the reckless folly of war  
 Seared my heart.

For the war,  
 For the sake of the nation,  
 So many men died.  
 As did many women support staff  
 Who accompanied the troops  
 To the battlefield.  
 It is very much mistaken  
 To think that only men  
 Served and suffered in the war.

And we must also never forget  
 The countless other women  
 Who worked with devotion  
 And died in the war.

Before we Japanese debate  
 On where the war dead should be honored,  
 It is more important  
 That we should not forget  
 Those precious, irreplaceable lives  
 That were lost in the war.

All the people of the world  
 Are equal as human beings.  
 If we focus on that reality,  
 That principle,  
 It becomes clear that there is  
 No distinction between us  
 And no reason for conflict.  
 The task facing the 21st century  
 Is to firmly embrace  
 And widely spread  
 This fundamental  
 Philosophy of humanism.

Memories of the war  
 Are indelibly burned  
 In my mind  
 To this day.

The sight of elderly couples  
 During nighttime air raids,  
 Trembling with fear,  
 Weaving their way through the streets  
 In search of refuge.

Nor will I ever forget  
 The pitiful sight  
 Of men of considerable social standing  
 Panicking like trapped prisoners,  
 Bolting for their lives  
 Like miserable losers.

In my family,  
 My four elder brothers,  
 In the prime of youth,  
 Were called away to war.  
 All four  
 Were made pawns  
 In Japan's invasion of China.  
 Later,  
 My eldest brother  
 Was also sent to fight in Burma,  
 Where he died in battle.

After the war,  
Unaware of this,  
My aged parents  
Waited and waited,  
Each day their steps heavy,  
Wondering when,  
Oh, when,  
He and their other three sons  
Would return.

During the war,  
My father and my mother  
Rarely smiled.  
I was suffering from tuberculosis,  
And did not know  
What to say — nor to whom —  
Of my hopes for the future.  
It was a time  
When sad figures  
Milled about the streets,  
Friendless and alone.

It was like being exposed,  
Day after day,  
To the icy blasts of the north wind.  
Everywhere one saw good citizens  
Looking like the condemned  
Being led to the gallows  
At the brutal command  
Of dark assassins.

I was filled with anger.  
I could almost hear  
The derisive laughter  
Of the hypocrites in power,  
Certain unscrupulous Japanese political leaders  
With their dismissive, arrogant attitudes,  
While we ordinary citizens  
Were forced to endure bitter hardships,  
And I could not bear it.  
In our hearts,  
We the ordinary people  
Had rejected the thought of war;  
We had repudiated it.

But, gradually,  
Before even realizing it,  
Controlled by the manipulations  
Of those in power,  
The people of Japan,  
As though brainwashed,  
Became glorifiers of the war.

The human heart  
Is frightening.  
And the authorities  
Who try to manipulate people's hearts and minds  
Are more frightening still.

On August 15,  
Japan lost.  
It was utterly defeated.

Haughty,  
Prideful Japan  
Was crushed  
By a determined, all-out  
counterattack.

No doubt  
Many wise and clear-sighted Japanese  
Cried out quite justifiably,  
“Hurrah for Japan's defeat!”

The true feeling of the people,  
Who longed for even just a little  
Peace of mind,  
Was that the callous authorities —  
The very ones  
Who had subjugated them like slaves —  
Should be struck  
With harsh lashes of agony and remorse  
As divine punishment.

Ah,  
August 15, 1945 —  
It was a day  
Of bright summer skies.

At noon,  
A radio announcement  
Broadcast Japan's defeat.  
Almighty Japan  
Thought it would win  
But it was utterly vanquished.  
Many wept,  
But  
Far more still,  
Without question,  
Were relieved  
Deep in their hearts.

The summer sky,  
Where we once watched  
Enemy planes,  
Was now incredibly quiet,  
And red dragonflies  
Flitted gaily through the air.  
Japan, which had declared itself  
The "invincible land of the gods,"  
Lay in utter ruin.

Just before the war's end,  
My family  
Was forced to evacuate our home,  
And we went to stay  
With relatives in Nishi Magome.  
However, this refuge —  
A house amid peaceful cultivated fields —  
Along with all our worldly possessions,  
Was struck by an incendiary bomb,  
And in an instant  
Consumed by flames.

With the consent of our relatives,  
My father built  
A tiny hut for us on the same lot,  
With a small sheet of scorched tin for the roof.  
We had no mosquito netting,  
So now instead of bombs,  
Squadrons of mosquitoes assaulted us.

On that August 15,  
His face suffused with emotion,  
My father,  
Murmured to himself,  
"My sons will return."

"My eldest, Kiichi,  
My second, Masuo,  
My third, Kaizo,  
And my fourth, Kiyonobu,  
Are coming home.  
One from Burma  
Three from China —  
They're coming home."  
He whispered these words,  
His breath catching painfully in his chest,  
As if he had awakened from a dream.

My diminutive mother  
Prepared dinner,  
As excited as a young girl:  
"How bright it is!  
Now we can keep the lights on!  
How lovely and bright!"

That summer  
My father was 57,  
My mother was 49,  
And I was 17.

August 15 signaled the moment  
When we emerged  
From a dark dungeon of gloom,  
And became once more  
A cheerful, happy family.

Although some of my siblings  
At first wept bitter tears  
At Japan's defeat,  
Deep inside  
Everyone was relieved.  
Their true feelings were  
"How wonderful!  
How wonderful that the war  
Is over at last!"

Eventually,  
We received the sad news  
That my eldest brother had died  
In the fighting in Burma.



Though most soldiers  
Returned quickly to their homes,  
A year passed, then another,  
Before finally,  
My three other older brothers,  
Narrowly escaping with their lives,  
Returned quietly,  
One after another.

All three,  
Unable yet to embrace  
The new age of hope,  
Returned home dazed,  
Hiding their feelings  
Behind a mask of bright smiles.

“Thank goodness! Thank goodness!”  
Were the only words  
That parent and child  
Could find to articulate their joy and relief.

My family had been thrown  
into disarray,  
My family had been cast  
Into the depths of misery.  
But we were not alone —  
Countless families,  
Parents and children,  
Wept tears of unhappiness,  
Of hellish suffering, of bitter grief  
Because of the war.  
Each year,  
When August 15 comes around,  
My heart burns with outrage.

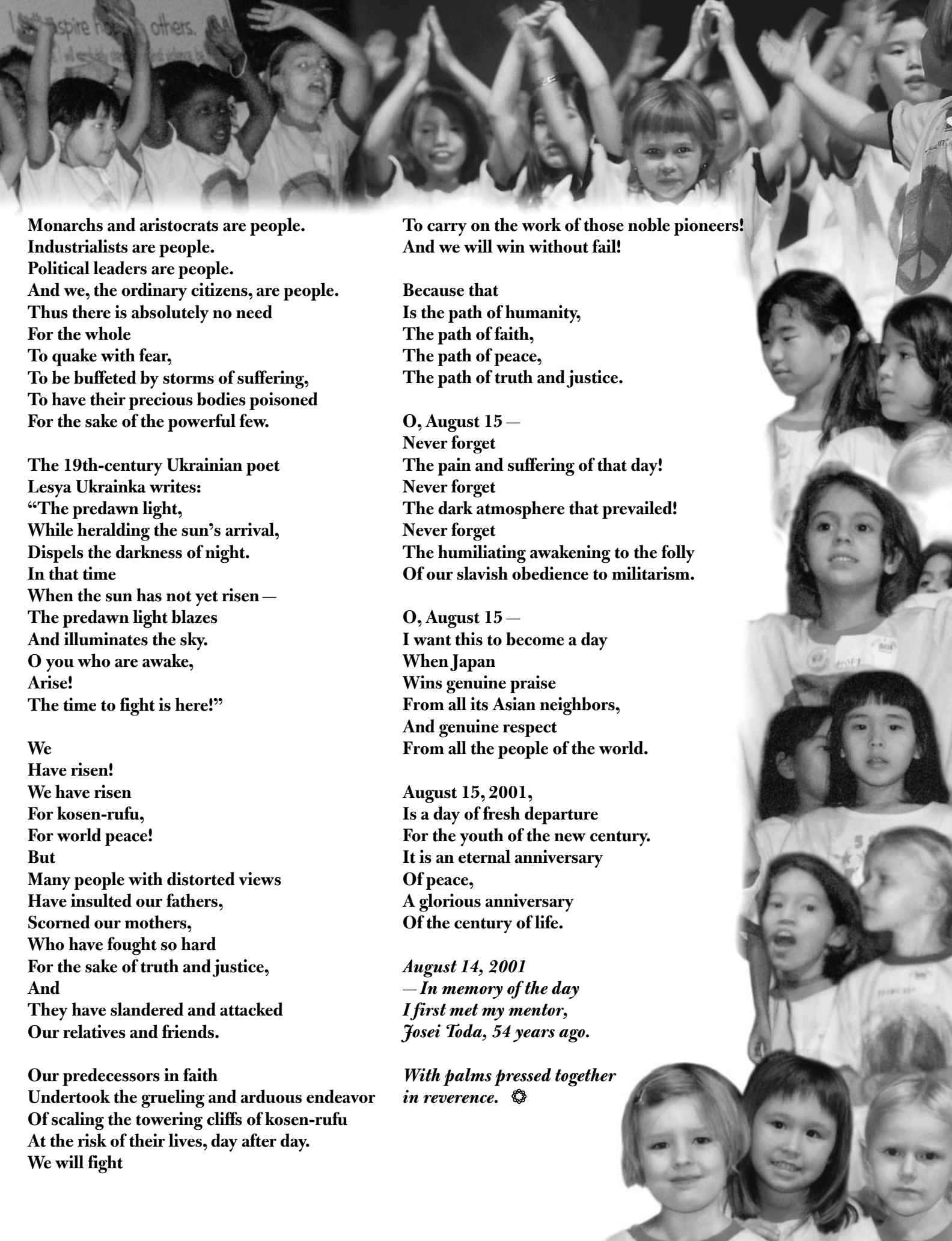
My youth,  
A period that should have been filled with hope  
And been the best time of my life,  
Had been despoiled and sacrificed,  
And my pure heart  
Cruelly trampled underfoot.  
Each August 15,  
My feelings of sorrow at that pain and loss  
Turn into boiling anger.

O you, the political leaders of Japan!  
On this date, August 15,  
Shouldn't you  
Prostrate yourselves at the people's feet  
And vow to give your lives  
To the cause of peace  
And the welfare of the people,  
And pledge to strive  
With selfless devotion  
For the happiness of the entire population?

Following Japan's defeat,  
I wondered what words of apology  
Those eminent scholars  
Who had sung the war's praises  
Would offer for their role  
In leading the country astray  
As they now bowed down low  
Before their young students.

At the sight of the high and mighty,  
Bedecked with the honors of rank and position,  
Who had extolled the war,  
Their backs now bent  
And shoulders drooping wearily,  
Bowing in apology  
Before the people of Japan,  
No doubt many ordinary citizens  
Sneered in scorn, thinking  
Those arrogant leaders had received  
Their just deserts.

We plainly saw  
The truth that  
Malicious, devilish forces  
Are ultimately doomed to ruin and defeat.  
And Japan's leaders  
Must never, ever forget  
The immeasurable pain and suffering —  
A dark prison of hellish torture —  
Inflicted on people in many parts of the world  
Due to Japan's aggressions,  
Due to its bombings.



Monarchs and aristocrats are people.  
Industrialists are people.  
Political leaders are people.  
And we, the ordinary citizens, are people.  
Thus there is absolutely no need  
For the whole  
To quake with fear,  
To be buffeted by storms of suffering,  
To have their precious bodies poisoned  
For the sake of the powerful few.

The 19th-century Ukrainian poet  
Lesya Ukrainka writes:  
“The predawn light,  
While heralding the sun’s arrival,  
Dispels the darkness of night.  
In that time  
When the sun has not yet risen —  
The predawn light blazes  
And illuminates the sky.  
O you who are awake,  
Arise!  
The time to fight is here!”

We  
Have risen!  
We have risen  
For kosen-rufu,  
For world peace!  
But  
Many people with distorted views  
Have insulted our fathers,  
Scorned our mothers,  
Who have fought so hard  
For the sake of truth and justice,  
And  
They have slandered and attacked  
Our relatives and friends.

Our predecessors in faith  
Undertook the grueling and arduous endeavor  
Of scaling the towering cliffs of kosen-rufu  
At the risk of their lives, day after day.  
We will fight

To carry on the work of those noble pioneers!  
And we will win without fail!

Because that  
Is the path of humanity,  
The path of faith,  
The path of peace,  
The path of truth and justice.

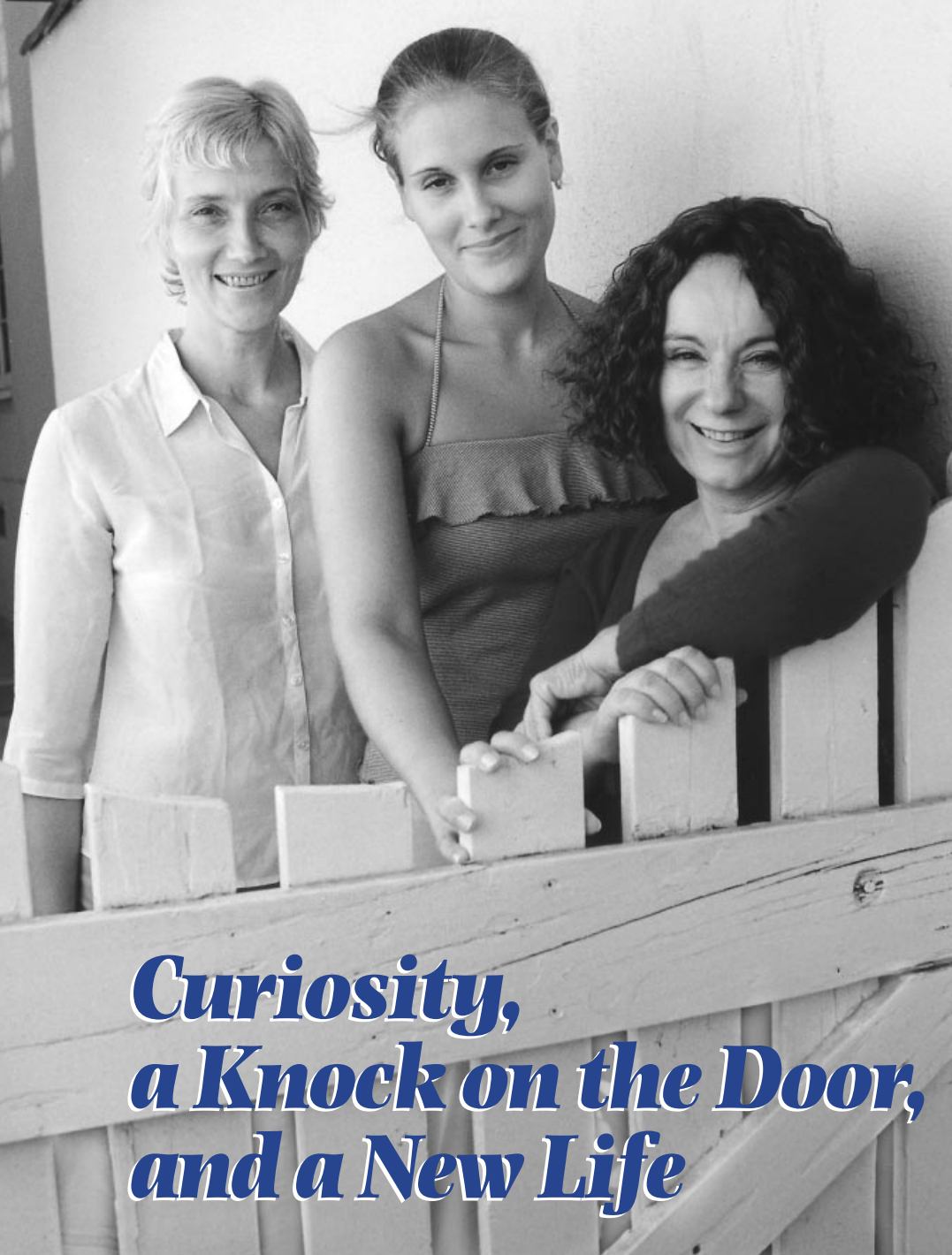
O, August 15 —  
Never forget  
The pain and suffering of that day!  
Never forget  
The dark atmosphere that prevailed!  
Never forget  
The humiliating awakening to the folly  
Of our slavish obedience to militarism.

O, August 15 —  
I want this to become a day  
When Japan  
Wins genuine praise  
From all its Asian neighbors,  
And genuine respect  
From all the people of the world.

August 15, 2001,  
Is a day of fresh departure  
For the youth of the new century.  
It is an eternal anniversary  
Of peace,  
A glorious anniversary  
Of the century of life.

*August 14, 2001*  
— *In memory of the day*  
*I first met my mentor,*  
*Josei Toda, 54 years ago.*

*With palms pressed together*  
*in reverence.* ☸



## *Curiosity, a Knock on the Door, and a New Life*

**When Evie Sullivan moved from Austria to California, she had more than souvenirs to send back home.**

Jean Pritchard

This is the story of how a friendship changed the lives of three women. Evie (above, right) and Elisabeth (left) were two young actresses in Vienna and best friends. Then Evie moved to the United States, leaving Elisabeth alone and sad during her pregnancy with daughter, Valerie. But when Evie found Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it changed the lives of all three.

BY EVIE SULLIVAN, BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA

**W**hen Elisabeth and I first met in 1976, we were both young and upcoming actresses at the Austrian National Theater, the Burgtheater, in Vienna, Austria. We shared a dressing room for the children's play "Little Red Riding Hood," in which Elisabeth played a vicious serpent and I had the title role. Elisabeth, the blond, blue-eyed, stat-

uesque serpent and me, the tiny, dark-haired Little Red Riding Hood didn't have much in common.

Elisabeth was a sincere and highly respected member of the theater, whereas I was a bit flighty, egocentric, as well as a bit of a party girl. Looking back, I often wondered how we became such great friends and confidantes of one another. As a matter of fact, I never had a girlfriend who was as close and reliable as Elisabeth.

When in 1981 my lifestyle got out of hand and I sought solace in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, it was Elisabeth who stood by me in my early sobriety. She was continually comforting me and she never gave up on me. I sometimes thought that I got sober in spite of myself and to not disappoint this precious friend.

I survived my wild years but my career did not. In 1982, I was laid off from the Burgtheater. My world crumbled in pieces. I had only one goal: to leave Austria and start anew at a different place. I applied for a scholarship from the Austrian Minister of Arts and Education and was able to attend the Lee Strasberg Institute in Los Angeles. At the time, Elisabeth was a newlywed and pregnant with her first child, Valerie. When I told her about my plan of leaving Vienna, she was sad and angry. How could I leave her alone with her pregnancy — not to mention that I wouldn't be around to watch the child grow up? Nevertheless, I left.

## **"You're going to get benefit from the practice."**

**A**t first, I suffered major culture shock in Los Angeles, but after a while, I adjusted to my new way of life. Before long, I found a nice apartment in Santa Monica, California, and an even nicer roommate. Charley always seemed to be upbeat and positive about everything. She was divorced but she and her ex-husband Kevin shared custody of their son, Sean.

Kevin used to come frequently to our home and every time he was there, Charley and he would retire into her room and make funny humming noises together. I couldn't figure out what they were doing.

One day, my curiosity got the better part of me and I knocked at Charley's door. Kevin shouted immediately: "Come in!" as if he had waited for that moment.

I will never forget the picture of the two: they sat on the floor in front of a little box with a paper scroll in it and muttered funny words. "We're chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo," explained Kevin. "We're Buddhists." Charley wrote the words on a piece of pink paper and I tried to keep up with them by reading the words over and over.

Charley knew that I was a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had shared with her that I was looking for a form of prayer and meditation that was right for me to fulfill the twelfth step of the program. I'd tried Zen and Yoga, Vipassana and even visited the Hare Krishnas. Nothing seemed right for me. I am a "Type A" personality, always in motion, always doing ten things at once. Sitting still and contemplating my navel was practically impossible for me. Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, however, fit my profile to a T. Even on the evening of introduction, I didn't want to stop chanting. "You're going to get benefit from the practice," Kevin explained.

The first person I told about my new passion was, of course, Elisabeth. As with every other event in my life, good or bad, she was always the first to know. Elisabeth listened politely but she didn't seem to share my excitement. She was at a very low point in her life, not sure about her marriage and unhappy with her career. I always admired and respected Elisabeth tremendously. Therefore, I shied away from giving her advice about how to live her life. But now, the shoe was on the other foot. I knew that if she just would chant, the answers would come to her and her life wouldn't be such a riddle anymore.

Elisabeth wasn't open to what I had to say but that didn't stop me from talking. However, I didn't just use my own limited words, I used SGI President Ikeda's guidance and his wisdom to penetrate her life. The concept of the mentor-disciple relationship is foreign to most Westerners. At first, it was foreign to me, too. But I was convinced that President Ikeda knew more than me, therefore, his wisdom would benefit Elisabeth. So, I kept sending her excerpts of the *World Tribune* and passages from the writings of Nichiren



Valerie, Evie and Elisabeth tour the SUA campus during orientation.

Jean Pritchard

Daishonin. It took some time until I got her to repeat Nam-myoho-rence-kyo after me on the phone. When I heard her say the words, it brought tears to my eyes.

## We encouraged each other to ‘turn poison into medicine’

I chanted for her every day and it didn’t take long until Elisabeth’s life reached out for Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. Shortly after she received the Gohonzon, her husband joined the SGI as well. Over the past seventeen years, Elisabeth and I have grown tremendously as we exchanged our life stories under the auspices of our Buddhist practice. What a difference that has made! Whatever happened, we just encouraged each other to “turn poison into medicine” with our chanting. I have had the good fortune to visit Vienna at least once or twice every year, spending time with Elisabeth and her family, watching her three beautiful children, Valerie, Rosie and Phillip, grow up. Elisabeth has raised them with the firm conviction that “Myoho-rence-kyo is like the roar of a lion.” I feel as if the three are like my nieces and nephew. Valerie and I share a great love for literature and I always joke with Elisabeth, telling her: “She got that from me!” Elisabeth, over the years, became the sister I never had.

When Valerie expressed the wish to study at Soka University and was a little insecure about how she could reach her goal, I reminded her to read *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and encouraged her to chant vigorous daimoku. Through her strong determination, the good fortune the whole family has accumulated over the years, and through their united Buddhist practice, Valerie is now a first-year student at the university of her dreams: Soka University in Aliso Viejo, California. President Ikeda’s foresight and wisdom have resulted in the establishment of a unique, world-class university, where we expect a new brand of humanists, politicians and professionals to emerge — the kind of leaders who place peace and understanding first and will make this world a safer, better place. It fills me with great pride and gratitude to see that Valerie is among them.

Valerie has reached her dreams, and come to think of it, it is amazing to see how far we’ve all come as we’ve applied our Buddhist faith to our lives. ☸

# A Dream Come True for All of Us

Although lost in despair, in 1985, on an island in Greece, Elisabeth Melichar-Augustin watched proudly as her daughter stood among students from around the world—the first class of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo in 2001. And she owes it all to a friend who introduced her to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

BY ELISABETH MELICHAR-AUGUSTIN, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

**I**n summer 1985, on the island of Crete, I experienced the deepest sense of hopelessness ever in my life. I had left my husband, my child, my job—everything—to try to make sense of things. Although I was busy as an actress at the national theater of Vienna, Austria, where I am from, and had a wonderful husband, I suffered from depression and felt that marriage imprisoned me.

My husband, Rudolph, and I considered a divorce, and separated for a while, but this didn’t change my dark life-state. And my eldest daughter, Valerie, always got sick with fevers or upset stomachs when her father was not there. Perhaps her message to us was that she wanted us to be happy together.

I had hoped that a trip to Greece would help me sort everything out as it had before. But this time I found no comfort—only a lot of tears. I could not help feeling that I was a loser, that I lived life void of my authentic self. I felt so alone.

## We became friends almost instantly

**I**n my despair, my best friend Evie Sullivan’s encouraging words echoed back to me: “Try chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. It will help you.”

I had met Evie, who was also an actress, in the theater in Vienna. We became friends almost instantly. By



Jean Pritchard

*Valerie with her mom, Elisabeth. “I am so proud that Valerie has challenged herself to attend Soka University of America. I see a courageous young woman blossoming with a wonderful future.”*

nature she was very explorative, willing to try just about anything once, including a number of spiritual practices. I, too, sought a deeper understanding of life and, following Evie’s lead, tried meditation, relaxation therapy and other more traditional therapies. But these practices all seemed to be incomplete. After a while, I stopped experimenting and just watched Evie jump from one thing to the next.

Six months earlier Evie had called from Los Angeles (where she now lives) to tell me she was practicing Buddhism. She assured me this time that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was the “real thing.” But I thought it was just another one of her phases and didn’t pay much attention.

While in Crete, I remembered that I brought the Buddhist prayer book Evie had given me. Through tears, I tried chanting in my small room with the windows closed. Though I didn’t know what the words meant, simply repeating them for a time seemed to lift my spirits. Afterward, I took a shower and went for a walk, taking in the sea and the blue sky. After more chanting and self-reflection, I decided to go back to my husband and family as soon as possible.

When I returned from Crete, I called Evie to say I had begun chanting. She was ecstatic. Little did I know, Evie had taught me the law of cause and effect

and the essence of real friendship.

Like many newcomers, I had many questions. So Evie would send me the speeches of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, and his words allayed my fears and doubts the moment I read them. After a long search for a spiritual home, I had finally found it in this practice of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in President Ikeda and in the SGI.

## I learned that I was responsible

**H**alf a year later, I received the Gohonzon, became a group leader, attended a European summer conference on Buddhism in the South of France, and decided to fight for kosen-rufu in Austria.

Shortly afterward, Evie came to Vienna to congratulate me and brought a little toy dog for Valerie. Valerie named the dog Jona and she slept with it in her bed all the time; Jona became her favorite toy.

Little by little, as I practiced, I learned that I was responsible for my happiness and could no longer blame my environment. I also learned to express my feelings, and Rudolph and I healed our relationship. Because I changed, my husband began to practice and we discovered a stable base for our relationship: to chant daimoku together for kosen-rufu and for our happiness. Many other family members and friends saw this growth and happiness develop and began to chant, too. Soon after we had our second child, Rosalie Yoko.

Of course, in sixteen years of Buddhist practice, more dreams have come true than I could have ever dared to imagine.

In his letter "Reply to Kyo'o," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra will be protected" and they will "enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 412). Just as this practice promises, our great fortune encompasses our loved ones.

When my daughter, Valerie, was born, Evie came over from America to welcome her. She saw her little face and said: "This child is happy to be here. She is your treasure. She will guide you in the future." And

she loved her from that first moment on.

In 1992, President Ikeda came for a short visit to Vienna. The members waited for him in the Vienna Stadtpark at the Johann Strauss monument for a group photo. I walked with Valerie and Rosie a few steps in the direction from which we expected him to come. When President Ikeda arrived, the children began to run toward him full of joy. Somebody took a photo of this moment. I have a copy, which remains a treasure in my life. It is also a very meaningful picture for Valerie. President Ikeda stretched his right arm toward her and said: "You are a nice girl." This all happened within a few seconds.

Years later, when Valerie was a teenager, she went through a very difficult time, an emotional crisis. We suggested that she receive the Gohonzon and strengthen her practice with a fresh perspective. We wanted her to understand how important her life was. This action helped propel her life forward, helping Valerie to see that her life had meaning and that she could create value. On the day we enshrined her Gohonzon, my husband and I felt profoundly certain that Valerie was on her path toward happiness.

## My friend was very determined Valerie would attend Soka University

**T**wo years ago, Austrian General Director Yoshio Nakamura told us that Soka University was opening in Aliso Viejo, California, just outside of Los Angeles.

He is a very direct man who treats the members as if they were his own children. "I want Valerie to apply from Europe," he said.

I thought it would be wonderful and hoped Valerie would consider it. My friend Mr. Nakamura was very determined that Valerie would attend Soka University, despite Valerie's concerns of leaving friends and family and our reservations about finances, and he chanted resolutely with us.

To make a long story short, I've come to Los Angeles to visit my dear friend Evie. In all the years past, it was she who came to Vienna to see and support me. Now, for the first time, I've come to see her in her romantic apartment in Beverly Hills. Together

Evie and I brought “our nice girl” Valerie to Aliso Viejo on Saturday, August 18, to help her settle in as a student of the first class of SUA. Valerie brought just one suitcase filled with her clothes, her sutra book, many big goals, and, not to mention, her toy dog, Jona.

I am so proud that Valerie has challenged herself to come to the United States to attend Soka University of America. This is a big step. It’s her first trip outside of Europe and, of course, being so far from her friends and family will not be so easy. Yet I have confidence in my daughter; I see a courageous young woman blossoming with a wonderful future ahead of her and so much to contribute.

Since my visit to the beautiful SUA campus with Evie and my daughter having met the faculty and joined in the entrance ceremony, I realize Valerie will be well cared for. As the founder of Soka University, Daisaku Ikeda remarked in his message to the students at the entrance ceremony: “Each person has a purpose that he or she alone can fulfill. A person who

pursues the fulfillment of this mission to the very end, whatever the obstacles, is a true victor in life” (*World Tribune*, September 7, 2001, p. 9). She is on her own path of victory now. I feel as if a dream has come true, not only for Valerie, but also for so many of us. From the depths of my heart, I want to thank all the people who have made this dream possible. ☸



**Nine-year-old Valerie (left) walks with SGI President Ikeda during his 1992 visit to Vienna, Austria. Today, she is among the first class of students at Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, founded by the SGI president.**

Seikyo Press

## Accepting Others Through Accepting Myself

Nineteen-year-old Valerie Melichar traveled half-way around the globe in search of a unique education—and found herself. She is becoming the change she wishes to see in the world.

BY VALERIE MELICHAR

**T**he past nineteen years of my life growing up in Austria have been very comfortable, protected years. I grew up in a peaceful country and Buddhist household with great parents who always respected my feelings and opinions. I have a wonderful sister and caring friends who always support me. All my life I felt loved and secure.

Nevertheless I have often felt that my life lacked any purpose. I knew I wanted to contribute to the society I was living in but did not know how I could do this. The political situation in Austria and the mentality of many Austrians often made me very angry. In October 1999, the new government was elected. The Austrian Liberal Party (“Freiheitliche Partei Oesterreich”)

gained a great number of votes in that election, in fact they received nearly thirty percent of the total votes. This was very frustrating to me because this party stands for many ideas I cannot accept. Their campaign had been very racist and intolerant, trying to arouse the Austrians' negative feelings toward foreigners and refugees. Many of their slogans suggested that the foreigners were the ones committing the majority of crimes, dealing drugs and the like. What disappointed me most though, was not the fact that it was possible to have a campaign like this in Austria, but that it appealed to many Austrians.

## Are all crimes committed by foreigners?

I had many conversations and arguments with people who did not share my opinions and usually I felt helpless and frustrated afterward. I saw that my anger, my crying and my frustration did not change a thing. I felt paralyzed. I knew I wanted to fight injustice, prejudice, racism and intolerance, but I did not know how or where to start.

One day I called the hotline of this particular party and talked to one of the employees for about half an hour. I was just asking him questions and I tried to stay very calm. I asked him why one of the party's brochures made it sound like all the crimes in Austria were committed by foreigners. At the end of our conversation, the man understood the point I was trying to make and apologized to me for the ambiguous way his party's brochure was worded. He even asked me if I would like it if the party leader, Mr. Haider, called me to talk further about my concerns. I said I would very much like to speak to him. Then I had to tell the man my age (I was seventeen at the time — not a potential voter) and that was the last I heard from them.

Again I felt helpless and frustrated because even if I had the potential to create a change in my environment, I was not old enough and not educated enough to be taken seriously. I was a member of a political youth organization for a while, but the main focus of this group was to organize parties and events; we did not really get involved in the political

situation of the country.

This August I came to Soka University of America as one of the first 120 students of this university. My first few days here were very hard and very confusing. For the first time in my life, I found myself in an environment where there was no one I knew and no one I could run to for comfort when I felt insecure. This situation caused me to think a lot about myself. I realized that many of the things I wanted to fight were actually in me. I acted unjustly at times, I had great fears, and often my insecurity turned into anger or aggression.

During my first week at the university, Arun Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's grandson, gave a lecture on nonviolence. One of the things he said made the problem I was having much clearer for me. He said that if we want to change anything in this world, we have to start by changing ourselves, because the violence in the world is the reflection of the violence within us. I realized I could never achieve anything if I felt weak or if I was led by a negative energy such as anger. For me the only possibility of converting this negative energy into a positive energy that can enable me to create value is through daimoku and education.

## I want to live a contributive life

Daisaku Ikeda says, "The mission of Soka University of America is to foster a steady stream of global citizens committed to living a contributive life." I think this is the key to my frustration: I want to live a contributive life. I think the education I will receive here at SUA will be the foundation I need to reach this goal. Before trying to change things, I have to understand how this world works. I am still not sure in what way I will be able to contribute to society, but I feel a very strong energy within every single student of this university. I think that we are all very courageous and determined to do everything we can to promote peace and justice in this world. It truly encourages and motivates me to be surrounded by people who are constantly striving to improve themselves and their environment.

One of the problems we have here at SUA though, is that we are still quite secluded from the



Jean Pritchard

*Valerie has found new friends among the other students at SUA. "I am taking a different approach toward friendship now. I do not have to prove anything to anyone."*

community. There is a shuttle bus that will take us to local markets or stores, but other than that we spend most of our time on campus. I think this can easily cause us to forget that not everyone shares the same spirit and the same values we have. I think it is important for us to keep in mind that it is much harder to stand up for one's beliefs when one is confronted by people who oppose and criticize them. I hope at SUA we will be able to acquire the strength and determination we need to overcome any obstacle in our way. I know that I will never give up this fight as long as I have faith in the Gohonzon. My Buddhist practice helps me to believe in myself and to overcome my weaknesses.

In the past month, I have realized a lot about myself while I was chanting. When I first came here, it was very hard for me to bond and create friendships with the other students. I was starting to feel very unhappy with myself, because I thought there must be something wrong with me since I could not open up to others. I now think the root of the difficulties I had related to honesty. I realized that if I could not be honest with myself and accept myself, it would be impossible for me to be honest with other people. Once I realized this, I started to chant about it and I began to feel more open.

I've met so many amazing people that I am now able to call my friends. Already I feel a strong connection to many of them. I feel that I am taking a different approach toward friendship now. For the first time, I do not feel I have to prove anything to anyone nor do I feel inferior or superior to anyone. I



Jean Pritchard

*Valerie and her mother, Elisabeth, share a moment on the SUA campus before Elisabeth returns to Vienna.*

think the reason for this is that I have stopped making these judgments about other people.

This small example in my own life has shown me that sometimes a difficult situation is necessary for change to happen. The change for the better in me was only possible when I was away from the security of my home, thrown into a completely new culture and environment. I have now made the determination that I do not want to let myself become discouraged, no matter what difficulties I face. Instead I want to use obstacles as the catalyst for improvement in myself and in my environment. If I manage to do this, I am converting negative energy, like anger or fear, into the positive energy I need to promote peace and justice wherever I am. ☸

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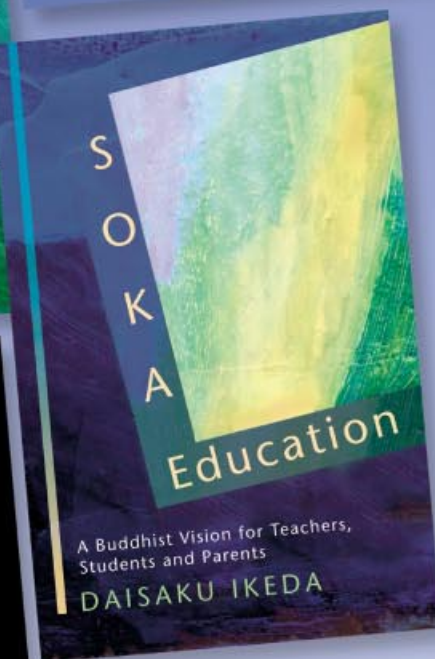
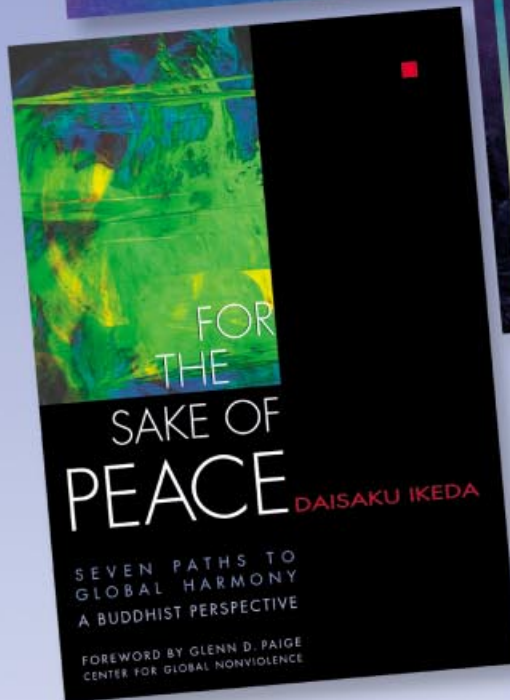
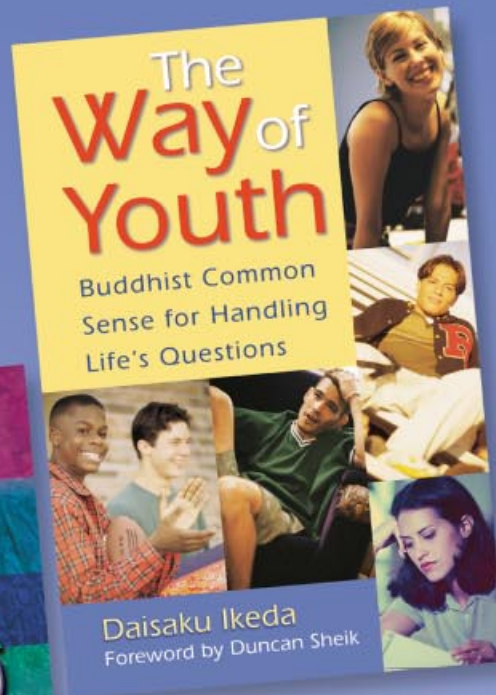
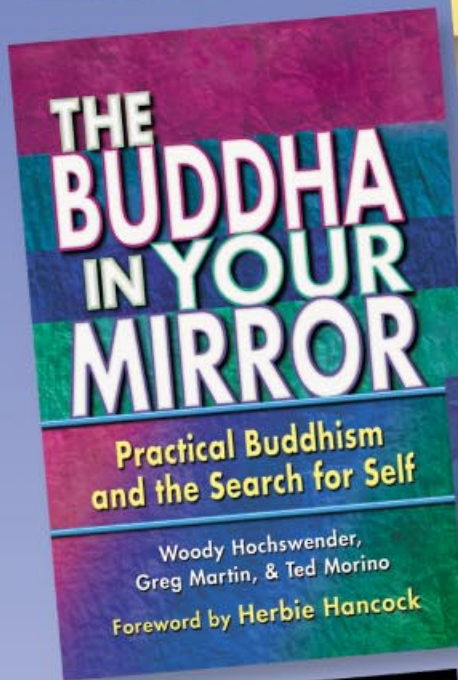
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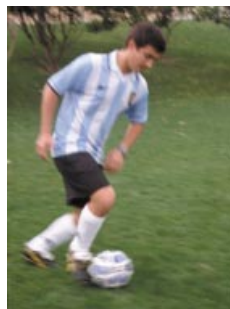
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