

World TRIBUNE

IN THIS ISSUE

SEIZE the **DAY**

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 27 SPEECH—PART 1

Giving the Greatest Gift: Friendship

'We are connected and indebted to all other living beings, so we should care for and value them,' says SGI President Ikeda. 'Introducing Nichiren Daishonin's teachings to others is the greatest gift of friendship.'

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 3rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 27.

Thank you for traveling such long distances, in such cold weather, to be here today. And a very warm welcome to our overseas members. Congratulations to you all on the remarkable advances you are making in our movement for kosen-rufu in each region!

During World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill led his country dauntlessly in the struggle against the fierce attacks of Nazi Germany. With his hallmark "V for victory" sign and unshakable faith that the Allied Forces would prevail, he was an inspiring, brilliant leader.

In a famous speech during the war, he called out to his fellow citizens: "You ask: What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival."

Victory at all costs! This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. Buddhism is all about winning. Only if we triumph, can we realize kosen-rufu. A brilliant path of victory will never open for those who are cowardly, cunning or underhanded.

We will now pass responsibility to youth in all spheres of our movement.

The time for the youth to take center stage has come. We have entered the period when we will pass the baton to youth in all spheres of our movement.

Nichiren Daishonin writes to his youthful disciple Nanjo Tokimitsu: "The reason you must repay your debt of gratitude to all living beings is that [since life extends across the three existences] in the past, all men have been your father at one time or another, and all women have been your mother. In lifetime after lifetime, you have been indebted to all of these living beings, which is why you should wish that all will attain Buddhahood" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1527).

Viewed from the perspective of Buddhism, we are connected and indebted to all other living beings, so we should care for and value them. The supreme way of repaying that debt of gratitude is to share the supreme philosophy of Buddhism with them. Introducing

PLEASE SEE SPEECH, 6



SGI-USA members' contributions help pay for the maintenance of 71 culture, community and activity centers throughout the country, as well as fund new projects like the completely redesigned World Culture Center (above) in Santa Monica, Calif., set to open in July.

Taking Our Efforts One Step Further

A Message
FROM MATILDA

By **MATILDA BUCK**
SGI-USA WOMEN'S LEADER



I love working for kosen-rufu. I can't imagine any better way to spend my life. I try to use my time as best I can, but there's a way to take my efforts one step further: through my financial contribution.

I am filled with appreciation when I think that, while I'm at home preparing dinner, my dollars are helping turn on the lights in the Oklahoma City Community Center. When I'm spending time with my grandchildren, a copy machine in the

enlightenment—is almsgiving, which includes the almsgiving of the Law (as in introducing others to this practice), the almsgiving of fearlessness (as in encouraging others) and material almsgiving. Nichiren Daishonin writes: "What is appropriate for ordinary people is offering in principle [sincerely offering what is important to one's own life]. This is the teaching called the paramita of almsgiving..." (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1126). This is our pledge: We make offerings for both the spiritual and the physical growth of our movement.

Once a year, in May, we are given an opportunity to crystallize our commitment to kosen-rufu by making a special contribution, and these contri-

PLEASE SEE MESSAGE, 11

What Does 'Correct Practice' Mean?

Q&A ON FAITH

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF



Q What does the "correct practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism" mean?

A Let me share six perspectives on what we can glean from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* on practicing correctly.

First, it stems from strong faith. As Nichiren Daishonin states: "This Gohonzon... is found only in the two characters for faith. This is what the sutra means when it states that one can 'gain entrance through faith alone'" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 832). Having strong faith means, in a sense, making the conscious ef-

fort to chant with deep trust that our own lives are the Mystic Law or the Gohonzon itself. This enables us to better appreciate the sanctity of our lives.

Second, it relates to having a determination to win with clear goals for the future. As indicated by the Buddhist principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, *ichinen sanzen*, the future evolves in accord with our *ichinen* or determination. A Buddhist sutra states, "The heart is like a skilled painter" — our determined practice is painting the

future. SGI President Ikeda says that "the power of the heart enables us to actually execute a wonderful masterpiece" with our lives (*Learning From the Goshō*, p. 129).

Third, it finds expression in taking action — working hard for our goals. "When it comes to faith, practice it fully," second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda taught. "And when it comes to work, work three times harder than others." We realize the real power of the Mystic Law through the action we take, through how we live our lives. This is why one of the SGI's eternal guidelines is "Faith equals daily life."

Fourth, it lies in making a vow for *kosen-rufu* with our whole lives. Even though we embrace the Gohonzon, in which the Daishonin expresses his spirit to bring happiness to all humanity, our fundamental life-condition can still get stuck in selfishness. But Buddhism teaches that we need to devote ourselves to the bodhisattva

practice — helping others become happy — to develop our own good fortune. It is in this vein that to practice correct faith we must make a vow or pledge for the happiness of others. President Ikeda has said that "prayer in the Daishonin's Buddhism means to chant daimoku based on a pledge or vow. At its very core, this vow is to attain *kosen-rufu*" (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 250).

Fifth, it means to commit ourselves to stopping evil. Buddhism, after all, is the philosophy of diminishing evil and generating good. As the SGI has advanced *kosen-rufu* on a global scale, opposition has emerged from within the realm of Buddhism in the form of the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. In the Daishonin's days, there were many such religious groups that pretended to be spreading Buddhism but were in fact attacking its very heart. The Daishonin was relentless in trying to educate people about the consequences of adhering to

these slanderous religious sects. Today, along the same line, by participating in the Soka Spirit educational movement, we can diminish evil.

Sixth, it means to practice the mentor-disciple relationship, an integral part of Buddhism. President Ikeda writes: "The path of mentor and disciple is one that leads to personal development and growth. Those without a mentor may appear free and unbound to anyone, but without a solid standard or model on which to base themselves, their lives become aimless and wandering" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 234).

I see in President Ikeda the greatest example of how to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism correctly in modern times. He has shown us his compassion for the people, passion for *kosen-rufu*, courage to stand up for justice and wisdom to lead humanity in the right direction. From his example, we can learn more about correct faith and practice. **WT**

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF WOMEN

Back to the Basics

By BARBARA FORD
LOS ANGELES



As women, we have come a long way from the days of Shakyamuni's provisional teachings, which denied enlightenment to women. Imagine being told that you could not attain enlightenment because you were a woman!

Joyfully, this situation changed when Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra, his true intent, and discarded the provisional teachings. These earlier teachings were incomplete, lacking the principle that all beings inherently possess the potential for Buddhahood and the wisdom to realize it.

The teaching that women share the same potential as men for Buddhahood first appears in the "Devadatta" chapter of the Lotus Sutra with the dragon king's daughter attaining enlightenment without changing her form. Moreover, in the "Encouraging Devotion" chapter, there are further predictions of

nuns attaining Buddhahood.

In fact, the Lotus Sutra is spilling over with the joy of opening the path of the Buddha Way to all living beings, including women.

SGI President Ikeda explains: "Bodhisattva Never Disparaging addresses everyone he encounters, men and women alike, with the promise: 'You are all practicing the bodhisattva way, and are certain to attain Buddhahood' (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 267). Viewed in its entirety, the Lotus Sutra takes it for granted that there is no distinction between men and

women in attaining Buddhahood" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 88).

Nichiren Daishonin even further elaborates the Lotus Sutra's teaching of non-discrimination, clarifying the profound enlightenment of many of his women believers. One such follower was Nichimyo Shonin, the mother of Oto Gozen. In "Letter to the Mother of Oto Gozen," the Daishonin praises the strong faith of Nichimyo Shonin, who traveled from Kamakura to Sado to visit the Daishonin carrying her infant daughter. The journey took about three weeks, traversing treacherous mountains where bandits lurked and crossing raging seas where pirates lied in wait.

The Lotus Sutra opens the path of the Buddha Way for all living beings, including women.

He writes to her: "Since you revere the Lotus Sutra you are a woman who is certain to become a Buddha.... Above all, your having come here, even though you are a woman, is an expression of your profound spirit of faith" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1222). Elsewhere, he praises her as "the foremost votary of the Lotus

Sutra among the women of Japan" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 325).

As women in the SGI, we have left the days of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings far behind. We are living in an unprecedented age. Women can become astronauts, university chancellors, senators, congresswomen — we have a multitude of opportunities. Of course, our situation is not yet perfect, but we are on the way to creating

true equality in society.

As far as the Buddhist teachings are concerned, equality is definitely ours. In "The True Aspect of All Phenomena," the Daishonin states: "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku" (WND, 385). **WT**

Corrections

• In the March 2 *World Tribune*, the experience "Not My Son, No Way" mentions that Linus Pauling's research on vitamin C led to a Nobel Prize. Dr. Pauling actually received Nobel Prizes for chemistry (in 1954) and his peace work (1962), not for his vitamin C research.

• On page 7 of the March 16 *World Tribune*, a photograph of the Valley Area women's meeting at the San Fernando Community Center was incorrectly identified as being Valley Chapter.

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EXPERIENCE — NANCY SIMMS LEE, LOS ANGELES

Repaying Debts of Gratitude

Nancy Simms Lee reevaluates her relationship with her mother and realizes that things were not what they seemed.

I'm giving you this red carnation on Mother's Day as a reminder to you about your mother, to whom you've not begun to repay your debt of gratitude."

It was Mother's Day, 1992, and I was nearing the end of a two-week SGI Training Course in Japan. These rather strict words came from SGI President Ikeda, as did the carnation. I sensed that President Ikeda was aware of the distance between my mother and me.

At that time, my mother and stepfather were living in my hometown of Santa Fe, N.M., keeping themselves busy caring for their collective crew of nine children and their spouses. My father was living a very quiet and secluded existence in another state. Well on their way to establishing their careers and families, my three younger siblings were living in various Southwest states.

President Ikeda's words spurred me into thinking about my relationship with my mother. My memories of growing up were basically pleasant. However, when I tried to chant about her, there was a battle raging between what I believed in my heart and what I thought in my mind. Walls were up between us. I thought she was disappointed in me and didn't accept my Buddhist practice.

If I'd learned anything from President Ikeda, it was that Buddhism is about the heart — opening one's heart to oneself and to others. What could I sincerely chant for — not out of formality, but from my heart? Certainly, not for her to practice Buddhism, I thought, because she's strong in her own faith and active in her church.

Soon, I began wholeheartedly and consistently chanting for my mother's and father's happiness and good health. I fully expected that my prayers would be answered, I just didn't know how.

About six months later, I was talking with my mother on the



Nancy Simms Lee, left, with her father, Leo Katz, her daughter, Flora Tangen, and her mother, Martha Stamm.

phone and she said: "Yesterday, I was talking with my Episcopal minister about my four children. I told him, 'I have two children who are practicing Christians, one who is a non-practicing Christian and one daughter who is a Buddhist.'" I took a deep breath, expecting the worst.

"I told him," she continued, "I have more respect for my daughter the Buddhist than anyone on this planet, because she is so intent on helping other people."

I was astounded. Clearly, it wasn't my mother who was putting up the wall between us; it was I. She wasn't judging me. I was judging her. She had unconditional love for me. Did I have the same for her? The answer was painfully clear to me — no. Determined to eradicate my shallow, negative attitude, my prayer got a little deeper. A few weeks later when I suggested she chant to help her insomnia, she cheerfully agreed to do so.

This was a wake-up call and the beginning of the meltdown of the ice around my heart. I began to face my resentments that I had kept tucked away for so long.

I resented my mother because I believed she was living in a dream world, not dealing with the emotional needs of her family members, including me, especially when our family was falling apart.

I resented my father, because

in the face of seemingly insurmountable financial and legal problems, he had become overwhelmed with guilt, thrown up his hands and left.

Looking deeper, I realized that I was the one causing my own suffering because of my judgment of my parents. My resentments had to go. In reality, my parents loved each other and us. They simply didn't have the capacity to overcome their obstacles together at that time. Forty years later I know they tried their best.

Slowly, like taking arrows out of a wounded heart, I continued my quest to purify my life. On another occasion during the training course, President Ikeda said: "You can devote your life to your friends and family and put forth effort toward their happiness. However, please do not be swayed by these responsibilities. Please live for your own sake, pursuing the life you choose."

Live for my own sake? I had simply defined myself in accordance with the roles I played — I was a wife, mother, daughter, editor, teacher and leader. And as far as the path I was following — well, others' expectations of me and my seeking approval from them determined it.

It became painfully clear to me that I was in so much denial that I was very insensitive to others' feelings and the cause of

much angst among those around me. I wasn't taking personal responsibility for myself on a fundamental level. And this included my attitude toward my parents.

About four years ago my dad became deathly ill with emphysema. My brother and sister and I convinced him to move back to Santa Fe. At the age of 72, he went back to work with his former construction partner and slowly began coming to family functions. He re-established old friendships and made new ones. His health has been restored and there's no sign of his emphysema. Now he spends every holiday with us — including my mother and stepfather — thoroughly enjoying his grandchildren.

Two years ago, I visited my mother to help her put together family photo albums. I learned things about her during this period that I had never known. When my mother was 18, her mother committed suicide after a long battle with addictions, which began when my physician grandfather had treated her tuberculosis with morphine. Hearing for the first time the intensity of my mother's suffering, I found it amazing that she was able to raise four basically healthy children.

During her 78th birthday dinner, my high school friend serenaded her in Spanish, singing the song, "Marta," which she said her mother had sung to her

when she was a child, some 60 years before. Seeing the vulnerable look of a newborn baby on her face, I began to cry. I felt as though my heart was about to burst with joy.

I'm finally at the point of having no unfinished business or regrets concerning my mother, only appreciation that we have come around full circle to the pure love of a mother and daughter again. I feel strongly that the karma of the women in my family seven generations in the past and in the future is changing, just as Nichiren Daishonin promises in his writings.

It's with a sense of awe that I'm now witnessing the beauty of my daughter, Flora, who at the age of 26 is carrying the legacy of the women in our family. Flora is a strong-willed, incredible woman. Her grandmother, my mom, financed her master's degree program, from which she graduated with honors. A very talented educator, Flora was named Rookie Teacher of the Year at her elementary school. She's given much thought to how to include her extended family for her fall wedding. She'll be honoring both her father, Jerry Tangen, who passed away almost 10 years ago, and her stepfather, Bob Simms, when she dances with Bob for the "father-daughter" dance. She has asked both my father and stepfather to walk her down the aisle, knowing of their mutual respect. They have agreed to do so. My 89-year-old stepfather, Allen Stamm, is even considering buying a tux for the occasion.

My mom and I visit frequently these days, as her health is fragile. I truly cherish each moment we spend together. Last Christmas, we were driving through a snowstorm together when Mom said that she wants to take me on a cruise this year. "No, Mom," I said, "I want to take you on a cruise, to repay my debt of gratitude." Several weeks later I won a cruise for two to Bermuda.

On one level, I feel I'm just beginning to repay my debt of gratitude. But on another, deeper level, I feel that within the realm of mother and daughter, there is infinite potential within each and every moment to continue to repay one's debt of gratitude. **WT**

FROM 'MY DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA'

The Mystic Law Gives New Life to All Knowledge

Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

'When based on the Mystic Law, all laws of the world and society begin to function in their most valuable way,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'All endeavors in human society — politics, economics, learning and so on — become revitalized. They come to display their full potential and attain new life.'

From SGI President Ikeda's speech at a youth training meeting held at Soka University of America, Calabasas, Calif., Oct. 1, 1991.

Yesterday, at the conference for leaders of the United States and Canada, I talked briefly about the reasons for Nikko Shonin's departure from Mount Minobu.

The fundamental cause for his departure lay with the decadent priest Mimbu Niko [one of the five senior priests], who tolerated and even encouraged slanderous actions on the part of Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of the area. This caused the area of Minobu [where Nichiren Daishonin spent the latter years of his life] to become defiled.

Among Niko's perverse views were his accusations that Nikko Shonin indulged in non-Buddhist literature. [Non-Buddhist literature here indicates Brahman writings of India, the Confucian and Taoist works of China, and general, secular and literary works. In some cases, the term is used to indicate scholarly writings and the Chinese classics, which at the time were considered the basic foundation of all learning, much as the liberal arts are today.]

Nikko Shonin strictly upheld the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin as revealed in "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." Based on this spirit, he instructed Hakiri that for him to make pilgrimages to Shinto shrines was [against the Daishonin's teaching and therefore] impermissible.

Hakiri thereupon sought the counsel of Niko. Niko told Hakiri: "Being a person who indulges in non-Buddhist literature, Nikko reads 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land' from that perspective, and so he fails to grasp its more profound meaning." He thus undermined Hakiri's trust in Nikko Shonin.

Nikko Shonin cites Niko's words in the letter, "Reply to Lord Hara," saying: "[Mimbu Ajari Niko answered Hakiri's queries, saying:] 'That the tute-

lary benevolent deities have abandoned this country is written in "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land." However, Byakuren Ajari [Nikko Shonin], basing himself on non-Buddhist scriptures, reads it in a biased manner and so is incapable of understanding its true intention'" (*Hennentai Gosho*, p. 1731).

Niko contradicted the Daishonin's teaching in telling Hakiri that it was therefore all right to visit Shinto shrines. Furthermore, he told him to visit shrines as often as he wished on the grounds that the Buddhist gods would gather at a shrine if a person who embraced the Lotus Sutra went there to pray.

Hakiri placed his complete trust in this false teaching, which allowed him to do as he wished. "Niko is a priest who can be reasoned with," Hakiri probably thought with delight. Almost invariably, a lay person's deviation from the Daishonin's teaching can be traced to the influence of a decadent priest skilled at accommodating the demands of lay people [regardless of what is correct from the standpoint of Buddhism].

To Hakiri — who had lost his faith — the admonitions of Nikko Shonin, who strictly protected the Daishonin's teaching by staunchly refuting slander, had already become little more than a source of irritation.

Nikko Shonin declared Niko's tolerance of slander to be "the workings of the devil king," "a betrayal of the late mentor" and "[an offense equal in gravity to committing] the seven cardinal sins." If someone who is charged with responsibility for protecting and spreading the Daishonin's teaching willfully distorts and arbitrarily alters the teaching, then the actions of such a person certainly represent the workings of the devil. They are the actions of a priest of the greatest evil,



SGI President Ikeda speaks at Soka University of America, Calabasas on Oct. 1, 1991.

who is guilty of betraying the mentor and committing the seven cardinal sins. This is what Nikko Shonin taught.

These historical facts contain an important lesson.

First of all, those who betrayed the mentor [Nichiren Daishonin] after his death all sought to justify themselves by making reference to some "more profound meaning" contained in his teaching, despite all documentary proof to the contrary.

In Buddhism, the offense of betraying the mentor is extremely grave. It amounts to destroying the very life of Buddhism. People who do so try to win acceptance for their false views by saying, "You should listen to what I say, irrespective of what my mentor wrote." And if someone presents them with written proof that shows their words or actions to be wrong, they try to gloss over the contradiction by saying: "That is a superficial level of interpretation. The true meaning is found elsewhere."

In exactly this manner, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is contradicting the Gosho and the guidance given by the successive high priests, desecrating them and attempting to consign them to oblivion. [A contemporary example of this is found in the priesthood's abrupt denial of High Priest Nittatsu's view on the significance of the Grand Main Temple. This view had served as a fundamental guideline for both priests and lay believers of

Nichiren Shoshu for more than twenty years. Yet now the priesthood claims that "the former high priest's true intention is not contained in his official statements but is found elsewhere."]

'Although the mentor has died, his writings remain.'

Nikko Shonin came to learn that Hakiri, in a quandary over whether it was permissible for him to make pilgrimages to Shinto shrines, had been making such remarks as: "The priests in the Kamakura area (followers of the five senior priests) say it is all right for me to go, but Nikko Shonin of Minobu has told me that I must not. Who should I listen to now that the Daishonin has died?"

Thereupon, Nikko Shonin strictly instructed him: "Although the mentor has died, his writings remain. This is in 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land'" (*Hennentai Gosho*, p. 1731). When the Daishonin is no longer in the world, it is his writings that we should make our mentor. So long as we continue practicing in accordance with the Gosho, what possible cause for confusion can there be? Here Nikko Shonin teaches the fundamental attitude for the Daishonin's followers.

What a remarkable contrast between the attitude of Nikko Shonin, who made the Gosho his foundation, and that of Niko, who based himself on his

own personal views and neglected the Gosho!

We in the SGI are advancing in perfect accord with the teaching of Nikko Shonin, who represents the treasure of the Priest, as we make the Gosho our foundation. At the same time, we are now witnessing the appearance of the followers of Niko within Nichiren Shoshu.

People look down on the correct teacher due to ignorance.

We must also bear the following lesson in mind: People who betray their mentor criticize those who strictly observe the mentor's teaching and interpret that teaching themselves in a biased manner as being non-Buddhist. In disparaging the correct interpretation as being "similar to non-Buddhist literature" or "a superficial reading," such persons, in their arrogance, suggest that they themselves have grasped the ultimate teaching of Buddhism when in fact they have not.

Thus, SGI members, too, while faithfully observing the precept that they strictly admonish slander, have come to be accused of "revering non-Buddhist teachings." We can regard this as an honorable badge of proof that we are indeed heirs to the legacy of Nikko Shonin.

Niko went so far as to brand non-Buddhist literature per se as evil. Niko Shonin refutes this

extreme and distorted view, saying: "The Daishonin's 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land' was written based on the style of non-Buddhist literature. The letter, sent in the eighth year of Bun'ei, was likewise written in the style of non-Buddhist works. In addition, the Lotus Sutra was written by the people in China most well versed in non-Buddhist literature, and for this reason it stands out among all of the Buddhist sutras for its style."

"In expounding this doctrine now, I would like to have someone who is well versed in non-Buddhist literature commit it to writing. Without an understanding of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings, I believe it will be extremely difficult to establish the Buddhist Law and to secure the land" (*Hennentai Gosho*, p. 1734).

Not only does he refute Niko's accusations about his "indulging in non-Buddhist literature" and about "non-Buddhist literature being false," but Nikko Shonin goes on to state that unless one incorporates the literary style and knowledge of non-Buddhist writings in attempting to introduce people to Buddhism, it will be impossible to "establish the Buddhist Law and to secure the land."

The 59th high priest, Nichiko, commented on the mistaken views of Niko: "His views certainly arose from a sheer lack of knowledge, and no doubt there were many priests and lay believers of little understanding who sympathized with him. In other words, I assume that his notions were based on the vulgar conventionalisms of the dark age [in terms of literature] of the Kamakura period, and that he simply used such accepted ideas to put down the teacher Nikko" (from *Fuji Nikko Shonin Shoden* [Detailed Accounts of Nikko Shonin of the Fuji School]).

In other words, Niko's defamatory remarks and false views were either due to his own lack of knowledge or were employed as part of an attempt to attack Nikko Shonin by appealing to the ideas of the uneducated masses.

We must cultivate in ourselves the light of intelligence. We must positively bring an end to the "dark age" [of Nichiren Shoshu].

Capable people must master both Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings.

Just as Nikko Shonin states, without an understanding of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings, neither realizing peace ("securing the land") nor accomplishing kosen-rufu ("establishing the Buddhist Law") will

be possible. In addition, Nikko Shonin indicates that capable people who are well versed in both realms of Buddhist and secular knowledge are necessary.

In particular, young people, basing themselves on Buddhism, must study hard, avidly seeking to expand their grasp of the knowledge and wisdom of the world.

In article eight of "The Twenty-six Admonitions," Nikko Shonin states: "Those who, lacking a thorough understanding of Buddhism, are bent on obtaining fame and fortune are not qualified to call themselves my followers" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

The failure of Nichiren Shoshu priests to observe this admonition is no doubt one of the factors underlying the current situation. Moreover, priests have practically no knowledge about the world and lack the desire to study.

They nevertheless imperiously command us to show them greater respect (concern for fame) and increase the amount of our donations (concern for wealth). Just whose disciples are they anyway?

All of Nikko Shonin's spiritual heirs are included in the treasure of the Priest.

"The Twenty-Six Admonitions" also states, "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). We SGI members are putting this admonition into practice.

In the postscript to these

"Twenty-six Admonitions," which were originally set forth as guidelines for priests, Nikko Shonin clearly states: "A person who violates even one of these articles cannot be called a disciple of Nikko" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1619).

By following Nikko Shonin, who alone represents the treasure of the Priest in its entirety, the members of both the priesthood and laity, in a broad sense, partially take on the significance of the treasure of the Priest. It is only too obvious, therefore, that any priests who go against Nikko Shonin's admonitions are naturally not to be regarded as representing the treasure of the Priest.

If priests, while calling themselves the Daishonin's disciples, demonstrate a blatant willingness to accommodate slanderous practices and belittle the value of the Gosho and, while calling themselves disciples of Nikko Shonin, conduct themselves in exactly the same manner as Niko, then they are destroying the three treasures of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. In any event, it can be definitely stated that the poorer people's breadth of study, the more prone they will be to brand those who are earnestly striving to promote kosen-rufu as persons who "indulge in non-Buddhist teachings."

The SGI is perpetuating the orthodox lineage of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Niko, revealing his superficial understanding of Bud-

dism, profaned Nikko Shonin by calling him a non-Buddhist. Nikko Shonin, on the other hand, thoroughly understood Buddhism and strongly urged his disciples to study non-Buddhist teachings as well.

This highlights two contrasting attitudes toward Buddhism: one that confines Buddhism to a limited, esoteric realm concerning only a small number of specialists, and one that takes the broader view that all laws and phenomena of the universe are part of Buddhism.

Simply put, Niko's was a dead Buddhism, while that taught by Nikko Shonin was a living Buddhism. We of the SGI are perpetuating the orthodox lineage of this dynamic, vibrant Buddhism.

How can one propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism without knowing about various other teachings that exist in the world? Just as second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda taught, when based on the Mystic Law, all laws of the world and society begin to function in their most valuable way. All endeavors in human society—politics, economics, learning and so on—become revitalized. They come to display their full potential and attain new life. The lifeblood of Buddhism pulses within society. If it is cut off from secular affairs, Buddhism's full validity cannot be revealed.

Niko might also have been jealous of Nikko Shonin's extensive knowledge and learning. The Danish philosopher

Søren Kierkegaard claimed that when action and passion disappear, the world is dominated by jealousy. This argument was the heart of his criticism against the modern world—against evil wisdom that strives to pull everything down to the same level [irrespective of the level of excellence or baseness].

Buddhism gains life only in correct faith.

Buddhism's mission must be to impart dynamism to the society and the age in which it is practiced and to the people who practice it. In one of his lectures, President Toda once fielded this question: "You said Buddhism became extinct in India and China, yet many sutras still exist in these countries, don't they?"

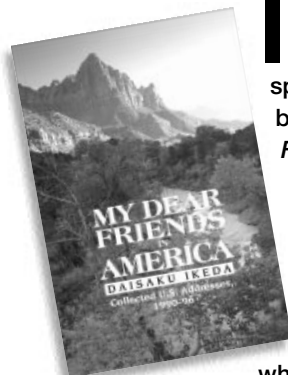
President Toda spoke forcefully: "There may be sutras, but sutras are by no means Buddhism. They are just books! For without faith, sutras are nothing more than books. No matter how many sutras and temples there may be in these countries, their Buddhism is already dead."

For example, even though a temple may possess original writings in the Daishonin's own hand, if that temple embarks on a heretical course, then it does not possess the lifeblood of the Daishonin's Buddhism. The lifeblood of Buddhism exists only in the correct faith actually manifested in people's lives. Correct faith—the vehicle of the lifeblood of Buddhism—is transmitted through the mentor-disciple relationship. Only when we follow the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin can we perpetuate the pure flow of the Daishonin's Buddhism for eternity. Should we follow the corrupt stream of Niko, who betrayed his mentor's teachings, we would commit the serious offense of destroying the heart of Buddhism.

The traitorous Niko attempted to destroy the Daishonin's Buddhism in many ways. Nikko Shonin, meanwhile, though having to endure the insult of being called a non-Buddhist, strictly abided by his mentor's teaching and protected the lifeblood of Buddhism. This contrast is a mirror that reflects the truth, now and always.

I sincerely hope that you, my young friends, will develop the SGI organization in the United States into the foremost in the world. Please take good care of the center of the worldwide kosen-rufu movement. Thank you and congratulations on today's gathering. **WT**

New Series: 'My Dear Friends in America'



In this new series, in response to readers' requests, we will be reprinting excerpts from some of SGI President Ikeda's 1990s speeches in the United States. All of these will be available in May in the new book *My Dear Friends in America: Collected U.S. Addresses 1990-96*, published by the World Tribune Press. Due to an oversight in the production process, an earlier edition of *My Dear Friends* was missing five speeches. All the SGI-USA bookstores have been asked to stop selling the book, and it is being reprinted. Anyone who has purchased an incomplete copy can

exchange it for the reprint, when it is released next month. To help facilitate this exchange process, the reprint will have a different color jacket to make it easily distinguishable from the defective version. Details on the re-release will be announced in the *World Tribune*.

FROM SPEECH, I

the Daishonin's teachings to others, then, is the greatest gift of friendship.

Please also respect and treasure your fellow members. I hope that our youth in particular, no matter what their position is in the organization, will treat all their elders as if they were their parents.

Please treat everyone you have a connection with, including your parents, with utmost respect. I hope you will work to broaden our network of friendship and trust with open, generous hearts. The more you do so, the greater the benefit you will receive, the further kosen-rufu will advance and the more expansive your state of life will become.

The Daishonin also strongly urges Tokimitsu to fight bravely, with all the spirit of youth, against the attacks of evil authorities: "When those of rank reproach you for your faith, think of them as worthy adversaries of the Lotus Sutra. Consider it an opportunity as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara plant, or the blind turtle encountering a floating sandalwood log, and reply to them firmly and resolutely" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 800-01). While on the one hand the Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu to treat all living beings as his fathers and mothers, on the other hand he urges: "Fight back fiercely against evil. That is what it means to be young!"

Words of truth are the strongest weapon against injustice.

The French writer and thinker Albert Camus was active in the Resistance, after the forces of Nazi Germany occupied his homeland. He helped found an underground paper, *Combat*, and used his pen to wage battle against the enemy. Words of truth and justice are a strong weapon. When we speak and write the truth, our lives shine with genuine value.

Camus writes, "We must affirm truth and justice in order to fight against interminable injustice, and create happiness to protest against a universe of misfortune." Let us fight against interminable injustice! Let us protest against the unhappiness in the world! The passionate cry of this great philosopher finds an echo in our hearts, too.

Camus was killed in an automobile accident in January 1960. It was a terrible shame,



The 3rd Headquarters Leaders Meeting is held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 27.

as all accidents are. Fatal accidents are a misfortune for the victims, and they also bring deep sadness to the victim's family and friends.

I hope you will constantly remind one another to be careful and strive to prevent accidents from occurring. Those who have been in an accident once sometimes have a life tendency to get involved in accidents again and again. I hope that such people will chant with the strong determination not to be involved in any more accidents.

As upholders of the Mystic Law, let us win for ourselves days that are free from mishap and misfortune, as we continually chant with the firm resolve to break through our negative karma, to avoid accidents and to work hard for kosen-rufu.

There is no reason to let your happiness be governed by popularity and fame.

Congratulations to the arts division members on attending today's meeting! Your 10 million fellow members are behind you. They are your fans. I am a big fan! Please know that you have fans all around Japan and the world.

Fame does not equal happiness, nor does it equal ability. Those who walk the supreme path of happiness known as faith are great artists of life. Compared to this distinction,

fame and popularity are mere illusions—they are as fleeting as the images on a TV screen, which disappear when you turn off the set.

There is absolutely no reason for you to let your happiness be governed by popularity and fame. Ordinary people have no fame but are the noblest of all. For instance, full-time homemakers may not be famous, but they are great beyond measure. The same is true of farmers and factory workers. Their work may not be flashy, but their existence is indispensable to us all.

Religion, moreover, has nothing to do with popularity. While enduring misunderstanding and even persecution along the way, we devote ourselves to leading others to happiness. We exert ourselves in our Buddhist practice.

The essence of religion is selfless dedication, the willingness to give even our lives for our beliefs. It exists on a level completely different from fame or popularity. This is crystal clear if we look at the Daishonin's life.

The Soka Gakkai is strong because it has continued to carry out its activities surely and steadily in spite of the malicious insults and slanders cast upon it. Like homemade salt pickles [made by salting and placing vegetables under a heavy weight to draw out their natural juices],

we are plain, honest and have wonderful flavor!

You are all emissaries of the Buddha. Whatever your situation or circumstances, you have a mission. You will attain happiness without fail. I hope that, no matter what obstacles you face, you will continue to advance calmly, enjoying everything you encounter in life.

If we do not follow what Nichiren Daishonin teaches, we cannot say we are practicing Buddhism.

Nichiren Buddhism is the Buddhism of kosen-rufu. And kosen-rufu is the very essence of Nichiren Buddhism. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, had a profound recognition of this and gave their lives completely to this noble cause. They were both great individuals.

To become happy not only ourselves, but to enable others to become happy as well. To bring harmony to our local communities. And to help our nations flourish and bring peace to the whole world. The lives of those who pray and work to achieve these goals pulse with faith dedicated to realizing kosen-rufu. And it is the Soka Gakkai, an organization that has inherited the Buddha's will and decree, that has spread this faith throughout Japan and the world.

In contrast, those who have forgotten about kosen-rufu, as Nichiren Shoshu has, are not practicing Nichiren Buddhism, no matter how much they may chant to the Gohonzon. Unless one follows what the Daishonin teaches in his writings, one cannot be said to be practicing Nichiren Buddhism. I want to make this perfectly clear.

Further, Buddhism is the teaching that answers the fundamental question of birth and death. It teaches an absolute law. As a result, from the perspective of the eternity of life, we who uphold this teaching can savor the essence of human life in this world.

No organization has a more profound mission than the SGI.

We have to watch out for internal enemies.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said strictly: "It may appear that our enemies are outside, but the most insidious enemies are within. Members elected to public office or those of high social status lose their faith and grow filled with self-importance. They become possessed by demons, negative forces, and they themselves become devilish functions. They go on to exploit the pure Soka Gakkai, sow confusion and wreak destruction. Though they owe their positions in society to the support of the Soka Gakkai, they look down with contempt

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

on their fellow members. They forget the debt of gratitude they owe the Soka Gakkai and, instead of protecting the members, exploit them to the hilt. Such people do not genuinely embrace the spirit of many in body, one in mind. They are not true Soka Gakkai members. Beware of enemies within!"

Mr. Toda was incredibly strict when he said this. Now I understand what he was saying.

Certainly, many illnesses also occur from internal causes within our bodies.

The external enemies are not the ones we have to worry about. What we have to watch out for are the internal ones. And in fact, just as Mr. Toda pointed out, at the innermost realm of faith, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood became our most virulent enemy. It is also the case that many of the ex-members who betrayed the Soka Gakkai were attorneys, elected government representatives and others of relatively high social status. We must never allow ourselves to forget

this harsh reality.

Preparations for the dedication of SUA are proceeding rapidly.

Let's change the subject, just like changing the channel. We have received some wonderful news from Governor Gray Davis of California. This coming May 3 has been designated "Soka University of America Day" in California. The official proclamation reads in part:

WHEREAS, Soka University of America will become the first new private liberal arts college in California to open on a full campus in 25 years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of Soka University, and all of the faculty and staff are dedicated to helping their students meet higher challenges and higher academic expectations; and

WHEREAS, Soka University of America will join Califor-



Representatives receive the Okinawa Peace and Friendship Award at the 3rd Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 27.

nia's world-class educational institutions in building a brighter future for our students;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GRAY DAVIS, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim May 3, 2001, as "Soka University of America Day."

There are many world-class universities in California. I also have heard that if California were an independent country, its economy would rank 7th in the world.

In addition, Dr. Victor Kazanjian, dean of religious and spiritual life at Wellesley Col-

lege, one of the leading women's colleges in the United States, has voiced in a recent interview the following expectations for the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo in Orange County: "I am excited about Soka University for several reasons. In basing its educational philosophy on value creation, on making meaning from education, it challenges the educational community in the United States with its own original purpose.... Inasmuch as SUA is a kind of beacon and reminder of the ancient role of education as a source of liberation, as a source of spirituality, as a source of enlightenment, ... it

promises to have a significant impact on the discourse about the meaning of education in this country. That is a big task.... Like any time there is a shift in the system, it sends waves. It's like dropping a stone into a pond. It has ripple effects across the entire pond. That is what I think SUA is doing."

Preparations for the May dedication of the school are proceeding at a rapid pace. The first board of directors meeting was held recently, and the library is now complete. We are in the final stages of the university's completion.

To be continued in the April 13 issue.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Youth Against Evil

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin strongly urges Nanjo Tokimitsu to fight bravely, with all the spirit of youth, against the attacks of evil authorities: "When those of rank reproach you for your faith, think of them as worthy adversaries of the Lotus Sutra. Consider it an opportunity as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara plant, or the blind turtle encountering a floating sandalwood log, and reply to them firmly and resolutely" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 800-01). While on the one hand the Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu to treat all living beings as his fathers and mothers, on the other hand he urges: "Fight back fiercely against evil. That is what it means to be young!"

1) Why do you think that Nichiren Daishonin encourages young people like Nanjo Tokimitsu to fight against evil authorities? Why is it especially important for young people to do this? If young people are passive in the face of evil, how will this affect the future of humanity?

2) The Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu in two seemingly contradictory ways—to treat all living beings with respect and to fight against evil authorities. Why do you think SGI President Ikeda is pointing this out to us? What is the common denominator that these two points of encouragement share? Where do they meet?

3) The SGI upholds religious tolerance but at the same time refutes the distortions of the Daishonin's teachings that the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is promoting. What are the common factors that both of these stances share?

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 11 ENCOURAGEMENT

The Sun Penetrates the Darkness

'The Mystic Law has tremendous power, just like the sun penetrating the darkness,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'With it, we can change any and all karma. Those who uphold the Mystic Law will never fail to become happy.'

The evening of March 11, SGI President Ikeda attended a conference with SGI representatives from France, Peru and Japan at the Shinano Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. Warmly praising the outstanding development of the organization in each country, President Ikeda made the following points:

- Those who blaze new paths of kosen-rufu where none have been before obtain eternal, boundless benefit. Their noble names will shine in the annals of history.
- The "Simile and Parable" chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, "There is no safety in the three-fold world; / it is like a burning house, / replete with a multitude of sufferings, / truly to be feared" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 69). How

can we transform this world of strife and suffering, which is like a burning house, into a realm of peace and tranquillity?

Politics concerns itself with power, while economics is concerned with profit. Buddhism, however, sets forth a way to absolute happiness on a much higher dimension.

The Mystic Law has tremendous power, just like the sun penetrating the darkness. With it, we can change any and all karma. Those who uphold the Mystic Law will never fail to become happy.

- Faith dedicated to realizing kosen-rufu is the heart and essence of Nichiren Daishonin. There is nothing loftier than a commitment to work wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu, for this is the great and timeless path that leads to world peace and happiness for all humanity.



Photo by PETER NELLHAUS

'Buddhism exists not for the benefit of authority or priests,' says SGI President Ikeda. 'It exists for the people, so that all without exception may attain the enlightened state of Buddhahood.' Above, members enjoy a session at the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Supporters Conference at the FNCC, March 8-11.

Buddhism exists not for the benefit of authority or priests. It exists for the people, so that all without exception may attain the enlightened state of

Buddhahood.

Those who work steadily to open the path of kosen-rufu together with the SGI, the organization faithfully carrying out

the Buddha's will and decree, are treasures of this world far more praiseworthy than people who boast high titles and positions in society. **WT**

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 14 ENCOURAGEMENT

The Spirit of Selfless Dedication

'The Soka Gakkai spirit is the spirit of selfless dedication, the spirit of kosen-rufu,' SGI President Ikeda explains. 'I hope you will seek out challenges and fully test your strength and ability as people who possess a profound mission.'

The evening of March 14, SGI President Ikeda attended a conference at the Shinano Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, with representatives from SGI organizations outside Japan, including a contingent from SGI-USA, and regional leaders from various parts of Japan. After thanking those who had traveled long distances, President Ikeda made

the following points:

- The most praiseworthy are ordinary people who strive for kosen-rufu. We should protect and support them without fail. As leaders, we should always be thinking about how we can encourage and show our appreciation to our fellow members. If there is a problem or issue at hand, it is important that we

swiftly address it, always doing our utmost to serve the members. Should this spirit and action disappear, callousness and inhumanity will come to reign in our organization, and it will no longer be a realm of Buddhism.

- Unless our hearts are firmly united and in rhythm, we will not be able to bring forth our true strength and potential. When we stand up for the sake of kosen-rufu in the spirit of the oneness of mentor and disciple, we can open the way to victory. We can tap the power of great, inexhaustible courage.
- Youth must cast aside vanity and conceit. The Soka

Gakkai spirit is the spirit of selfless dedication, the spirit of kosen-rufu. I hope you will seek out challenges and fully test your strength and ability as people who possess a profound mission, giving free play to the power of faith. Please become a driving force in all endeavors and create a history of unprecedented brilliance.

President Ikeda also expressed his delight to Soka University of America representatives that the 1st class of SUA, Aliso Viejo has so many outstanding students. He asked the SUA representatives to put all their energies into raising world leaders. **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 35-36

'If there is a sun shining in our hearts, we can dispel all inner darkness and without fail arrive at a glorious morning of victory,' Shin'ichi Yamamoto reflects. 'If we want to transform the community in which we live, we must ask ourselves: Do our hearts burn with a fighting spirit and are we truly committed to spreading Nichiren Daishonin's teachings?'

After being appointed as the women's leader of Amami Oshima Chapter, Haru Fujisawa traveled from island to island igniting the flame of the Mystic Law.

Her journeys didn't always go smoothly. If a storm hit, the beautiful blue sea would turn into a swarm of angry waves, and her way would be blocked. She once found herself stranded offshore for seven hours, her boat unable to dock due to the high swells. On another occasion, she slipped and fell while transferring from a ferry to a small boat that would take her to shore. On the islands, she often spent two or three hours each night walking from place to place visiting members, but this exposed her to the danger of being bitten by the poisonous *habu* snake.

Sometimes people even threw salt at her and her fellow members who had come to talk with them about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. [In Japan, it was traditionally believed that salt had purifying qualities; it

was thrown as a form of protection against impurity.] Watching the salt scatter around her like falling snow, Haru consistently vowed to herself: "I won't give up! Whatever happens, I will spread the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the Amami Islands faster than any other part of Japan and make this the happiest place in the entire country!"

Takashi Nogawa, the Amami Oshima Chapter leader, shared this conviction with Haru, as did all the Amami members.

Folk religion was still deeply rooted in the Amami Islands, and people worshipped the female priests who conducted local shaman rituals as well as those believed to be faith healers who could communicate with and speak for the gods. Anyone who opposed such traditions was thought to be cursed.

Amid these circumstances, the Soka Gakkai members proudly strove to teach people about Buddhism. They broke ties with the old customs and

proclaimed to others the difference between correct and false teachings. This caused great anxiety among the islanders, and their reactions to the Soka Gakkai members' efforts were often quite severe.

For example, Saburo Shigehara began sharing Buddhism with people on his home island of Kakeromajima. Some twenty local households out of the nearly one hundred in his area decided to join the Soka Gakkai, but just around that time, Saburo's 85-year-old grandmother died. Then, in a three-month period, his cousin, aunt, younger brother and father also died.

A rumor spread that anyone who joined the Soka Gakkai would die. It was a curse, people said. Criticism of the Soka Gakkai flared violently, and even members began to have doubts.

It was true that Shigehara's family members had died after taking faith, but this did not shake him at all. He had seen their faces at the time of their deaths, and each had looked completely different than any he had seen before. Their complexions were rosy and they seemed to be smiling. They looked totally at peace. This fact served to convince Shigehara even further that he was practicing a correct religion.

Shigehara told fellow members: "If I, a member of the Shigehara family, am not disturbed by these deaths, why should anyone else be? This faith is tremendous!" His firm conviction allayed the members' fears.

The sun rose high above the vast ocean. The long-awaited morning of a new birth had arrived.

Early on June 22, Shin'ichi stepped out into the garden of the



The Amami Oshima Community Center.

Amami Oshima Community Center and looked at the sun rising in the sky. The night's blackness had vanished like a dream, and a brilliant, beautiful world of light enveloped him. It was a wonderful and majestic morning, a golden dawn. Green papaya trees, banana trees, date palms, and cycads growing in the center's garden glistened in the sunlight under a cloudless sky.

"If there is a sun shining in our hearts," thought Shin'ichi, "we can dispel all inner darkness and without fail arrive at a glorious morning of victory. If we want to transform the community in which we live, we must ask ourselves: Do our hearts burn with a fighting spirit and are we truly committed to spreading the Daishonin's teachings?"

A majestic sun of fighting spirit burned brightly in Shin'ichi's heart. For him, each day was supremely important. He lived each moment of his life as if it were the last. Such is the determination of one who strives to create a new history.

The eagerly anticipated completion ceremony for the Amami Oshima Community Center began just before 10:00 a.m. Some 500 members packed the building, with many overflowing into the grounds. Their joy-filled faces turned the center into a garden of smiles. Seeing the members so happy wiped away Shin'ichi's fatigue from his long journey.

After gongyo, there was a progress report and words

from a number of leaders, and then Shin'ichi spoke of the tremendous power of the Gohonzon. He hoped that the members of the Amami Islands would enjoy wonderful benefit from their practice.

"The Gohonzon is a mandala, which means 'cluster of blessings' and 'perfectly endowed,'" he said. "In other words, it contains the benefits of all Buddhas and all teachings or laws without exception. The strength of our faith and the strength of our practice are what draw forth the power of the Buddha and the Law from the Gohonzon. At the same time, our strong faith and practice manifest themselves as the powers of the Buddha and the Law."

Shin'ichi spoke next of the importance of chanting daimoku, and finished by saying: "This community center is a castle of the Law for all of you to use freely for spreading the Daishonin's teachings. I hope that your unity and courage will give rise to a great surge of propagation that will flow from this castle, which is the southernmost of our community centers in Japan. I am counting on you to achieve kosen-rufu here in the Amami Islands in my stead."

The Amami members listened deeply, absorbing each of Shin'ichi's words.

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



Finding the Positive in Mental Illness

PERSPECTIVE

By JULIAN KURITA
NEW YORK

Julian Kurita's experience of battling mental illness with faith has given him a positive perspective on this obstacle so many Americans are facing. Now, he wants to help others see it positively, too.

Valerie Kurita, Julian's mother, shared her experience of her struggle to help her son in the March 2 World Tribune.

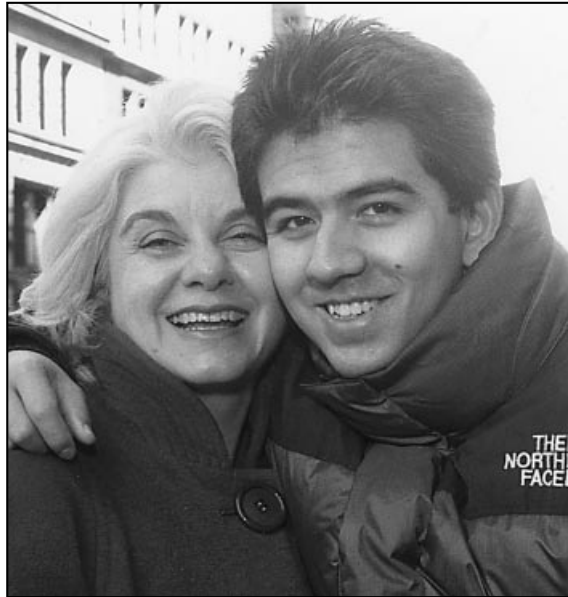
During my childhood, there were times I thought I was talking to people in my head. Sometimes, they would suggest I do self-destructive things, like stealing or mistreating someone. I never told anyone about this because I didn't know there was anything wrong with it.

After I left home to go to college, the hearing of voices increased. I believed there were people giving me telepathic instructions and I began acting very strangely, as most people who knew me during my college years could tell you. Throughout this time, I continued to chant, attend discussion meetings and study Buddhism.

I thought there was nothing wrong with me, but my roommate, who is also a practicing Buddhist, became increasingly concerned with my behavior. Finally, he called my mother, Valerie, who came to Wisconsin and brought me home.

At the age of 22, I was admitted to a hospital and diagnosed with schizo-affective disorder. This mental illness is a combination of schizophrenic symptoms, such as paranoia and delusions, and depression. The standard understanding of this illness is that it is incurable. The best that could be hoped for, I was told, was that the symptoms could be controlled with drugs that were almost as debilitating as the illness.

Some people in my position might have just given up and resigned themselves to a life of



Julian Kurita with his mother, Valerie.

misery. However, my experience in the SGI had taught me to challenge my difficulties, not give in to them. So I did gongyo whenever I was able and chanted extra daimoku during my most depressed and delusional moments. I always felt better afterward.

My mother was determined that I would become healthy. Every day, she read books and did research on the Internet. We tried many different treatments until we found the work of Dr.

Abram Hoffer, a colleague of the late Dr. Linus Pauling, and his use of megadoses of vitamins to cure mental illness.

Of course, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo led us to this solution, but action was just as important. If we had just chanted and not taken action we would never have found this treatment. In January 2000, I started the vitamin regimen, eliminated sugar from my diet, gave up smoking and learned to be disciplined in the things I

ate. It felt like an austerity that might have been practiced in the time of Shakyamuni.

My recovery didn't occur overnight. I started out lying on the couch all day at home by myself, fighting off feelings of desperation and suicide. As my condition improved, I became more active and my psychiatrist connected me with a vocational rehabilitation program here in New York.

I continued to chant. When I felt negative, I talked openly and honestly to my parents. Just talking about my feelings seemed to take half the pain away. My parents' encouraging responses took care of the rest. Gradually, I learned to encourage myself. The practice and philosophy of Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism were indispensable in my recovery—I gained the ability to derive hope from the most dismal of situations, the power to turn poison into medicine. When I went to discussion meetings, everyone was so supportive. They said things like, "You're going to win, no matter what." Even though I had a cloud of hell hanging over my head each day, their kind words penetrated my heart.

This illness has given me the perfect opportunity to revolutionize my life. I fight every day to improve myself. I am learning how to live and to determine right and wrong. My suffering has taught me to be compas-

sionate toward others. Many people look down on those with mental illness, but I have learned to try to help them see things in a positive way.

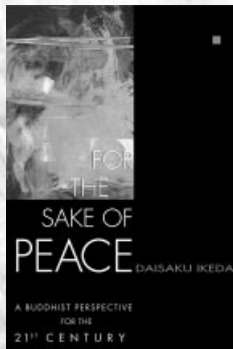
Now, at the age of 24, I honestly feel better than I did before my breakdown. I no longer hear voices or suffer from delusions or paranoia. I feel happy and proud to have had this struggle and that I have an advantage over those who have not yet had a major life challenge. I've learned so much, especially to never listen to those who tell you something is impossible. As human beings, we all have infinite potential.

I experienced this difficulty so that I can challenge my dreams for the future. I am now working a part-time job that my vocational rehabilitation program arranged for me. I'm taking art classes and applying for school in the fall as a transfer student to finish up my MFA degree. I also practice martial arts—kung fu and tai chi. I play electric bass and hope to put a rock group together for the Youth Family Culture Festival in our zone.

This struggle has taught me that a never-give-up spirit in prayer and action equals victory in all things.

Perspectives printed here do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the SGI-USA or the World Tribune.

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Now in its seventh year, Soka University of America's graduate school in Calabasas, Calif., is accepting applications for its master's degree program in second and foreign language education for the 2001-02 academic year.

Individuals seeking admission to the MA program must hold a bachelor's degree with a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 2.7 or B- on a four-point scale. Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit a Test of

English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 600 (on a paper-based test) or 250 (on a computer-based test) and a Test of Written English (TWE) with a minimum score of 5.0.

Applications for the 2001-02 academic year are due by April 30. For more information, contact the Graduate Admissions Office at 26800 West Mulholland Highway, Calabasas, CA 9102. Telephone (818) 878-8717, e-mail: grad_admissions@soka.edu.

The District: Where the World Begins

EDITORIAL

By **JEFF FARR**
MANAGING EDITOR



The district is where kosen-rufu starts, where the whole world begins to change.

SGI-USA members have their own millennial anxieties. Not about the world ending at any moment but about the world beginning again. See, if we believe we are living at a great turning point in history—and that we are responsible for what happens from this point on—we have to keep asking ourselves what we need to focus on most.

This can be a little stress-inducing, many members have mentioned to me. There are an infinite number of things we could be doing—even *should* be doing—but time is limited.

Our district activities, I believe, should be at the top of our list. Although they may seem “small” in comparison to the big times we live in, we should

never underestimate their far-reaching impact. Forty years ago, SGI-USA movement began by forming a district in Hawaii and holding the first discussion meeting in America. He listened to the members’ problems, did his best to answer their questions and encouraged everyone present to work for others’ happiness. It was a small meeting, a simple one, but it led to the more than 1,700 SGI-USA districts now meeting across the nation.

“The district is where kosen-rufu really begins,” SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima says. “It is the door for us to enter the world of

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. In the district, based on studying this philosophy together and sharing our experiences in faith, we change the way we view our lives and the world, thus inspiring one another to break through the many problems we face.

“When I think of all the life-changing moments that have taken place at SGI-USA district meetings over the years, it blows my mind. Many, many people’s lives have been saved by something they heard at one of our district meetings.”

The district is also where, since we must work so closely together, we accelerate our human revolution. Putting together a district meeting, for instance, has always helped me to do this. I have had to have the guts to share my (sometimes unusual) ideas for the meeting. I have had to try to understand opinions completely at odds (or so I thought) with my own. I have been in the middle of a couple of personality clashes, trying to help my friends harmonize (and survived!). All these experiences have led to understanding myself more and being better able to see things through others’ eyes.

What makes the district so

great is that our rough edges rub off against one another. Our differences start to complement one another. Each of us grows—the district grows—and kosen-rufu expands. The door opens wider.

In “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” Nichiren Daishonin encourages us, “All disciples and lay supporters of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the spirit of many in body but one in mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 217). What better place to do this than the district? Our differences may be blaring in such proximity, but we surely aren’t going to get beyond them by keeping our distance from one another.

I love all the districts I have had the honor to visit and been a member of, for this is where I have seen us truly transcend many things. I have seen how kosen-rufu actually happens. And I have thus felt part of the creation of the future. The 21st century, May 3, 2001, the second Seven Bells—where do these start? Nowhere but in the district. **WT**

FROM MESSAGE, 1

Contributions help to keep our organization running.

Did you know that in a typical month, we spend between \$400 and \$700 for utilities (gas, electricity, water) for each of our facilities? Multiply that by 69 community centers, two new activity centers and other facilities like the SGI Plaza in Santa Monica, Calif.

Here is a general breakdown of how our contributions are used:

- Asset acquisition (the purchase of buildings, properties and equipment, as well as building improvements)
- Operations (community center leases, insurance, maintenance, mailings, utilities, photocopy machines, telephones)
- Bookstore operations (purchasing, distribution costs and warehousing)
- Administrative (salaries, legal, accounting and administrative costs)
- Activities (for instance, renting space for the upcoming Youth Family Festivals)

Along with our own contri-

butions, there’s another aspect that is important: Enabling everyone to participate. We should not assume someone knows about this contribution activity. If you’re too shy to encourage others to participate, then just tell them how good you feel about making a contribution yourself. After all, this is May 2001. This period has been a target of our organization for decades. That alone makes it historic, and so what an auspicious time to make a financial contribution to kosen-rufu.

I am overflowing with pride at what we have accomplished to this point and what we will embark upon from now. Three steps may provide a starting point for the May commemorative contribution activity:

1. Pray that the May 2001 commemorative contribution will be the most successful ever—that we can strengthen our financial foundation for the 21st century.

2. Make a personal goal to take our own commitment one step further in one aspect of our lives, whether financial or otherwise.

3. Help one other person to participate at this historic time.

Our organization exists only because of our contributions—our time, our effort, our care and, yes, our money. During his 1996 trip to the United States, President Ikeda said, “To do, create or contribute something that benefits others, society and ourselves, and to dedicate ourselves as long as we live to that chal-

lenge—that is a life of true satisfaction, a life of value” (*SGI President Daisaku Ikeda’s Addresses in the United States*, p. 78). This isn’t some giant entity out there accomplishing all this—it’s all of us.

May 2001 is a historic time, not only because it’s the beginning of a new century, but because we, each of us, can take all of our past efforts and our future dreams one step further. **WT**

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GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND SUPPORTERS CONFERENCE AT THE FNCC

The Moon Is Over the Capital

Photo by PETER NELLHAUS

By LINDA THORNBURG
CORRESPONDENT

The moon rose full over Toda Lake, greeting those who had come to the SGI-USA's first Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Supporters Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, March 8-11.

The participants gathered from across the United States, and some even came from England, Australia, France, Italy, Switzerland and St. Martin. They ranged in age from 19 to 65 and were of every beautiful hue and color of the human rainbow.

SGI-USA Vice General Director Greg Martin congratulated attendees by quoting Nichiren Daishonin's "Letter to Niike," saying: "The journey from Kamakura to Kyoto takes twelve days. If you travel for eleven but stop with only one day remaining, how can you admire the moon over the capital?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1027). The moon is over the capital. Congratulations — you have persevered."

Many had traveled long, spir-

itual journeys, transforming with faith the sufferings of isolation, ridicule and abuse into fuel for building lives of joy and deep compassion. That profound faith was acknowledged and celebrated.

Such an acknowledgement and celebration were years in the making. GLBT members had so often heard that their faith was "shallow and self-centered" because they had not used it to change their sexuality. From the outset of the conference, it was clear there was a new direction in the SGI-USA organization that these members had given much of their lives to transform, simply to include them as they are.

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima opened his remarks saying: "This conference is a reflection of your hearts and your sense of determination. That all of you gathered here, at this time, is not a coincidence." He apologized for the "lack of understanding" and the "many difficult times."

He compared these members' struggles with the civil rights movement of the 1960s, saying



Members in dialogue at the first Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Supporters Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

that people who lead the way for human rights are often persecuted but that their efforts will be recognized as people look back in 40 or 50 years. "What we do here today will be felt instantly around the world," he said.

Cheers of gratitude and tears of healing flowed with the reading of President Ikeda's message (see box), through the memorial for members lost to HIV/AIDS, ignorance and ne-

glect, and through the very last heart-opening experience. The participants affirmed their profound mission to embrace and celebrate their lives as they are, eradicating the self-doubt, misunderstanding, and hatred that mark homophobia.

Greg Martin said he was transformed: "I was made more deeply aware of the great courage GLBT members have to have just to be themselves. I

am more deeply aware of the depths of their struggles, even facing physical danger, simply for being who they are."

Linda Johnson, SGI-USA vice women's leader, who had given endless hours of encouragement at the conference, thanked participants for their honesty and faith. "You have a profound mission," she said, "to show people who believe they have limitations that there are none." WT

Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD



SGI-USA Vice General Director Gary Murie (center) enjoys a meal and dialogue with fellow conference participants.

Photo by JEAN PRITCHARD



SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima (right) congratulates participants on the historic conference.

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE GLBT CONFERENCE

Live With Pride, Confidence and Courage

My heartfelt congratulations on your Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Supporters Conference! I ask that all of you who have gathered today please enjoy your dialogues and encourage one another to your hearts' content, so that you may move forward through building a network of human harmony.

As Nichiren Daishonin states, "Through the example of one person all living

beings become equal" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 564), Buddhism upholds equality and expounds supreme humanism. All human beings have equal rights. There is no difference whatsoever in their inherent dignity. So no matter what you may face, please live with pride, confidence and courage.

To live with dignity, we must devote ourselves to chanting prayer, we will be stronger,

brighter and happier.

Please be true to yourself and live free, for you all embody the Mystic Law. Contribute to your communities and society out of your desire for the happiness of many others. In these efforts shines the splendid beauty of life.

I am praying from the bottom of my heart for your great happiness, peace and safety.

March 8, 2001
Daisaku Ikeda