



**FEATURE ON
OVERCOMING
DEPRESSION
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**Terri Johnson
conquers
chronic
depression.
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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 7 SPEECH—PART 1

It All Depends on How We Live

‘Everything depends on the kind of commitment and resolve with which we live our lives,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘Those who lack determination are vulnerable to defeat. Those who lack commitment lead sad, empty lives.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 1st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 7.

Happy New Year! Congratulations on kicking off the new century with the 1st Headquarters Leaders Meeting! Everything depends on people. Buddhism is spread and history is created by people. Everything comes down to people. This is a fundamental point.

The Soka Gakkai has ushered in the 21st century with countless visitors calling on

us to pay their respects and share their good wishes. Our wonderful alliance of Soka is more lively and high-spirited than ever.

I have received messages from more than a dozen world leaders, including former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, voicing their hope that we might meet and talk together

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 4



Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda encourages women's leaders at the 1st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, Jan. 7.

SGI GENERAL DIRECTOR WADA VISITS LOS ANGELES

Our Sincerity Determines Everything

By MARK KORAL

LOS ANGELES CORRESPONDENT

On the morning of Jan. 8, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada and SGI North America Bureau Director Norimasa Saito arrived in Los Angeles for a nine-day stay in the United States. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima commented that despite the long flight, “Mr. Wada was in great spirits and extremely happy. It was as though he had returned home.”

At each meeting Mr. Wada attended in Southern California, he reminded everyone of the importance and power of the basics of faith, practice and study. He



SGI General Director Wada encourages Southern California Zone leaders that ‘what is important is our sincere heart.’

quoted Nichiren Daishonin, who said, “There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 681), and explained that “doing gongyo and chanting is not an obligation—

nor is working to advance kosen-rufu. It is for our own sake and for our own happiness.”

On Jan. 16, Mr. Wada attended a Southern California Zone leaders meeting held at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center with more than 1,700 in attendance. General Director Nagashima introduced a video of SGI President Ikeda's powerful speech at the 51st Headquarters Leaders Meeting held in November of last year (Dec. 15 and 22, 2000, *World Tribune*). Following the video, Mr. Wada shared that President Ikeda is in excellent health. On Jan. 2, he turned 73 years old.

PLEASE SEE WADA, 3



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Southern California Zone leaders enjoy a Jan. 16 meeting with SGI General Director Eiichi Wada at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center.

Devil King of the Sixth Heaven

Back to the Basics

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

There are natural, protective forces inherent in one's life and the universe that Buddhism explains to be functions of the Mystic Law or expressions of the Buddha's life. These are sometimes described as the Buddhist gods, as Nichiren Daishonin does in "The Treatment

of Illness": "The fundamental nature of enlightenment manifests itself as Brahma and Shakra" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1113). The Daishonin's Buddhism expounds the direct way to fill our existence with this protection — and how this protection ultimately comes from within our lives.

At the same time, however, there is also a destructive force inherent in our own lives and the universe that emerges to oppose our determined efforts to manifest the power of the Mystic Law or the Buddha's life. This "fun-

damental darkness manifests itself as the devil king of the sixth heaven," the Daishonin teaches (WND, 1113).

The word *king* in the term devil king points to the severity of this destructiveness. In the Latter Day of the Law in which we live, the devil king is said to dominate a society where Buddhism is not yet widely upheld. The devil king is, in other words, the original egoistic desire coming from deep within human life that seeks to control other people for the sake of selfish profit — a diabolic form of desire.

Upon presenting the Mystic

Law for the sake of the people's happiness, the Daishonin was thus immediately persecuted by people poisoned by the devil king's destructiveness. In the history of the SGI, the three presidents — Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda — all followed suit; they met with serious persecution because of their unsparing dedication to spreading the Mystic Law. Today, High Priest Nikken and his priesthood are functioning as the devil king of the sixth heaven in trying to confuse people about the SGI and the Daishonin's true teachings. It

is certainly time for us in turn to follow suit as well; we have to take responsibility for protecting this Buddhism and the people from this devilish function.

In short, the devil king of the sixth heaven is that function which fiercely opposes each of us in our effort to create lasting happiness. SGI President Ikeda thus repeatedly stresses that life is a continuous struggle against evil, within and without, and that Buddhism is concerned with winning.

Next week: Ted Morino on Buddhism vs. the Devil King

THE COURAGE TO REACH OUT

DANNY'S JOURNAL

By DANNY NAGASHIMA
SGI-USA GENERAL DIRECTOR

I hope everyone is in high spirits and enjoying the new year!

I recently traveled to Seattle to participate in the newly formed Pacific Northwest Zone's kickoff at the Seattle Culture Center on Jan. 6, with more than 1,000 people in attendance.

At the meeting, I introduced one gentleman who had left the SGI in 1990 to practice with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Earlier that day, he had told me he hadn't understood the significance of the temple issue at the time, but he continually chanted to understand. Recently, he started to feel like something was missing in the temple, so he began to study Nichiren Daishonin's writings to find an answer.

It was at that time that an SGI member called him. She and another member had been chanting for him to return to the SGI. This gentleman was so encouraged after they talked that he decided to attend the kickoff that day. The Pacific Northwest Zone members gave him a warm welcome, and he mentioned



Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima greets members outside the San Francisco Culture Center, Jan. 7.

to me that he felt as if he had come home.

This is such a beautiful example of the difference we can make in others' lives by having the courage to reach out. I strongly believe there are many people waiting for us to take such compassionate action. If we can develop this type of courage, our movement will grow immeasurably.

The next day, I participated in a leaders meeting for the newly formed Northern California Zone. To my surprise, there were more than 1,000

people in attendance there as well. These members have returned to the heart of SGI President Ikeda's visit to San Francisco on Oct. 5, 1960, one of his first steps toward worldwide kosen-rufu. They are determined to stand up, fulfilling their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth to propagate and share the joy of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

On Jan. 18, I attended the annual observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday at the King International Chapel at Morehouse College in At-

lanta. Immediately following this ceremony was the opening of our "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition in the lobby of the chapel. All 1,000 students who attended the observance walked past it, and many of them stayed for the opening.

Baron Segar, director of the Southeast Region of UNICEF, shared that he was deeply moved by the exhibit and expressed his desire to cooperate more with SGI-USA in the future. It was a wonderful opening and I thank all the members

in Atlanta who worked so hard to make this event a tremendous success!

Let's continue to advance steadily this year, enjoying growth in every aspect of our lives. Please take good care of your health, and I hope to see you soon! **WT**

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Southern California BSG Meets

By **JAMIE LIPTAN**
STAFF WRITER

More than 250 Southern California Zone youth gathered for a Behind-the-Scenes Group (BSG) Kickoff at the Santa Monica Community Center, Jan. 21. BSG includes the Byakuren, Soka Group and Gajokai — youth activity groups that support SGI-USA activities.

In his message for the meeting, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima wrote: "I feel that today is a great celebration of joy, celebrating all of you, the young men and young women, who through your behind-the-scenes efforts, have ensured the safety of our precious members and the success of every activity. Thank you so much!"

Following SGI-USA Youth Leader James Herrmann's inspiring lecture on the mentor-and-disciple relationship, the audience enjoyed the latest video speech from SGI Presi-



Southern California Zone youth gather at a Behind-the-Scenes Group Kickoff, Jan. 21.

dent Ikeda at the 51st Headquarters Leaders Meeting and remarkable experiences from

two members about revolutionizing their lives through their BSG activities.

Each of the BSG groups presented a humorous skit about their activity group:

"Charlie's Byakuren Angels" defeated their own fundamental darkness with faith, practice and study; the Soka Group presented a picture of the "Soka Gakkai Galactic" on May 3, 3001; and the Gajokai offered a parody of *Star Wars*, with "Gajosky Walker" out-dueling the influence of "Darth Temple."

One focus of the meeting was propagation, which has been emphasized by the national youth leaders this year. "We often ask how we can contribute to the Soka Spirit movement," said SGI-USA Gajokai Leader Eric Freedman. "One of the best ways is to share Buddhism with our friends. When we open our hearts to others in this way, we increase the Buddha's forces to combat evil. This is a natural extension of our BSG activities, which exist to protect the members."

After the meeting, there were refreshments, lively discussions and entertainment from a Gajokai rock band. **WT**

FROM WADA, I

Mr. Wada commented that simply sharing the power of this Buddhism with others — the act of conducting dialogue with friends, relatives and all the people around us — is itself propagation. "The Daisshonin explains that the act of *shakubuku* is just like planting the seed of Buddhahood in the field — in the heart of other people's lives," he said. "This seed will someday bud and bear fruit with the support of sunlight and water. And depending on the type of tree of course, some will bear fruit at

an earlier stage than others. But whenever the bud appears, we should take very good care of it. That's how we raise capable individuals."

Mr. Wada went on to recount the early days of his Buddhist practice. "I embraced the Gohonzon on May 18, 1954," he said. "I started practicing because I was very sick, and within 100 days of practice I was able to recover from my illness. This was my first benefit.

"The first time I met President Ikeda was in 1955. On that occasion, he shared two points with me. First, he told me: 'You

will encounter various obstacles and adversities in life. However, please never leave the Gohonzon.' His second point was to 'please follow a good senior both in times of joy as well as sadness.' He told me never to remain alone in my practice."

Mr. Wada shared his feeling that for too long, human beings have been abused, enslaved and made tools for the sake of religion, politics, education and economics. "We are now enacting a struggle, together with President Ikeda," he said, "to reverse this relationship so that these human institutions come to exist for their true purpose — to serve the happiness of the people.

"In order to change the world in this way," he continued, "we must struggle against the abuse of existing authority. Through our efforts at propagation, we can expand our realm of friendship, trust and happiness throughout our immediate surroundings. What is important is our sincere heart. Our sincerity determines everything." **WT**

SGI Donates to Relief Efforts in India Quake

A deadly earthquake struck western India on Jan. 26. The Soka Gakkai responded with an immediate donation for those left homeless and injured. A total of \$42,600 was donated to the Embassy of India in Tokyo and to complement this, a further \$17,100 has been donated by the SGI through the Indian organization, Bharat Soka Gakkai, for the rapid local purchase of medical supplies, food and other emergency relief items.

Mr. Akashi Ouchi, the local coordinator of the SGI in India, is now in Ahmedabad undertaking an assessment of emergency needs. He reports that the scale of the devastation is hard to imagine. "Sadly this country often suffers natural disasters, so our members have developed expertise in the area of emergency relief," he says. "We will do everything we can to alleviate even a

small part of the terrible suffering here." Donations of emergency supplies are also being collected at SGI centers in Mumbai (Bombay) and New Delhi.

In past disasters such as the Orissa cyclone in 1999, the Soka Gakkai donated funds and Bharat Soka Gakkai members collected emergency supplies, undertook assessment missions and delivered assistance directly to the affected areas, as well as working in cooperation with agencies based close to disaster sites.

SGI-USA members interested in providing assistance are encouraged to contact the American Red Cross or other reputable agencies in their area. At this time, relief organizations in the United States are requesting financial donations rather than specific supplies.

Information courtesy of SGI Office of Public Information



More than 1,700 leaders gather at the Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center to hear SGI General Director Eiichi Wada's encouragement.

FROM SPEECH, I

in the near future.

The year 2001 will no doubt see even more distinguished guests from around the globe visiting us here at Hachioji.

A genuine Buddhist continues striving for kosen-rufu to the very end.

The famous 19th-century German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann once visited Hachioji. Schliemann is renowned for his discovery of the ruins of the ancient city of Troy in Turkey and many other important archaeological finds. Many of you may be familiar with his name.

Schliemann was determined to realize the dreams of his youth. He was resolved to achieve them without fail. And the world knows him as someone who did precisely that. His many significant archaeological discoveries rewrote the history books. [Schliemann, who was captivated as a young child by the story of the Trojan War, was 8 years old when he vowed to one day find the ruins of the ancient city of Troy. He suffered much hardship as a youth, including the

death of his mother and poverty. Unable to continue formal education because of his circumstances, he went to work at a young age. In his spare time, he studied foreign languages on his own and became fluent in more than a dozen, including English, French, Dutch and Spanish. After the age of 40, he finally began his archaeological work and succeeded in proving that the civilizations of Troy and Mycenae actually existed.]

Schliemann visited Hachioji on June 19, 1865, during the period when Japan was undergoing its transition from the Edo Period to the Meiji Period. Schliemann later described his visit to Hachioji as having been particularly interesting. He wrote his impressions of this area: "Beautiful fields stretched in all directions. And the view from the hills was even more lovely."

Six years after that visit, in 1871, Schliemann began excavation work on the ancient site of Troy. That was the same year that first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was born.

People around the world applauded Schliemann on the re-



The 1st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting is held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 7.

alization of his lifelong dream. However, among the scholars of his homeland, Germany, there were many jealous of his success, and they launched a storm of criticism and attack upon him. Such is human nature. Though he made wonderful discoveries, he was criticized. This is the way of the world.

The attacks also extended to his wife, Sophia, who assisted him in his work. The criticism took such a toll on her emotionally that this strong woman finally fell ill and took to her bed.

Her husband supported and encouraged her: "You must not let our present difficulties get you down.... These wretched attacks will vanish like chimney smoke. It is the work of the jealous scholar, the closed, established circle! To the public, in all countries, we are heroes, revered, leading the most exciting and adventurous lives."

His words implied: "What do scholars who are cloistered in a closed, narrow world know? They're just strutting around on ground where they stand unopposed! Let's not be concerned by their criticisms! Isn't the world applauding us?" In this way, Schliemann strove to cheer up his wife.

Everything depends on the kind of commitment and resolve with which we live our lives. Those who lack determination are vulnerable to defeat. Those who lack commitment lead sad, empty lives.

Schliemann never rested for a moment while alive. This no doubt was the creed by

which he lived.

"I will strive without rest! Others can do or say what they like! I will never stop moving forward! Those who wish to stop and rest can do so! I will continue to advance to the very end! Those who want to complain can please themselves! I will walk the path I have chosen, no matter what!" A person who possesses this kind of unshakable conviction is a true practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Faith lies not in simply reciting the sutra. Nor does it lie in eloquence or being skilled at giving guidance. A genuine Buddhist, no matter what happens, pursues the way of faith, practice and study as taught by the Daishonin to the very end—a person who continues striving earnestly for kosen-rufu. Such conduct is the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

The outcome of our lives is determined by the final chapter. Therefore, it all comes down to whether the last phase of our lives is free of regrets and shines with magnificent brilliance like a beautiful sunset. Just as a lovely sunset portends a sunny day tomorrow, our life's closing chapter will determine the nature of our next existence.

Only the SGI is practicing Buddhism exactly as the Lotus Sutra teaches.

The sunsets in Hachioji are glorious. "The sunset glow fills the sky and nightfall descends..." goes the famous Japanese children's song "The Sunset Glow." This song is said to be about Hachioji sunsets. I

have visited Ongata, the area closely connected to the song. [Ongata in Hachioji City is where Uko Nakamura, who wrote the lyrics, hailed from. Today it is renowned as "Village of the Sunset Glow."]

Once, during one of our discussions, Vice Chancellor Arthur K. C. Li of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and his wife, Diana, asked me about the most beautiful sunset I had ever seen. While the sunsets over Manila Bay in the Philippines are famous, there is a place in Japan that has magnificent sunsets, too. I replied without hesitation, "Not everyone may agree with me, but I find the sunsets in Hachioji, the site of Soka University, the most beautiful of all."

Hachioji is a wonderful name. Though this may not directly have anything to do with the origin of the city's name, the Chinese characters for Hachioji, meaning eight princes, also appear in the Lotus Sutra. I have spoken of this before.

A Buddha called Sun Moon Bright is mentioned in the "Introduction" chapter of the sutra. This Buddha, endowed with wisdom that illuminates all living beings like the sun, the moon and a bright light, had eight princely sons. [According to the sutra, there were 20,000 Buddhas, appearing one after another, named Sun Moon Bright. The last of these Buddhas was a king before he left the secular world and had eight sons.]

The eight princes had deeply meaningful names—each corresponding to different kinds of wisdom: 1) Having Intention

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Working Together

From This Speech:

In the present age, only the SGI is practicing the Buddhist teachings exactly as the sutra teaches. It is important to advance on the path of growth, the path of happiness, by working together with our fellow members in the SGI organization, as we each strive to develop and polish ourselves. Being on our own might seem very free, but it can lead us to becoming selfish and complacent, and ultimately straying from the path that is in rhythm with the law of life.

- 1) Why is it important to our happiness to work together with other SGI members? Why can't we just become happy practicing on our own?
- 2) The SGI membership is extremely diverse. What does it mean to the world that we are able to work together and create amazing things in this organization?
- 3) How does working with other members help us to polish ourselves? Are we able to polish ourselves in ways we would otherwise not?
- 4) How has your practice with your district or with the SGI organization in general helped you to grow as a human being?
- 5) How can practicing on our own lead us to become "selfish and complacent"?

(wisdom); 2) Good Intention (excellent wisdom); 3) Immeasurable Intention (boundless wisdom); 4) Jeweled Intention (priceless wisdom); 5) Increased Intention (superior wisdom); 6) Cleansed of Doubt Intention (doubt-freeing wisdom); 7) Echoing Intention (eloquent wisdom); and 8) Law Intention (Dharma wisdom).

Let us, too, demonstrate these outstanding virtues of the eight princes, as we dance onto the stage of the new century.

The Lotus Sutra states, "Dignity and virtue came easily to them [the eight princes], and each presided over a four-continent realm" (p. 15). The eight princes, if you like, ruled the world. Together with their father—the heart and mind of parent and child uniting as one—they renounced their royal positions and honors in society and earnestly and humbly devoted themselves to Buddhist practice. They made many good causes in the company of countless Buddhas. [The sutra states, "They [the eight princes] ... planted good roots in the company of a thousand, ten thousand Buddhas" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 15).]

In the present age, only the SGI is practicing the Buddhist teachings exactly as the sutra teaches. It is important to advance on the path of growth, the path of happiness, by working together with our fellow members in the SGI organization, as we each strive to develop and polish ourselves. Being on our own might seem very free, but it can lead us to becoming selfish and complacent, and ultimately straying from the path that is in rhythm with the law of life.

You can tap your wisdom freely and fully through courage in faith.

In Buddhism, eight means to open. The nuance is to tap, to reveal, to develop.

The wisdom of the eight princes resides within each of us. Please tap those functions of wisdom freely and fully through courageous faith. Please develop your wisdom, your good fortune and inner state of life. And please foster an endless flow of capable people, opening up the path of kosen-rufu. This is the focus of our "Hachioji Revolution."

The Daishonin writes, "Names have the virtue of never failing to be substantiated" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1274). I ask our leaders to stand up with fresh resolve and, in a manner that is worthy of the name Hachioji, show such splendid actual proof that this area's presence will be known throughout the world.

Here in Hachioji, there are a total of 21 universities, including our Soka University. When we first established Soka University here 30 years ago, there were only a few universities. Some people ridiculed us for building a university "out in the sticks." Now, however, Hachioji has become a university town, one that will lead the way for the

world in the 21st century. I am confident that Soka University—this oasis of Soka education—will produce more and more bright, talented people filled with promise who will make their way into the wide world.

To be continued in the Feb. 16 issue

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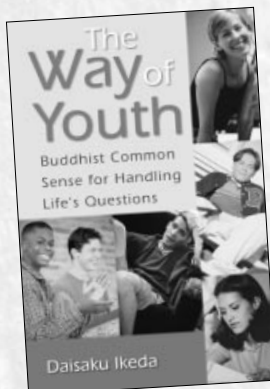
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EXPERIENCE — TERRI JOHNSON, NEW YORK CITY

Clearing the Dark Clouds of Depression

Based on her Buddhist practice, Terri Johnson overcomes chronic depression through therapy and medication.

I can remember being depressed and afraid of life as early as age 3. By 13, I was contemplating suicide, and at 17, I made an attempt. Though I had some brief experiences with psychotherapy, it helped very little other than to confirm that I had a problem with chronic depression.

One constant love in my life, however, was art. I loved to draw and designed my first Chanel-type suit in the third grade. I was so proud of its unusual colors, olive green with turquoise blue trim.

I went to college and received a fine arts degree in fashion design. Unfortunately, the real world inserted its ugly head again, and I couldn't get a job in my field, even though I had graduated with honors. My first job was in the garment center, as a secretary, in 1974.

Around that time, I was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I was intrigued and decided to chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo to overcome my depression.

Within my first week of practice, I had many obstacles, including losing my job and coming down with laryngitis. But with the encouragement of many members, I continued because I was told that if I chanted, I could definitely become happy. I learned early on that obstacles are sources of growth and must be challenged.

My biggest target was my underlying depression and thoughts of suicide that hadn't yet been cured by therapy. As a cause to change my illness, I chanted and participated in many SGI activities. I took responsibility within the organization, shared Buddhism with others, and danced and sewed costumes for various SGI-USA culture festivals. Much of this I did in the midst of depression, fighting tears and my fear of being around people.

There were other times when I could not chant at all. I experienced long periods of isolation, where for a month I would not answer the phone or leave the house. During these times, I remember being told that if I was too depressed to do gongyo, simply chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo even once or a few times would be a powerful cause toward my happiness. Though the days were dark, I eventually would come out of the depression

enough to get back to work.

In 1981, I finally began working as a fashion designer, which for me was "happiness," but my old friend depression was once again consuming me, and I could not handle it alone.

I started therapy again, chanting the whole time to overcome this chronic depression. But my life fell completely apart, and I ended up in the psychiatric wing of a hospital for a month. I remember asking a friend in faith whom I trusted why this was happening if my Buddhist practice was so strong. She encouraged me, saying my life was strong enough to deal with the problem and eradicate it. I wanted to believe her, though it was hard. Still, I managed to return to the prime point of why I began practicing: I simply had to overcome my depression.

When the hospital released me, they referred me to a new doctor, a psychiatrist, for outpatient care. My first question to her was "Why, of all the times I struggled with depression, had this bout been so serious that I ended up in the hospital?"

Her reply sounded very Buddhist: "Because no one ever found the true cause of your illness."

At that moment, I knew that my Buddhist practice had brought this new therapist and me together. I felt she would be instrumental in helping me finally get better.

Shortly after I was released from the hospital, I lost my design job and spent several years working as a temporary secretary, though I really hated the work. This made me even more depressed.

My life seemed an endless cycle of chanting for design jobs that I could not get, punctuated by going in and out of the hospital. Many doctors told me to give up my dream of being a designer, since I previously had only one job in my field. They believed that the reason I was depressed was because I was reaching for the impossible. Even my parents were telling me to get a nice, sensible job with a retirement plan because the highs and lows of the garment industry were too stressful.

I reminded myself, "The point of practicing Buddhism is to achieve the impossible."

I was in and out of the hospital — 10 times to be exact. Each stay was shorter. In the mornings, I would get up early and go into one



Terri Johnson in her art studio in New York next to her painting titled 'Peony.'

of the lounges to chant before the other patients woke up. My last hospital stay was for five days. Upon my release, I vowed never to return...and I haven't. That was more than 15 years ago.

When not in the hospital, I continued to do SGI activities, even though much of the time I was suffering great internal pain. Chanting was not easy. I felt like staying home curled up in a little ball hiding from the world. One treasured memory I have is making the costumes for a culture festival in Texas. I did not attend the festival because I was in the hospital again, but I received a gift from SGI President Ikeda for my efforts. I was astonished that he recognized me, because I valued myself so little.

As I chanted about my feelings, I experienced a turning point. I realized that I equated my self-worth with the work I did. I loved working as a designer, so temporary work was excruciating for me. My challenge was to value my life no matter what work I did.

A quote from Nichiren Daishonin helped me understand the value of my life: "When deluded,

lunge these thoughts.

My therapist also helped me view my illness and my Buddhist practice differently. I thought that because I practiced Buddhism, my goal should be to get well without medication; that my faith wasn't strong unless I could overcome the illness without it. So I chanted to change my brain chemistry.

Every time I went to the doctor, I would ask when I could stop the medication. But over a period of years, I realized that the medication was what I needed to be balanced chemically — it did not make me a weak person.

While I was chanting one evening, I realized that my prayer about my brain chemistry had been answered. Because of scientific advancement, the correct medication for balancing my brain chemistry was now available to me. It occurred to me that I had been seeking the answer to my prayer based on a narrow perspective.

In 1985, I got work again as a designer for a line of clothing sold nationwide. Though the job lacked creativity, it was a stepping stone. I continued to struggle for years, determined to be more creative and use my design skills. I also began to work as a fine artist.

Four-and-a-half years ago, I got a break and landed a great job designing sweaters for a company that produces an exclusive line sold nationwide through Home Shoppers Network television. I am also in the process of finalizing the details of a line of sweaters with my own label. In addition to this, my paintings have been shown and sold in galleries in New York City and Washington, D.C.

The joy of my job does not leave me problem-free. I still have an occasional day when I get depressed. I can feel the depression coming on the same way you might feel a cold coming on. The difference is, now I know how to manage my condition, and I know it's not going to last forever. I give myself 24 hours to feel down as a way to acknowledge, instead of suppress, my feelings. Then I get in front of the Gohonzon to chant. Chanting gives me the wisdom to know if I can challenge the depression with my practice alone or if I need the additional support of a doctor's visit and/or a medication adjustment.

Since I began practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism 26 years ago, the biggest benefit I have received is that I wake up every day happy to be me and alive. I know I have overcome my

PLEASE SEE JOHNSON, 7

Photo by CAROL BARNSTEAD

EXPERIENCE — KORY JAMES, LOS ANGELES

Free From the Cycle of Depression and Suicide

Kory James overcomes his depression and chants to change his family's mental health in the 'preceding seven generations and the seven generations that follow.'

Based on my family's mental health history, I feel I was genetically predisposed to suicidal thoughts and depression. I was 9 when my mother experienced severe depression after she divorced my father, an elder minister in the Jehovah's Witness religion. She had believed that her marriage was going to last forever and could not cope with it breaking up; doctors told us later that she had a bio-chemical disorder and was prescribed anti-depressants for years afterward.

When I was 19, my father committed suicide; he had experienced mental problems during the last six months of his life. After his death, I found out that he had been diagnosed with a chemical imbalance and that he had refused to take any medication. For many years I blamed myself for not being able to save his life.

I believe my own depression was triggered full force around age 11, when I accidentally hurt my friend while playing on a teeter-totter. My friend's parents were extremely angry and my mother sided with them. Afterward, hopelessness and depression consumed my life; not only did I feel miserable about hurting my friend, I was not allowed to ever see him again or bring closure to this accident.

Being raised as a Jehovah's Witness, I was discouraged from becoming too close with other children because they were "worldly" and part of an evil system that was going to be destroyed at Armageddon. As a result, I never made many friends.

FROM JOHNSON, 6

chronic depression because of my Buddhist practice — my psychiatrist can vouch for my stable condition. Without this practice, I sincerely believe I would not be alive today.

When I chant, I overflow with appreciation for the Gohonzon and for my life. I want to thank all the people who have encouraged me throughout my practice, and I pledge to create the kind of life that will encourage others to achieve their impossible dreams. **WT**

For much of my childhood I felt alone, an outcast.

Another major depression hit me at age 17 after I moved in with my dad and I realized I was gay. This went against everything I was raised to believe as a Jehovah's Witness. I tried for a while to hide from it, but couldn't and began to believe that I did "have a black heart" as the Bible says homosexuals do.

At 18, I attempted suicide. I believed I was just going to die at Armageddon anyway, so I might as well take care of it now. I was so tired of living a lie and feeling worthless.

When I woke up three days later, my sister was sitting on the side of my hospital bed. She asked how I was; I just cried, wishing I had died.

Soon after I was released from the hospital, I made a determination to never again allow a religion or anyone else's ideas to cause me to deny who I was. I began to embrace my true self.

But this was just the beginning. I had gotten in touch with a major problem that caused me pain but I still had to deal with the fear, guilt and depression I felt about being gay and abandoning the religion in which I was raised.

Somehow I managed to get through my father's suicide and my identity crisis by hiding my depression and pretending to be the life of the party wherever I went. But I knew I was my own worst enemy. I was afraid of myself, afraid that the negative part of me would kill me one night when I was weak.

As a defense mechanism to hide from my reality, I began to live recklessly. I had gotten into a relationship with a girl that I had met at a party one night. Though she knew I was gay, she didn't care. I moved in with her and all we did most of the time was have wild parties until police showed up.

By age 24, I knew I could no longer deal with my depression alone and had to face my life. I began to see a clinical psychologist who prescribed anti-depressants for me. I didn't like how they made me feel — actually, I didn't feel anything. It was as if I was just existing, as if I was emotionless, so I just stopped taking them after a few months. I also stopped seeing the therapist.



Photo by MARTIN COHEN

Kory says, "Through chanting, not only have I transformed my own depression, I have made a determination to create great change in my family. Already my mother's health has turned around."

In the early '80s, my Aunt Barbara, who had a history of depression and attempted suicide, began chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo. She had overcome depression and a heart condition. She told me about Buddhism, but I never gave it much thought, figuring it was one of the many weird things that my aunt did. I later found out that even though my aunt was receiving many benefits from her practice of Buddhism, she was afraid to tell me too much about it for fear of angering my mother, still a practicing Jehovah's Witness.

In early 1986, a friend, who had just begun to chant, introduced me to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism once again. She said that if I chanted I could become happy. I thought about my Aunt Barbara and how much her life had changed. At this point, I was ready to do about anything.

I began chanting and received the Gohonzon on June 28, 1986. Eventually, as I continued to chant, I began feeling less and less suicidal. I started noticing that my depression would last for shorter and shorter periods of time.

After a few months, I got connected with other SGI members and began practicing in a district.

Three months later, I moved out of my girlfriend's place, realizing that we were just together because it was comfortable. I started being true to myself, being honest about my sexuality. Before I became a Buddhist, I re-

ally had no hope of a happy life.

One reason I found Buddhism attractive was because it emphasized absolute equality. There were no rules or tenets against being gay. It was the first and only philosophy I had found that encouraged me to accept myself and taught me that I am pure just as I am.

SGI President Ikeda has been an endless source of encouragement for me: "Just as cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms all possess their own unique qualities, each person is unique. We cannot become someone else. The important thing is that we live true to ourselves and cause the great flower of our lives to blossom. ... The Buddhist way of life is to grow each day, accomplishing more today than yesterday and more tomorrow than today" (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 109).

Through constant struggle and challenging myself every day to chant as much as possible, I was able to break free of my cycle of depression and suicidal thoughts. But this did not happen overnight, and I constantly had to remember to never give up. I also realized that suicide is a very selfish act, and I could never cause my brother the anguish of having both his father and brother commit suicide.

As I said, I believe I have a genetic predisposition to de-

pression and have decided to take responsibility to change my family karma. "Buddhism is the supreme medicine," President Ikeda writes. "The Daishonin says that the benefit of faith extends to the 'preceding seven generations and the seven generations that follow'" (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 139).

For some time now, I have been chanting for my family's health and well-being — especially my parents'. I wrote a vow as follows: "I am relentlessly showing actual proof of my amazing Buddha life! Through my compassion I have completely transformed every family member's karma — spiritually, physically and materially."

Through chanting, not only have I transformed my own depression, I have made a determination to create great change in my family. Already my mother's health has turned around.

I feel so fortunate to be part of the SGI-USA. If I hadn't started chanting when I did, I would not be alive today to know what a beautiful and exciting adventure life is. **WT**

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An Essay: Struggles and Triumphs in Challenging Depression

By LEE WOLFSON
PITTSBURGH

The following personal history is a composite of many different SGI-USA members who have been kind enough to share their struggles and triumphs in overcoming depression. This article is focused on unipolar depression, a mood disorder that is characterized by a pervasive sad or dysphoric mood, as opposed to bipolar disorder, or manic/depression, a mood disorder that includes depression and mania (euphoria).



Photo by MARK MILLER

was an ordeal. She could not concentrate and was unable to sit up straight or look at the Gohonzon. She was restless and fidgety and after less than a minute of chanting, she simply got up and went back to her chair. "What is the point of chanting when I can't formulate a single coherent thought?" Jen said to herself.

When her husband finished, he asked her what was wrong. At that moment an overwhelming feeling of fatigue and melancholy washed over her and she was close to tears. She just looked at him, unable to find the words to describe what she was experiencing. He gently took her hand and held it for a time. Jeffery looked at her and again gently asked what was wrong. The tears began to trickle down her cheeks, and Jen began to describe her problems at work, but then cut the discussion short because she really didn't want to burden him.

Jen went to bed that night at her usual time, although she knew it was quite futile. Sleep did not come easy these days, and when it did, it was fitful at best. These long night hours were the worst. The demons she thought she had vanquished when she first began her Buddhist practice returned with a vengeance. In the early morning hours when she could not return to sleep, she would find herself ruminating about all her past mistakes, real or imagined.

When the alarm finally sounded, she dragged herself from the bed, a feeling of fatigue her constant companion. She sat with her cup of coffee, her appetite gone. Darkness had descended once again into Jen's life, and even though she had successfully defeated it numerous times in the past, she had no confidence that she would be successful this time. Jeff came into the kitchen and sat down next to her and said, "I am worried that you are getting depressed again."

"What makes you say that?" Jen said softly.

"I know you, Jen. I see all the warning signs. I think you should do something about it."

"And just what would you suggest?" It was not easy for Jen to accept advice from her husband. Jeffery measured his words

carefully, but they came directly from his heart. "Do you remember when I first found out about my medical condition? I was devastated and felt so hopeless. You were the one who told me not to give up. You were the one who gave me that quote from *For Today and Tomorrow*: 'Everyone at some time suffers from illness in one form or another. The power of the Mystic Law enables us to bring forth strength to overcome the pain and suffering of sickness with courage and determination' (p. 16). And from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*: 'Namyoho-enge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle!' (p. 412). You not only encouraged me to chant, you dragged me in front of the Gohonzon every day and chanted with me. You have to know that I am prepared to do the same."

His confidence and compassion for her momentarily moved Jen's heart. How could she forget the fierce battle that she and her husband fought against his illness?

"You are probably right," she said. "I guess I didn't want to admit what was really happening. Sometimes I think it would be far easier to battle against a medical illness, instead of a mental illness."

"Why is this so different? When I got sick, we chanted together to find the best doctors, find the right medication, and to change poison into medicine. We can do the same thing now. How many times did you tell me the importance of faith and a strong determination?" By now, Jeff was warmly smiling at Jen, and in spite of herself, Jen was meekly smiling back.

"Jeff, you're right. Let's do gongyo, and when we're done, I am going to find a good psychiatrist."



Jen is not alone. In any given one-year period, 9.5 percent of the population, or about 18.8 million American adults, suffer from a depressive illness. Most people think that depression is much more widespread. Because we have all felt depressed or discouraged at some time in our lives, we assume that this temporary low mood is the same thing as a major depression. As illustrated by Jen's experience, we can see that major depression is a far more debilitating condition than a simple case of the blues. Depressive ill-

nesses often interfere with normal functioning and cause pain and suffering not only to those who have a disorder, but also to those who care about them. Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the ill person.

Even though we have come to understand unipolar depression as an illness, there are no blood tests, brain scans or other technologies available to help us make a diagnosis of major depression. The diagnosis of depression is made by carefully looking at symptoms as reported by the person and their family. According to the DSM-IV, otherwise known as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Fourth Edition), five or more of the following symptoms must be present for two weeks or longer:

- **Depressed mood.**
- **Pervasive loss of interest or inability to enjoy pleasurable activities.**
- **Appetite disturbance including loss of appetite or increased appetite.**
- **Sleep disturbance.**
- **A pervasive feeling of fatigue or low energy.**
- **Psychomotor retardation (a physical slowness) or psychomotor agitation (restless and fidgety).**
- **Feelings of worthlessness and/or excessive guilt.**
- **Diminished ability to concentrate or make decisions.**
- **Preoccupation with thoughts of death including suicidal thinking.**

If we recognize that depression is a serious and debilitating illness, then it is only natural to ask what causes this kind of depression? Common sense tells us that depression is most often brought on by life events; i.e., death of a loved one, loss of a job, divorce, etc. Life has a way of providing us with an unending supply of difficulties. It is only natural to think of depression as a reaction to stressful life events, and in many cases, this is true. If this were the entire story, then one might assume that depression only afflicts people with "weak character," or a "low life-condition." However, there have been many people of outstanding character and courage who struggled with depression, such as Abraham Lincoln and Win-

ston Churchill.

So what is the rest of the story? We know that there are numerous risk factors for predicting who might be more susceptible to depression. Depression can run in families. Evidence from studies of twins supports the existence of a genetic component. Across six studies, the average concordance rate in identical twins (40 percent) for unipolar depression is more than twice the concordance rate in fraternal twins (17 percent). The rate of depression in women (12 percent) is twice that of men (7 percent). There are numerous theories about this gender difference, but there is no consensus in the scientific community about the underlying cause.

Early life experiences also make people more vulnerable to depression. If one of your parents died when you were a child, or if you are the victim of childhood abuse you have a higher vulnerability to depression. Chronic medical conditions as well as life-threatening medical events like stroke and heart attack can also lead to depression.

Medical research has shown that depression may be related to a chemical imbalance of serotonin, one of the substances called neurotransmitters that transport signals between nerve cells in the brain. This has led to the introduction of Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil and Celexa. These serotonin specific uptake inhibitors have proved effective in treating depression with minimal side effects but have not come without controversy. Some people worry that the widespread marketing and availability of these medications may be anesthetizing large segments of our society to the healthy travails of life. This may or may not be the case, but for those like Jen who have suffered with the torment of a major depression, these new medications have been a blessing.

Another helpful way of understanding depression is to view it as a spectrum disorder. In other words, the milder manifestations of depression that we all experience have some of the same root causes as the more severe forms of clinical depression. Martin Seligman, Ph.D., in his book *What You Can Change and What You Can't* presents a compelling argument for viewing depression this way: "Mild depression is usually caused by pessimistic habits of thinking. The pessimist sees the causes of failure and rejection as permanent (It's going to last forever), pervasive (It's going to ruin my everything), and personal (It's my fault). These habitual beliefs are just that, mere beliefs. They are often false, and they are often inaccurate catastrophizing" (p. 115).

Dr. Seligman goes on to argue

that optimistic thinking may be a powerful antidote to pessimism and depression. Contained within the worldview of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a profound capacity to look at the totality of life with all of its travails and suffering and still find hope and fundamental goodness at the core. In October 1992, I wrote an essay for the *Seikyo Times* (now *Living Buddhism*) in which I demonstrated the inherent psychological strength of the Daishonin's Buddhism as reflected in his views of the self, the world and the future. The purposes of this article do not permit me to reintroduce the evidence for this. Let me just say that in all three areas, we find robust examples of the Daishonin encouraging and exhorting his disciples to embrace Buddhism with optimism and hope, despite the dire social, economic and personal circumstances of 13th-century Japan.



I had been several years since Jen last saw a psychiatrist, and she was not looking forward to seeing one again. The last time was before she began her Buddhist practice, and it had never been a satisfying experience. He prescribed a variety of antidepressant medications, which were only moderately successful, but he never seemed to have time to talk. She eventually stopped the medication and stopped seeing the psychiatrist.

Several months later, an old friend introduced Jen to Buddhism. Jen was drawn to her friend's explanation of Buddhist theories and felt that she was hearing a wonderful explication of her own view of life. However, she was skeptical that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo would somehow change her life. Nevertheless, she sat down with her friend a few days later and tried chanting.

In the short period of 15 minutes, she sensed something shifting in her life, and when they finished, she felt more relaxed and open than she had in years. Her friend connected her with the local SGI-USA organization and she began attending meetings. All the smiling people she encountered initially put her off, that is, until she listened to their experiences. She came to realize that their smiles were born of great struggles to overcome many of the same problems she was facing.

She bought a copy of *For Today and Tomorrow* by SGI President Ikeda, and the words practically leapt off the page at her. Reading his guidance was like finding an oasis in the desert. In spite of the many years of having no hope for the future, she found herself becoming more optimistic and cheerful. Each Nam-myoho-enge-kyo she chanted

felt like a powerful challenge to her deeply held feelings of worthlessness. And her interactions with other Buddhists reinforced her determination to take responsibility cheerfully for her own life. The dark curtain of depression had finally begun to lift.

Jen sailed along majestically in her life, thinking that since she had become a Buddhist, she was impervious to problems. But when her husband became ill, she felt like the world had come to a crashing halt. She could not understand how this could happen to someone who practiced sincerely. Rather than resolve her doubts, however, she gradually succumbed to the darkness of her depression once again.

Jen's husband continued to gently, but firmly encourage her in any way that he could. Mostly, he just chanted with her every chance that he had.

Several weeks went by before she got the courage to call a psychiatrist. She hoped her Buddhist practice would provide a foundation for a more rapid and full recovery, but she felt anxious and a little embarrassed when she walked into her new psychiatrist's office for the first time. Before she knew it, she was crying. The story of her husband's illness poured out of her.

After she finished telling her story, her psychiatrist carefully reviewed her symptoms and their duration. It came as no surprise to her when he told her she was in another episode of depression, but it was strangely comforting to give this darkness that had become her constant companion a name. He then explained to her that in the years since she was last treated for depression, there was important new research on the treatment of depression. He told her that combining medication with weekly psychotherapy would give her the best chance at a quick and robust recovery.

Jen left the office with a prescription for one of the new antidepressants, and a referral to see a therapist. When she arrived home, there was a message on her answering machine from her district leader reminding her about the district discussion meeting. She had not taken any calls from her leaders in faith and had not been to a district meeting in months. She was sure her depression was written all over her face and the last thing she wanted was for someone to "encourage" her, or worse yet scold her. However, tonight she was feeling more optimistic and decided to return the call. She got the schedule of activities but made no promises to attend.

She began taking her new medication that night. She experienced no immediate response to the medication, but she real-

ized it might take weeks for the medication to begin working.

A few days later she went to her first appointment with her therapist, who specialized in treating depression. Over the next few weeks, Jen explored her interpersonal relationships with her therapist. He proposed that they focus on her feelings about her husband's poor health. He suggested to her that in addition to her genetic predisposition to depression, this current episode might be about her grieving over

transforming the poison of your depression into medicine?"

Jen's favorite part of the meeting was always the lively discussions that ensued "on the way out the door." She had a lot of catching up to do. The last person she spoke to was her district leader, Sarah. She apologized for her long absence. She told Sarah that as a Buddhist, she knows she isn't supposed to feel guilty, but these feelings of guilt were what kept her from returning to the meetings. She felt like a failure as a

better therapy sessions. She also noticed that the more honestly and openly she engaged in her therapy, the more motivated she was to return to the Gohonzon and ponder the issues before her. She was also discovering new and better ways of communicating with her husband. Her feelings of resentment and grief were giving way to a renewed determination to embrace her husband and their shared life.

Jen returned to see her psychiatrist several months after her initial visit. She was feeling much better. So she asked him how long she would need to keep taking the medication. He told her that she needed to stay on her medication for at least four months if not six months from the point in time when she really began to feel better because she would be at significant risk for a relapse if she discontinued her medication sooner. Jen agreed to meet again in four months and decide then what to do about the medication.

Jen's depression is now in complete remission. She has decreased the frequency of her therapy sessions, but has decided to keep seeing her therapist for a few more monthly sessions to solidify the gains she has made in her interpersonal life. While she would rather never see the dark cloud of depression in her life ever again, she is appreciative of the gifts her suffering brought her: a more committed relationship with her husband, a fresh start with her Buddhist practice, and a deeper and more authentic connection with the members in her district.



There are many SGI-USA members who have found the optimism, hope and life force they needed to overcome depression through the practice of Buddhism alone. There are also members like Jen who may need the help of compassionate professionals, support from their families and fellow members, and a strong daily practice to return to a healthy life. **W**

Lee Wolfson is a psychologist at Western Psychiatric Clinic and Institute (WPIC), a division of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. WPIC is an international leader in the research and treatment of mood disorders. For the past 11 years, Lee has worked on several landmark studies in the treatment of depression and bipolar disorder. He has published several papers on psychotherapy and regularly presents symposia at professional meetings. He is also a founding member of the International Society of Interpersonal Psychotherapy. He has practiced Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with the SGI since 1972.

'Many people of outstanding character and courage struggled with depression, such as Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill.'

the life she would never have with her husband due to his poor health. His attempts at helping her to find her strengths in the midst of a very difficult situation felt very compatible with her beliefs as a Buddhist.

She also told him about her Buddhist practice and her involvement with the local community of SGI-USA members. He was keenly interested in her perceptions of how the practice of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo was helpful to her and about how she got along with her friends in the organization. Jen appreciated his open-mindedness and was surprised when he actually encouraged her to be consistent in her practice. He told her that maintaining consistent daily social rhythms would be helpful to her recovery. Even though he was referring to sleep, diet, exercise, etc., she immediately associated this with a consistent daily Buddhist practice.

When it came time for her next district meeting, Jen decided she was well enough to attend. Much to her delight, they warmly welcomed her back to the meeting. It was as if she had never left. The discussion that night was about turning poison into medicine. Before she knew it, she was sharing her experience of struggling with depression. Jen told the group that in spite of their encouragement, she still could not see how she could turn her depression from poison into medicine.

One of the members looked at her very intensely and said softly, "Perhaps your willingness to share and encourage us through your experience is part of the process of

Buddhist because she saw her depression as an inability to manifest "actual proof."

Jen was surprised when Sarah apologized to her. Sarah told her that she felt like she had let Jen down because she had not realized how much Jen was suffering. "When you stopped coming to meetings and wouldn't return my phone calls, I was at a loss," Sarah said. "I should have tried harder to reach you. Now that you're back, I don't want you to disappear again. Let's keep chanting together to overcome your illness." They hugged and made plans for Sarah to come over.

A few days later, Sarah came over to chant with Jen. They decided to chant for an hour. Jen wondered if she had the stamina to sit for that long, but she was determined to do her best. Over the course of the hour, she went from tears of grief to a deep sense of appreciation. In those precious moments of complete concentration, with her heart fully open and her voice deep and sonorous, the chattering of her mind quieted and true wisdom appeared. She understood, more with her heart than with her mind, that by embracing this wonderful law, she was severing the roots of her suffering. She knew that finding the right medication and a therapist she could trust and talk to was a benefit from her Buddhist practice.

How swiftly the days passed. The first signs of improvement from the medication were improved sleep and appetite. Jen felt her therapy was going very well. She noticed that when she chanted more, her daily life continued to improve and she had

FEB. 16: THE BIRTH OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

His Behavior As a Human Being

SIGNIFICANT DATES

ON MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM AND THE SGI

By JAMIE LIPTAN
STAFF WRITER



Nichiren Daishonin, founder of the Buddhism practiced by SGI members, once wrote to a believer: "The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). In other words, the Buddha's lessons aren't to be learned so much from his words, but from his actions.

It is easy to think of the Daishonin as someone who lived above the fray of everyday human suffering. While we credit him with overcoming in-

credible persecutions for the sake of posterity and leaving us a philosophy that can lead humanity to peace, we may be less able to view him as simply human, vulnerable to the same feelings of inadequacy and defeat that we are.

To do this, however, belittles the Daishonin's revolutionary life. Born of the humblest circumstances in a country plagued by war, famine and government corruption, this ordinary man created a movement that would span the globe and change millions of lives.

Despite his great accomplishments, he was very aware of his humanity. In "Letter to Misawa," he discusses the persecution he has received as a result of his vocal opposition to

the authorities: "During the past countless kalpas, I may have met the Lotus Sutra several times and aroused the aspiration for enlightenment. However, while I may have been able to bear one or two difficulties, I must have given up when faced with a succession of great obstacles. In this life, I knew that if I were truly resolved to withstand the harshest trial then I must speak out. This I did, and I encountered great persecutions one after another, just as the sutra predicts" (WND, 895).

He knew that his life, both in that existence and past ones, had been building strength to accommodate the challenges ahead, and that his overcoming of these difficulties — obstacles he had succumbed to in the past — would be the triumph of his life.

He goes on to say: "My resolution is immovable. Determined to endure any hardship,

I have fulfilled the Buddha's prediction, and I have not the slightest doubt" (WND, 895).

We can simply read this passage with the feeling of awe at the magnitude of the Daishonin's life, or we can see him as someone who, through his own practice of faith and challenging of his circumstances, created an indomitable spirit to overcome anything. His greatest wish was for his followers to achieve this same awareness.

In a lecture on the Daishonin's "The Opening of the Eyes," SGI President Ikeda writes: "With this writing, he wanted to convey his immense life state to his followers, to show them that only through waging a great life-or-death struggle can one manifest a truly immense state of life. He wanted to establish this truth for all time" (*Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 50).

Through his actions, he did just that. He proved the greatness of the Lotus Sutra through perseverance and faith, not rhetoric, refusing to compromise his conviction in the Law and in humanity. His life stands as the greatest example of human revolution.

This Feb. 16, in commemoration of the 779th anniversary of the Daishonin's birth, we can return to the fundamental spirit with which he lived; that we all, equally, can develop an immovable resolve and have not the slightest doubt in our inherent Buddhahood. **WT**

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 1, PARTS 23-24

In June 1963, the Soviet spacecraft 'Vostok 6' is launched with the 26-year-old Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova on board, the first female sent into space.

TV and radio news announced that at 3:00 p.m. on June 14, 1963, the Soviet spacecraft Vostok 5, piloted by cosmonaut Valery F. Bykovsky, had entered Earth's orbit.

The first manned space flight had taken place two years earlier, in April 1961, when Soviet cosmonaut Yuri A. Gagarin had successfully orbited the earth aboard Vostok 1, so the launching of Vostok 5 in itself did not astonish the world. But with the news about Lieutenant Colonel Bykovsky also came word that the Soviets would soon send a woman into space for the first time. This stirred the world's interest.

Then, two days later, another news flash circled the globe: at 12:30 a.m. on June 16, the Soviet spacecraft Vostok 6 was launched with a female cosmonaut on board. Her name was Valentina Vladimirovna Tereshkova, and she was a 26-year-old second lieutenant.

"It is I, Seagull!" Her bright and cheerful voice reached earth from outer space. Moscow Television showed the

interior of the cabin of Vostok 6, and conveyed the image of the young woman floating in zero gravity to people's television screens. Her face, with its lovely smile and determined expression, became known around the world.

"It is I, Seagull! I see the horizon. A light blue, a beautiful band. This is the Earth. How beautiful it is! All goes well!" "Seagull" was the call sign she used for contacting Earth. Lieutenant Colonel Bykovsky, who had begun his flight two days earlier aboard Vostok 5, used the call sign "Hawk." The purpose of these two flights was to compare the effects of long-term space flight on men and women.

Seagull and Hawk both held parallel orbits around our planet. Vostok 6 completed 48 orbits in 71 hours. It landed safely on June 19, at 11:20 a.m. Vostok 5 made a new record for time in orbit, completing 81 orbits in 119 hours and 6 minutes. It returned safely to earth on June 19 as well, at 2:06 in the afternoon.



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

The world applauded the achievement of Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, who had soared into the vast skies of freedom.

She had been an ordinary working woman. Her father, a skilled tractor driver, was killed in the Second World War when she was a child. Her mother worked hard in a textile mill, doing her best to raise three children. Growing up watching her mother work dauntlessly in spite of their many hardships, Valentina went to work at a tire factory in Yaroslavl on the banks of the Volga when she was seventeen. Later, she got a job in the same textile mill where her mother worked.

Her dream of becoming a cosmonaut was born when she heard the news of the successful first manned space flight of

cosmonaut Yuri A. Gagarin in Vostok 1. The thought of flying into space herself excited her. It became her grand dream. It was a dream shared by many young people around the world in those days.

Every young person has a dream. Having dreams and ideals is one of the privileges of youth. Far too few, however, actually realize their dreams. Once the opposing winds of difficulty begin to buffet them, many sink as quickly as a leaky boat. Only by pursuing a dream in the face of such realities, by continuing to pursue it until the very end, will that dream be realized.

At the time the Vostok 1 mission succeeded, Valentina was a member of the state aviation club and a skilled amateur parachutist. The young textile-mill worker was already beginning to weave her dream of flight. Her original reason for joining the aviation club was that she wanted to see her hometown from the sky. Her first jump took place during a rainstorm. No doubt she felt anxious and afraid. But she challenged herself and took flight, breaking through the dark clouds of fear that loomed in her heart.

From that time on, she grew more and more fascinated with the sky. It was then that she learned of Major Gagarin's space flight. Less than one year later, she had been selected for the Soviet space program. The training for cosmonauts turned out to be far tougher than she had anticipated. Of course the physical training was hard; but she also had to study many specialized subjects, including rocket science. Each day she underwent continuous, intensive training that challenged the physical and mental limits of her being.

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



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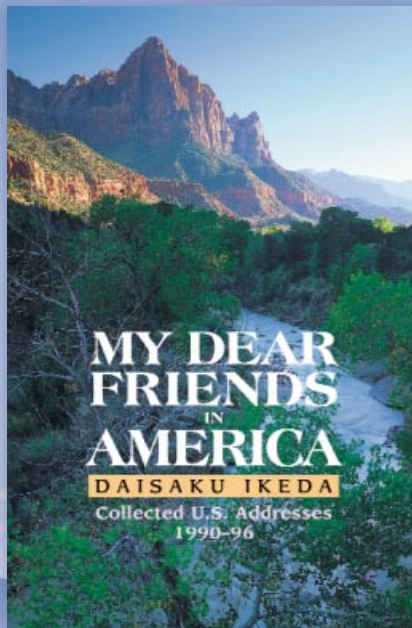
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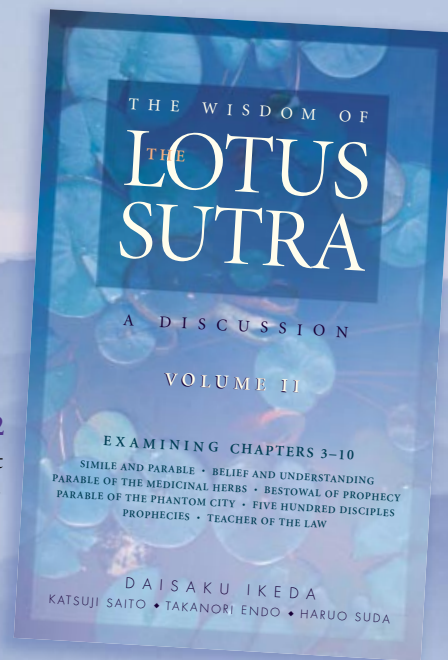
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