



EXPERIENCE

Sanjay Gaur confronts dyslexia as he works to solve global environmental problems.

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE TO THE SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS

An Inner Transformation of Each Person

“Only through seeking an inner transformation for each person, based on the ideal of respect for individual life, can we achieve a fundamental transformation of our society,” SGI President Ikeda says.

Congratulations on holding your historic and momentous SGI-USA Family Youth Festivals and Victory Over Violence activities!

Our SGI friends in 165 countries throughout the world have been praising and lauding your courageous progress in standing up to create a society based on mutual respect for our shared humanity that is free of violence.

I especially want to acknowledge the youth of SGI-USA, who have been working hard at the core of this movement. You have developed splendidly! Without a doubt, you have achieved victory! Nothing could make me happier! To the youth, I offer my utmost respect and applaud each one of you!

To the men and women who have constantly supported these young people, sharing in their struggles, I offer my sincere appreciation.

I extend my gratitude as well to all those who are gathering and to the many individuals and organizations who have honored us with their assistance and support of the Victory Over Violence project. Thank you all very much!

Seven hundred years ago, Nichiren Daishonin established the basis for world peace with the spirit of securing the peace of the land by establishing the

truth (Jpn *rissho ankoku*). He asserts, “Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 15). By “this one evil” he means the fear and hatred that lies within the people’s hearts.

Our activities to overcome violence, which begin with transforming and expanding the capacity of our hearts, constitute a magnificent peace movement to challenge those social misconceptions and distortions of the human heart that give rise to violence. Victory Over Violence accords precisely with this spirit of Buddhism. I am absolutely convinced that this movement, led by trailblazing global citizens, is instrumental to broadening the solidarity of courage and virtue necessary to surmount violence in today’s society.

When we look at the reality of today’s world, it is evident that honest, ordinary people are most frequently the victims of violence. In addition, people who possess the least social position or power are the ones who suffer the most from discrimination.

What will end people’s suffering? The fundamental solution lies not in politics, economics, government, the media or in the law alone. Only through seeking an inner transformation for each person, based on the ideal of respect for individual life, can we achieve a fundamental transformation of our society.

When we tolerate violence, both the victim and the offender will suffer, and clouds of anguish will envelop their hearts. In contrast, when we rise above violence, both are able to rejoice from the depths of their lives. In his lyrics for the song “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s 9th Symphony, the German poet Friedrich Schiller exclaims: “O Friends no more



Photo by STEPHANIE SYDNEY

Young people in Los Angeles take a break during a rehearsal for their Sept. 15 family youth festival.

these sounds! Let us sing more cheerful songs, more full of joy!” Just as Beethoven expressed his triumph with this song, your joyous gatherings this summer are your own songs of triumph to be heard throughout your communities!

This summer, more than 100,000 courageous hearts throughout the United States will join to celebrate their shared humanity by singing Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” a song that resounds with a universal message of equality. Together, let’s pave the way for a hope-filled 21st century!

My dear friends, I am always praying for your good health and happiness.

Daisaku Ikeda

(Right) The youth of Hawaii perform in their family youth festival, July 7. Look for full coverage of the Hawaii festival in next week’s issue.

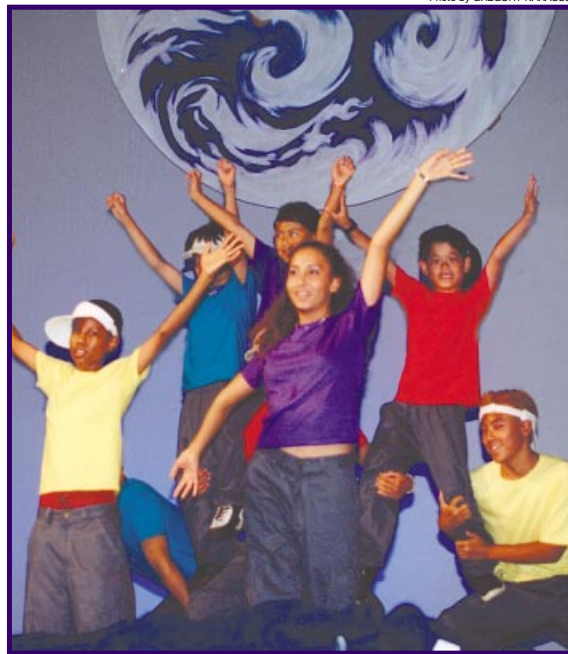


Photo by GREGORY NAKASUJI

Who Is the 'Original Teacher'?



By JEFF KRIGER

SGI-USA VICE STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER

This new series will clarify the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's mistaken interpretations of Nichiren Daishonin's writings.

A pamphlet distributed by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood aimed at inspiring doubt about the Gohonzon to which SGI members practice reads: "Be absolutely certain to be led to the attainment of Buddhahood by not breaking from the original Master of all mankind." ("Admonitions against Slander," *Shinpen*, p. 1040; ref. *M.W.*, Vol. 1, p. 166). This explains that we must completely follow the Way of Master and Disciple to realize our road to Buddhahood. For us, to proceed to the original Master of all mankind means that we must faithfully follow



the guidance of the High Priest, the general head priest" (*Refuting the Soka Gakkai's "Counterfeit Object of Worship": 100 Questions and Answers*, p. 9).

In *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, the above quote from "The Essentials for Attaining Buddhahood" (formerly titled "Admonitions against Slander") reads, "Above all, be sure to follow your original teacher so that you are able to attain Buddhahood" (WND, 748).

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is asking us to interpret these words to mean that following its head priest, Nikken Abe, is to follow the "original Master of all mankind."

Honju is the Japanese term translated by the priesthood here as "the original Master of all mankind" and in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* as "original teacher." *Hon* of *honju* means original, fundamental or true, and *ju* means to follow. *Honju* therefore literally means whom, or that which, one originally followed, or one's original teacher.

Differences in wording aside, these two translations communicate the same basic message: We should not be mistaken as to who our original teacher of Buddhism is, and we should take care to follow that teacher always. Immediately after the quoted sentence, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Shakyamuni Buddha is the original teacher for all people, and moreover, he is endowed with the virtues of sovereign and parent. Because I have expounded this teaching, I have been exiled and almost killed" (WND, 748).

Earlier in this writing, the Daishonin points out that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the embodiment of the fusion of reality and wisdom that is entrusted by the Buddha to Bodhisattva Superior Practices and others to propagate in the Latter Day

of the Law.

While referring to Shakyamuni Buddha as the "original teacher," the Daishonin also makes clear that he himself is fulfilling the mission of Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, to whom the Buddha specifically entrusted the task of upholding and spreading this teaching.

"Shakyamuni Buddha" mentioned above is not the Shakyamuni historically depicted, the Buddha who attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree. Instead, this is the Shakyamuni revealed in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, who actually first attained enlightenment in the remote past, countless kalpas ago. Even this Buddha became enlightened at a particular point in time through his practice of the Law always present in the universe. That Law is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the original teacher by which all Buddhas, including Shakyamuni, attain enlightenment.

In addition, from the standpoint of faith, we should view the Daishonin—the Buddha who directly expounded that Law—as our original teacher.

A Buddhist teacher is one

who actively expounds the principle by which all people can overcome suffering and attain supreme happiness, enlightenment. The Daishonin, more than any Japanese person of his time, wrote and spoke tirelessly in order to teach ordinary people how to overcome suffering and achieve ultimate happiness. In these writings, he expresses his immense, compassionate will for the happiness of all people in the future.

Who is qualified to share his mission as a genuine teacher of Buddhism? The Daishonin clarifies, "If you are the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (WND, 385). This is the key to what it means to "follow" one's original teacher. It is not to passively obey or show deference, but to teach the Law with the same mind—the same compassionate spirit and courage—as one's original teacher. This should be the standard by which we assess any teacher of the Daishonin's Buddhism, as well as our own bodhisattva practice.

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, in asserting that following Nikken Abe is to follow one's "original teacher," makes no mention of our true original teacher—Nichiren Daishonin. Such assertions are precisely what this Goshu passage warns us against. **WT**

Protective Forces Come From Within



By DORIS McCLOSKEY

GREAT LAKES REGION WOMEN'S LEADER

From "The Supremacy of the Law," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 612–17.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo stated, "The stronger one's faith, the greater the protection of the gods." So long as one maintains firm faith, one is certain to receive the great protection of the gods. I say this for your sake. I know your faith has always been admirable, but now you must strengthen it more than ever. (WND, 614)

Nichiren Daishonin's main point here is that "the protection of the



gods" results from maintaining and strengthening our faith in Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The gods he mentions are the various forces inherent in life and the universe that manifest in nature, the environment and human beings.

It is our strong life-force that invokes the protection of these universal forces. And the stronger one's faith, the

greater the protection.

SGI President Ikeda explains: "Interestingly, gods that were worshiped in different localities of ancient India before the birth of Buddhism are described as assembling on Eagle Peak to hear the Lotus Sutra being preached. This is because the new teaching of Buddhism viewed such gods not as external existences governing human lives, as the non-Buddhist teachings had regarded them, but as functions inherent in human life and the life of the universe" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 91).

Strengthening our faith is the key to bringing forth this inherent power in our lives. By ceaselessly challenging ourselves to live vibrant lives through practice for oneself and others, we can tap our inexhaustible potential and learn to treasure each moment of life. At the same time, we can

eliminate all negative forces, such as self-destructiveness, from our lives. We can push negativity away from us and from those we care about. President Ikeda puts it this way: "The more we challenge and triumph over our problems, the stronger Buddhahood grows within us. In that sense, if our faith is strong, negative factors immediately transform into positive factors [protection], and loss transforms into merit. To a person of faith, everything that happens in life becomes a benefit" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 127).

Ours is a constant pursuit of firm faith and true reason: always reaching beyond our present stage of development, always improving, always seeking, always surpassing our current level, always following our own path—not comparing ourselves with others. When we say that Buddhism is true rea-

son, what we really mean is that through our continuous chanting of the ultimate Law of the universe, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we can continue to develop our lives and surroundings. Betterment of our lives, betterment of society, betterment of the world. Believing that we as individuals can cause everything to improve is what firm faith is all about. President Ikeda thus says: "Faith purifies reason, strengthens it, and elevates it. 'Pure faith' is at once thoroughly polished faith and rigorously tested reason" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 52).

The essence of faith in the Mystic Law is to awaken the protective forces in our lives and express them in our surroundings, in whatever situations we find ourselves in. This is exactly what Nichiren Daishonin did. Whatever happened to him, he turned it into something positive. When we practice Buddhism with firm faith, there is nothing that can defeat us. There is nothing that can stop us from becoming completely happy. **WT**

The study materials for the advanced exam are the same as announced at the end of 1998. The materials are from three different sources. Selected Lectures on the Goshō, vol. 1, and The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, vol. 1, are available at SGI-USA bookstores and from the SGI-USA Mail Order Center. Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue is available on the SGI-USA Web site (www.sgi-usa.org).

Source No. 1: *Selected Lectures on the Goshō*, vol. 1, published by NSIC in 1980.

A) "The True Entity of Life" (pp. 3–24, 30–39, 58–70, 87–89).

B) "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law" (pp. 95–109, 121–23, 150–55, 169–72, 190–95).

C) "The True Object of Worship" (pp. 203–23, 240–81).

Source No. 2: *The Wisdom of Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, published by World Tribune Press.

D) The entire book (1st through 9th installments of the "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" series that began in the April 1995 *Seikyo Times* and continued in *Living Buddhism*).

Source No. 3: *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue*.

E) The entire pamphlet.

The Advanced-level exam will be made from material covered by the following sample questions.

Selected Lectures on the Goshō — "The True Entity of Life"

Q1:

In "The True Entity of Life," Nichiren Daishonin combines what two view points, from which two important writings, to explain the Gohonzon? (p. 17)

Q2:

With respect to the "true entity of all phenomena," what is the difference between the Lotus Sutra and other sutras? (pp. 19–20)

Q3:

The Daishonin states: "Where there is an environment, there is life within it. Miao-lo states, 'Both life (*shoho*) and its environment (*eho*) always manifest Myoho-enge-kyo.'" What makes the Lotus Sutra's view of life and environment superior to other teachings? (pp. 22–23)

STUDY DEPARTMENT

Advanced-level Examination Sample Questions

The Advanced-level Examination, which any current SGI-USA member who has passed the Intermediate-level or Senior-level Examination is eligible to take, will be held Oct. 21. Those who pass the exam will become post-graduates in the SGI-USA Study Department.

Questions 4–8 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote:

No one but Nichiren has ever revealed these teachings. T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo knew in their hearts but did not declare them aloud. There was reason for their silence: The Buddha had not entrusted them with the mission, the time had not yet come, and they had not been the Buddha's disciples from ages past. No one but Jogyo, Muhengyo and the other leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth can appear during the first five hundred years of the Latter Day to spread the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo. Only they are qualified to inscribe the object of worship which physically manifests the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated together in the Treasure Tower. This is because both the Law and the object of worship are the reality of *ichinen sanzen* revealed in the *Juryo* Chapter of the essential teaching.

Q4:

What is signified by "the Buddha had not entrusted them with this mission?" Who did the Buddha entrust and why? (p. 31)

Q5:

When is the right time to spread the Mystic Law and who understands it? (p. 31)

Q6:

As for where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth live, the Lotus Sutra identifies it as "the space below the earth." How do T'ien-t'ai and Nichiren Daishonin respectively describe the dwelling place of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth? (pp. 32–33)

Q7:

What is the difference in purpose between transient bod-



Photo by JONATHAN WILSON

hisattvas and the Bodhisattvas of the Earth? (pp. 32–33)

Q8:

What is the significance of the statement, "No one but Jogyo...can appear during the first five hundred years to spread the Law of Myoho-enge-kyo"? (pp. 34–35)

Questions 9–11 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote:

The two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, are merely functions of the true Buddha, while Myoho-enge-kyo is actually the true Buddha. The sutra explains this as "the *Tathagata's secret* and his mystic power." The "secret" refers to the entity of the Buddha's three properties and the "mystic power" to their functions. The entity is the true Buddha and the function a provisional Buddha.

Q9:

How are "entity" and "function" portrayed on the Gohonzon and what does that mean to our practice? (p. 36)

Q10:

What is the difference between the two categories of "true" and

"provisional" as applied to human life, and what comparison does T'ien-t'ai use to illustrate their relationship? (pp. 36–38)

Q11:

Summarize the meaning of the "Tathagata's secret" both in terms of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra as T'ien-t'ai defines it and from the perspective of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. (pp. 38–39)

Q12:

The Daishonin states, "No matter what, maintain your faith as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and forever exert yourself as Nichiren's disciple." Why is this statement the key to attaining Buddhahood and the spirit of the SGI? (pp. 58–61)

Questions 13–14 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote:

If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And since you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of the Buddha from the remotest past.

Q13:

How do we become "of the same mind as Nichiren?" (pp. 62–67)

Q14:

In addition to chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, what else identifies one as a Bodhisattva of the Earth? (pp. 62–67)

Q15:

The Daishonin states, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women." What is the significance of this statement in regards to the SGI efforts for kosen-rufu? (pp. 62–67)

Questions 16–17 are based on President Ikeda's explanation of the following quote:

Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn't this signify "emerging from the earth"?

Q16:

Why does this statement signify "emerging from the earth"? (pp. 67–70)

Q17:

What is the significance of the statement "Only I, Nichiren, first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo"? (p. 68)

Q18:

What part of "The True Entity of Life" is so important that President Ikeda encourages us to memorize it? Also explain the significance of this passage in terms of our practice. (pp. 87–89)

Q19:

Nichiren daishonin states, "Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism." In light of this passage, where does Buddhism exist and manifest itself? (pp. 87–89)

Selected Lectures on the Goshō — "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life"

Q20:

According to the opening portion of the lecture on "The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," what is the Buddhist view of life and death expressed in the title of this letter? (pp. 103–04)

Q21: What is the significance of our state of life in each successive moment? (p. 107)

Q22: What does “the ultimate Law” (*ichidaiji*) in the title signify? (pp. 108–09)

Q23: Nichiren Daishonin states, “Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless aeons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other.” Explain this passage literally and from a deeper viewpoint. (pp. 121–23)

Q24: The Daishonin states: “Therefore, to chant Myoho-enge-kyo with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death. To carry on this heritage is the most important task for Nichiren’s disciples, and that is precisely what it means to embrace the Lotus Sutra.” What does it mean to chant with “this realization”? (pp. 121–23)

Questions 25–27 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with one mind (*itai doshin*), transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death. Herein lies the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation. When you are so united, even the great hope for kosen-rufu can be fulfilled without fail.

Q25: What does it mean to chant with “one mind”? (pp. 150–55)

Q26: What relationship does diversity have to the Buddhist principle of unity? (pp. 150–55)

Q27: What is the “true goal of Nichiren’s propagation”? (p. 151)

Questions 28–29 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

Gold can neither be burned by fire nor corroded or swept away by water, but iron is vulnerable to both. A wise person is like

gold and a fool like iron. You are like pure gold because you embrace the “gold” of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra reads in part, “Sumeru is the loftiest of all mountains. The Lotus Sutra is likewise the loftiest of all the sutras.” It also states, “The good fortune of the believer cannot be burned by fire or washed away by water.”

Q28: What is the meaning of the analogy comparing gold and iron to a wise person and a foolish one? (pp. 169–72)

Q29: In terms of our lives, what do fire and water symbolize? (pp. 169–70)

Questions 30–31 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in your life. Only then will you realize that earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of life and death are nirvana. Without the lifeblood of faith, it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra.

Q30: What does this passage tell us about the role of faith in terms of our practice to the Gohonzon? (pp. 190–95)

Q31: What does it mean for our faith to be “steadfast and correct” at the moment of death, and what awareness does this teach us to pray with? (p. 191)

Q32: Where and to what extent does the “heritage of the ultimate law” flow? (pp. 193–94)

Selected Lectures on the Goshō — “The True Object of Worship”

Q33: What does the Daishonin mean when he talks about “Shakyamuni” and “the Lotus Sutra” from the standpoint of his own enlightenment? (pp. 207–09)

Q34: Explain the inscription of the Gohonzon in terms of the Person and the Law. (pp. 207–10)

Q35: What is the meaning of the three powerful enemies in terms of Nichiren Daishonin’s life? (pp. 210–11)

Q36: In Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, what does it mean to “observe one’s mind and to find the Ten Worlds within it”? (p. 213)

Q37: What is the difference between “a Buddha” and “a common mortal”? (p. 214)

Q38: What tends to result from having a “subservient attitude” toward an object of worship? (p. 216)

Q39: Discuss the Three Great Secret Laws in terms of the One Great Secret Law (pp. 217–18)

Questions 40–41 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

An arbitrary interpretation of these quotations may distort their meaning, but in essence they mean that Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myoho-enge-kyo. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was.

Q40: In this passage, Nichiren Daishonin explains the principle of “embracing the Gohonzon is attaining Buddhahood” (*juji soku kanjin*). Explain this principle in terms of practice. (pp. 240–45)

Q41: Beyond its literal meaning, how should we interpret the phrase “Shakyamuni’s practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase Myoho-enge-kyo” from the standpoint of the Daishonin’s intent? (pp. 242–44)

Q42: What is the difference between the Buddhism of the True Cause and that of the True Effect? (p. 246)

Q43: How can those who believe in the Gohonzon today, in the Latter Day of the Law, apply the message of the Parable of the Three Carts and the Burning House? (pp. 255–56)

Q44: Explain the significance of the

phrase that opens the verse section of the Life Span (sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra that reads “*ji ga toku bu(tsu) rai,*” meaning, “Since I attained Buddhahood. . . .”) (p. 257)

Q45: What is the meaning of the statement, “The enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha is our own flesh and blood. His practices and resulting virtues are our bones and marrow”? (pp. 264–67)

Questions 46–50 are based on President Ikeda’s explanation of the following quote:

Chapter Eleven of the Lotus says: “Those who choose to protect this sutra serve Taho Buddha and me. . . . They also serve all the other Buddhas present who dignify and glorify all the worlds.” Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas in the ten directions represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves. By searching them out within us, we can receive the benefits of Shakyamuni, Taho, and all the other Buddhas. This is what is meant by the following passage in Chapter Ten: “If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment.”

Q46: Explain this passage in terms of the three enlightened properties of life. (pp. 268–69)

Q47: What does it mean to “choose to protect this sutra”? (pp. 268–71)

Q48: What is the meaning of “If one hears the Law for even a single moment, he will be able to attain perfect enlightenment.” (pp. 268–72)

Q49: If hearing is not merely listening, but life-to-life interchange, what hinders our “hearing”? (pp. 271–74)

Q50: In his explanation of this passage, President Ikeda warns us of the danger of “hatred and jealousy” (*onshitsu*). What guidance does he give for overcoming this danger? (pp. 272–75)

Q51: Nichiren Daishonin states: “The Juryo chapter states: ‘Once I also practiced bodhisattva austerities, and the life which I then acquired has yet to be exhausted. My life will last twice as many aeons from now.’ He was speaking of the world of Bodhisattva

within ourselves. The bodhisattvas of the earth are the followers of the Lord Shakyamuni.” What is the function of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in terms of supporting our inner life-condition? (pp. 277–78)

The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Volume 1

Q52: The Daishonin states: “The teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures all partially explain the phenomena inherent in one’s life. They do not explain them as the Lotus Sutra does.” In what manner does the Lotus Sutra give other teachings and philosophies their proper perspective? (p. 13)

Q53: What negative effects may result from basing our view of life solely on “the teachings such as those of the non-Buddhist writings and those of the Hinayana and provisional Mahayana Buddhist scriptures,” instead of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 13)

Q54: The Lotus Sutra begins with the phrase “This is what I heard.” In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” how does Nichiren Daishonin interpret this phrase? (p. 16)

Q55: The Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings states: “His body neither existing nor not existing, neither caused nor conditioned, neither self nor other. . . .” What does “his body” refer to in the context of the sutra? How

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did second Soka Gakkai president Toda interpret the meaning of "his body"? What is the significance of Mr. Toda's realization to humankind? (pp. 22-23)

Q56: What does Nichiren Daishonin say are the three meanings of myo [of *myoho*, the Mystic Law]? These are the attributes of what? (p. 24)

Q57: In the Lotus Sutra, what is the meaning of the expression "teacher of the Law"? (p. 50)

Q58: The Daishonin states: "When one knows the Lotus Sutra, one understands the meaning of all worldly affairs." In light of this passage, what is the primary focus of the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 55)

Q59: The Daishonin spoke of the Lotus Sutra in terms of its comprehensive, abbreviated and essential forms. What is the essential and most appropriate form of the Lotus Sutra for today's practice? (p. 68)

Q60: The Lotus Sutra begins with the passage "This is what I heard." From the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, what is the essence of this passage? (pp. 73-75)

Q61: What is the significance of the assembly of various beings at Eagle Peak as described in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra? What do those beings in the assembly signify in terms of the Ten Worlds? (p. 86)

Q62: In the Lotus Sutra, there is no distinction between men and women in attaining Buddhahood. Substantiate this claim using more than one example

from the sutra. (p. 88)

Q63: Nichiren Daishonin states: "Abutsu-bo is therefore the treasure tower itself, and the treasure tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful." In light of this passage, what is the symbolic meaning of the treasure tower in the Lotus Sutra? What does it teach us? (p. 93)

Q64: According to the Daishonin, what does it mean to "reside in the Ceremony in the Air"? Explain the significance of the Lotus Sutra's progression from the first assembly on Eagle Peak to the Ceremony in the Air and back again to Eagle Peak in terms of our practice. (pp. 96-97)

Q65: What is the distinction between Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and Shakyamuni's Buddhism from the viewpoint of the three assemblies and the two places? (pp. 97-99)

Q66: The Daishonin states: "The nine worlds have the potential for Buddhahood" and "Buddhahood retains the nine worlds." Explain each of these passages in terms of "the three assemblies in two places" as described in the Lotus Sutra. (p. 97)

Q67: The "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: "The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, appear in the world for one great reason alone." According to the sutra, what is the "one great reason" the Buddhas appear in the world? (pp. 114-15)

Q68: What is the implication of the Buddha seeking to open the door of Buddha wisdom [the

state of Buddhahood] to living beings as described in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra? (p. 115)

Q69: What are the three types of expedient means that T'ien-t'ai identifies in his Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra? Which types of expedient means are discarded in the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra when it states, "honestly discarding expedient means"? (pp. 121-24)

Q70: Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy of the Law?" Explain this passage in terms of the "secret and mystic expedient." (p. 128)

Q71: Explain the concept of "the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle." In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, how is the one vehicle expounded? (p. 140)

Q72: What is the meaning of "the unification of the three vehicles within the one vehicle"? Explain the two aspects of the unification. (p. 142)

Q73: The Daishonin states: "If the worlds of the two vehicles do not attain Buddhahood, then the worlds of the two vehicles within each of the other eight worlds will not attain Buddhahood. And if the worlds of the two vehicles within each of the other eight worlds do not attain Buddhahood, then none of the other eight worlds will attain Buddhahood." In light of this passage, compare the Lotus Sutra with the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings in terms of the enlightenment of the two vehicles and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, and explain the equality of all living beings as expounded in the Lotus Sutra. (pp. 148-49)

Q74: In the "Expedient Means" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni expresses his goal to "make all persons equal to me, without any distinction between us." What Buddhist principle explains why it is possible for the Buddha's disciples to share the same goal and to practice the way of the oneness of mentor and disciple? (p. 156)

Q75: Nichikan, the 26th high priest, emphasized that striving to attain the same state of life as the Daishonin is the very essence of Buddhism. Nichikan states: "We ourselves manifest the life of the founder, Nichiren Daishonin" and "our lives immediately become the Gohonzon of 'three thousand realms in a sin-

gle moment of life,' the entity of the founder, Nichiren Daishonin." What does Nichikan say we must do to make this possible? Contrast Nichikan's view with the position of the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. (pp. 159-60)

Q76: How does Nichiren Daishonin explain the meaning of "consistency from beginning to end" from the standpoint of the Buddha's enlightenment? What does the Daishonin say is "the reason the Lotus Sutra is acclaimed for its great impartial wisdom"? (p. 172)

Q77: In "On Attaining Buddhahood" the Daishonin writes: "Therefore, when you chant myoho and recite renga, you must summon up deep faith that Myohorenge-kyo is your life itself." Explain this passage in terms of the true entity of all phenomena. (p. 182)

"Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue"

Q78: How do Nichiren Shoshu and the SGI differ with regard to their views of equality, the heritage of the Law and the Gohonzon? (pp. 13-16)

Q79: Discuss the true significance of "eye-opening" in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. (pp. 20-22)

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SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NEW POEM FOR YOUTH

O the Joyous Dance of Youth!

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS



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

*I will resolutely face
And triumph over
The billowing onslaughts
Of hardship
That may come my way!
I will fight to the end,
Concluding each challenge
With victory!*

*My struggle
Is unending,
Until I sleep,
Until I die,
Even in my dreams,
I will continue
To fight for justice.*

*Foolish insults
Do not concern me,
For we are champions
Of the spirit.*

*Nor do the repeated lashes of criticism
Inspired by jealousy
Have any significance for me,
One who lives true
To his own resolutions.*

*I have
A mission,
Conviction,
Wisdom,
And I shine
With a victorious spirit.
I know full well
That baseless slander
Is the work of cowards.*

*My young friends!
My beloved young friends!
Rigorously denounce evil.
Live strongly,
Fight bravely,
Even amid betrayal and turmoil,
And emerge triumphant.*

*There is no need
To join the ranks
Of outspoken commentators
Grown arrogant with celebrity.
For the words that flow
From their pitiful mouths
Are bereft of deep convictions
Or long-term goals,
And lack a solid view of life
And the world.*

*My young friends!
Do not abandon
Your most powerful weapon*

*In the struggle for justice and truth—
The power of speech
Like a roaring lion!*

*My young friends!
To fear death
Casts a stain on one's eternal honor.
Never forsake
The undying honor
That is faith.*

*And
Day after passing day,
Compose without fail
A vital and immortal
Diary of your life.*

*Those who possess a towering spirit
Can live in rhythm
With all things
In the universe.
For be it the ocean,
The sky,
The open plains—
Therein
The true law,
Though intangible
Like a dream,
Exists without question.*

*I am blessed
With countless allies;
I am armed
With a powerful law
For achieving eternal victory.*

*My young friends,
You possess
The sword known as conviction,
The sword known as truth,
The sword known as faith!*

*Those who seek
To sunder your unity
Will suffer the accursed fate
Of ultimate and inevitable ruin,
Targets of the anger
Of Buddhas and heavenly deities
Throughout the universe.*

*Have firm conviction!
Fight with confident voice!
The profound law governing our lives
Is always overflowing with energy,
Like pure spring water
Bubbling forth unceasingly.
At all times,
With an unflagging life-force
Like the immortal phoenix,
You are fully prepared
To take on any battle
On behalf of good-hearted, honest people.*

*Do not forget to avenge
The insults of those past persecutions!
Strive fearlessly
Until you have dispersed
Those antagonistic forces,
Those insane slanderers,
Who in those bitter days
Besieged
A champion of truth and justice!*

*For through that struggle,
Your lives will be adorned
With a brilliant crown
That will sparkle and shine
In both life and death
Throughout the three existences.*

*Your youthfulness in years
Makes you superior to any sovereign.
Monarchs across the ages
Have wept with envy
At the sight of unknown young men and women
In the bloom of youth.*

*With no more than
Your youth, your vigor, your vitality,
You possess
The most precious jeweled crown.*

*No one can hold a candle to you.
Not even the world's most powerful ruler
Can ever hope to compare.*

*The noblest people are often found
Among the most humble and unknown.
As for the renowned,
Whose achievements have brought them fame,
It is those who possess
A bright seeking spirit for the Way
Who are truly respectable.*



Photos by STEPHANIE SYDNEY



Nichiren Daishonin tells us:
 "At first only Nichiren
 Chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo,
 But then two, three, and
 a hundred followed,
 Chanting and teaching others.
 Propagation will unfold this way
 In the future as well.
 Does this not signify
 'Emerging from the earth'?"
 (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 385)

Now, in this intense struggle
 Of the new century,
 The next generation
 Of the young men's division
 Has "emerged from the earth"
 And begun to shine.
 O the fresh energy
 Of this great multitude!
 O their joyous dance,
 Which we have eagerly anticipated!

Around and after the time
 Of the swirling tempest of 1979,
 When the last of the first Seven Bells
 Drew to a close,
 This new generation of young men
 Was born and raised.
 Now, by mystic coincidence,
 With bold and courageous strength,
 They have begun to ring in
 The second set of Seven Bells.

These young men are fearless
 They are outgoing and open.
 They are the bright morning sun
 Signaling a new era of growth
 And development in kosen-rufu,
 As they boundlessly expand
 Their network of friendship and trust
 With energy and creativity.

The Daishonin, too,
 Encouraged the young Nanjo Tokimitsu,
 Telling him that in spreading the teaching
 Of infinite hope and truth,
 Youth must speak to youth,
 Youth must inspire youth.

The alliance
 Of this new generation of young men,
 Who are advancing into the 21st century
 Like a comet streaking across the sky,
 Destined to achieve victory and glory,
 Has been firmly established.

Despite being of an age
 When they want to have a good time,
 Despite living in an age
 When juvenile crime is on the rise,
 How sincere,
 How positive,
 How earnest,
 Are these young men
 Dedicated to living a meaningful youth!

The next generation
 Of young women's division members, too,
 Is making bright contributions
 That are winning the applause of all.
 Pure and lovely,
 How energetically these young women
 Exert themselves!
 O their noble dedication!
 O the speed of their communications!
 O the vibrant, diamond-like strength
 With which they care for others!

Everyone praises these young women
 Who are the hope of all.
 Everyone is praying for their happiness
 And wishing that their vibrant spirit
 Might never fade.

They present a noble image
 Of a journey of life

That can only be described as magnificent,
 As they gaze at the future
 With clear, luminous eyes.

My young friends!
 Live on and through all trials!
 Never throw away
 The precious jewel
 That is your own life!
 Live on and through all adversity!

Whatever obstacles may confront you,
 Live on undefeated!
 Ever polishing your inner gem,
 Leave a history of accomplishment
 For the sake of society
 And for yourself.

Alexander the Great
 Was in his early 20s
 When he embarked
 On his historic expedition to the East
 Carrying only the treasure of hope!

Activist writer Victor Hugo
 At 20
 Began his war of words for truth
 With his first collection of poetry,
 Saying we must roar louder
 Than the rumble of thunder.

On the eve of the Meiji Restoration
 (1868),
 The famous Japanese reformer
 Takasugi Shinsaku,
 Not yet 25,
 Formed his famous
 Volunteer militia unit.
 The disciple could not rest
 Until he had defeated his mentor's enemies.
 [Shinsaku was a disciple of Yoshida Shoin, the
 revolutionary scholar, teacher and writer.]

The French thinker Simone Weil,
 Burning with youthful passion,
 At 20
 Became a fierce fighter
 For those who were oppressed
 And threw herself into activities
 For peace and the welfare of humanity.

America's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
 Was 26
 When he assumed leadership
 In the struggle for human rights,
 Heading toward his glorious dream
 Of freedom, equality and dignity.

Helen Keller, embodiment of hope,
 Launched her efforts
 For the welfare of others
 In her mid-20s,
 Urging individuals
 To draw on the power
 Within their own lives
 To transform themselves
 And their environment,
 And to contribute to the society
 In which they live!

Kosen-rufu
 Could be described
 As an all-encompassing revolution.
 It constitutes a formula
 That secures a great path
 On which all things can advance
 In the direction of the highest good
 As we strive to carry out
 Our individual human revolution.

It promotes health
 And happiness;
 It is dedicated
 To others,
 To society,
 To peace,
 To culture,
 And
 To unity,
 To justice!

Those who wish to lead lives
 As slaves to fads and fashions
 Can do so.
 Those who wish to advocate

PLEASE SEE POEM, 8



FROM POEM, 7

*Different values
Can do so.
Those who wish to live
Self-centered lives
Pursuing only their own interests
Can do so.*

*But
Without achieving happiness
For ourselves and others,
All pursuits are hollow and meaningless.
Both philosophy
And Buddhism
Go deeper,
Teaching us to open our eyes
To the world,
While at the same time
Showing us that great meaning exists
In our immediate circumstances.*

*Let us study history,
Philosophy,
Religion!
Isn't it crucial
That humankind turn its gaze
To the metaphysical realm of the spirit?*

*Climbing the towering peak
Of Mount Everest
Is an act of courage.
Crossing the Pacific
In a yacht
Is an act of courage.
Traveling around the globe
Is an act of courage.*

*But
The journey within our own lives
Is far more courageous
And profound.
How are we to explore, discover,
And understand the inner depths
Of our own precious life,
Our most priceless possession?
This spiritual quest
Is far more important.*

*Isn't this
The direction we should aim for
From the 21st century
Into the future?
Isn't this
The direction of the right path
Of human conduct
We have dreamed of?*

*This is truly
Important;
It leads to genuine
Human security and peace.
Otherwise,
I fear
That a reversal—
Back to the war and strife
That have plagued our past—
Will begin to occur
In people's hearts.*

*O the time of youth!
Therein lies
Infinite brilliance,
Sunlight
That shines and dances,
The future,
Challenge,
Advancement,
Growth,
Hardship,
Success,
Disappointment,
Tragedy,
Glory,*

*And also
Twists and turns,
Patience,
Friendship,
Adventure.*

*In your future,
The whole world
Is waiting;
The shining promise of peace
Is waiting.*

*If you allow yourself to be defeated,
All that will await you there
In your future
Is a world of Hell,
Harsh and unrelenting.
Therefore,
Whatever momentous difficulties
You may encounter in life,
Fill your heart with courage
And surmount all challenges.
In courage
You will find
Justice,
Victory,
A bright future,
And vibrant joy.*

*Those who are fooled by honeyed words,
Who are swept away by ephemeral fads,
Who break their vows,
And who leave no trace of progress,
Also see the great sun of hope
Disappear from their lives.*

*My young friends!
Become youthful philosophers of action
And, up until your very last breath,
Fight faithfully for your beliefs
And act to realize them.*

*My young friends!
Will you drown in foolish,
intoxicating pleasures*

*Or will you challenge your situation
head-on
And become great victors of
supreme happiness
Who shine with eternal brilliance?*

*To win in that struggle,
It is crucial to denounce evil and injustice
And live strongly
For the cause of what is right and good
With the force of a tornado.*

*My young friends!
Do not let yourselves down
Or be defeated by your own weakness!
You yourselves
Are both the sovereign
And the people.*

*Live expansively!
Live far into the distant future!
Walk resolutely!
Strive confidently!*

*Extinguish
The darkness
With the brilliant sun
Of your spirit!
Sever
The chains of evil
That have long bound humanity
And stride boldly
Into a shining world of hope and dreams!*

*—In commemoration of the June 30
anniversary of the student division,
the July 11 anniversary of the young
men's division and the July 19 anniversary
of the young women's division.*

*—And in commemoration of the 50th
anniversary of our splendid Soka
Gakkai youth division.*

SGI President Ikeda is recognized throughout the world as a poet laureate.



the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'JWELED SWORD'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 2, PARTS 21-22

Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells the student division members: 'Unless you strive in all sincerity to deepen your faith, you will succumb to your inner weakness. But even if there is only one of you left, I will continue to encourage that one person and to work with that person to realize our goal.'

At his Kyoto University lecture, Shin'ichi Yamamoto addressed the male student who was thin and pale: "You don't have enough money to eat? That must be very tough. Let me help you out a little."

Embarrassed, the student replied, "No, please, that's all right. I can't accept that kind of help from you."

Shin'ichi smiled and said: "Don't be silly. I hope you will all think of me as an older brother. In that spirit, I intend to nurture each of you to become a person of great ability dedicated to the realization of peace and human happiness based on Buddhist ideals." This was Shin'ichi's firm conviction and desire.

Tomomasa Yamawaki, a graduate of Kyoto University who was now a judicial apprentice, also attended this first session of the lecture series on "One Hundred and Six Comparisons." He had joined the Soka Gakkai four years earlier. At that time, he was taking a long leave from school to tend

to his nephritis, and was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings while he was recuperating. As he practiced his new faith, he gradually regained his health and eventually returned to university. He studied for the bar exam and passed in the fall of 1961.

As he introduced himself, Yamawaki proudly announced his current status as a judicial apprentice. In that pride, however, one could sense a kind of arrogance that was covering for a lack of self-confidence. Nevertheless, Shin'ichi was glad that a member of the student division had managed to pass the difficult bar examination. He recalled how, when he had been arrested on trumped-up charges during the Osaka Incident, there was not a single attorney he could count on. None had the backbone to take a stand for justice. Even though they knew perfectly well that Shin'ichi was innocent, they all advised him to prepare for a guilty verdict. [In the Osaka Incident, President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth

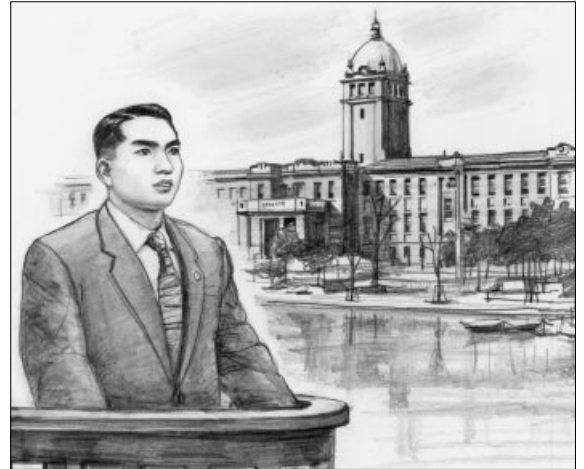
division chief of staff, was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in an Upper House by-election in Osaka in 1957. At the end of the court case that dragged on for almost five years, he was fully exonerated of all charges in January 1962.]

Shin'ichi had to fight alone to clear his name. Because of that experience, he had long awaited the emergence of attorneys who would uphold the Buddhist principle of respect for the dignity of life and fight for justice and humanism. Now here was Tomomasa Yamawaki, who had passed the bar examination and was about to participate in the lectures on "One Hundred and Six Comparisons."

Shin'ichi said to Yamawaki: "So you've become a judicial apprentice. That's quite an achievement. Please do your best as a pioneer!" To all of the members, he then remarked, "I will protect each of you as long as I live." In fact, he continued for years to guide and encourage the students. He gave them unwavering support in many different ways. When, for example, Yamawaki became a full-fledged attorney, he was looked to from the start as a legal advisor to the Soka Gakkai.

Yamawaki, however, came to regard the Soka Gakkai, a realm formed from bonds of trust, as an ideal place to realize his personal ambitions. Faith is a struggle between the potential for Buddhahood and the potential for devilish or destructive tendencies — between the good and the evil — that exist within our own lives. Our Buddhist practice, which enables us to polish and develop ourselves, is essential to defeating this inner destructive nature. But Yamawaki, who neglected to make earnest, genuine efforts to strengthen his faith, was an easy target for the devil king of the sixth heaven.

Later, when he officially became legal advisor to the Soka Gakkai, he carried favor with the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu in a plot to bring the organization under the priesthood's thumb and gain control of the Soka Gakkai himself.



Illustrations by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

When his ambitions were frustrated, he exploited his position as legal advisor to commit the preposterous crime of extortion against the Soka Gakkai, thereby revealing his true colors as a person of exceedingly malign nature.

Bent on destroying the Soka Gakkai even after serving time in prison for his crime, he would continue to conspire with the priesthood, shrewdly involving certain political forces and segments of the media.

Shin'ichi could see in Yamawaki's demeanor a considerable degree of dishonesty, arrogance and duplicity, and at times would strictly advise him about these shortcomings. But mostly he would warmly encourage and try to guide Yamawaki. Everyone has weaknesses. It is easy to break ties with people, but if we were to turn our backs on every person we deemed to have faults, we would be unable to help anyone grow or develop. Believing in the inherent goodness of human beings is the secret to fostering people; it is also the spirit of a Buddhist.

The more weaknesses or negative tendencies someone had, the more energy Shin'ichi put into encouraging that person. He tried to think of ways to help the person realize his or her full potential, and gave the person opportunities to take responsibility within the organization.

Shin'ichi was willing to forgive and embrace not only Yamawaki, but anyone who, de-

spite having been deceitful in the past, awakened to the importance of living with integrity and began working wholeheartedly to contribute to kosen-rufu. But this good faith was often taken advantage of. Shin'ichi, however, wasn't afraid of being hurt, and because he continued to put great effort into fostering people, he was able to raise capable individuals who came to be active in the various areas of endeavor necessary for the realization of peace based on Buddhist ideals.

After the participants had finished introducing themselves, Shin'ichi told them: "There will be many temptations along the way to achieving kosen-rufu. There will be obstacles. Unless you strive in all sincerity to deepen your faith, you will succumb to your inner weakness. Some among you here today may abandon your faith or betray the Soka Gakkai in the future. But even if there is only one of you left, I will continue to encourage that one person and to work with that person to realize our goal."

"That said, however, I hope all of you remain to the very end. And I hope that you will continue striving together with me to spread the Daishonin's teachings around the world as long as you live."

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



Leadership Appointments



Steve Saparstein
SGI-USA Men's
Secretariat Leader



Reiko Flores
Southern Zone
Young Women's Leader



Joe Ross
Southern Zone
Young Men's Leader



Ian McIlraith
Southern California
Zone Men's Leader

Laurie Wong
San Diego Region Women's
Leader

Sybil Sepassi
San Diego Region Vice
Women's Leader

John Smith
Southeastern Region Young
Men's Leader

Julie Kang
Southeastern Region Vice
Young Women's Leader

Donna Fabian
Caribbean Region Vice
Women's Leader

Charlot Boll
Hawaii No. 1 Region Vice
Women's Leader

Kim Mommsen
Midwest Region Young
Women's Leader

Bill Mackey
Rocky Mountain Region
Men's Leader

Sonia Roza
Florida Region Young
Women's Leader

Joanne Kawamoto
Hawaii No. 1 Region Vice
Women's Leader

Cybele Cochran
New York West Region
Student Division Leader

Brian Blaser
Rocky Mountain Region Vice
Young Men's Leader

Lalena Wolfe-Henninger
LA Coastal Region Vice
Young Women's Leader

Patricia Nakanishi
Hawaii No. 2 Region Vice
Women's Leader

Dawn Lomden
Philadelphia Region Vice
Women's Leader

Christian Martinez
Rocky Mountain Region
Student Division Leader

Dorney Burgdorf
East Bay Region Young
Women's Leader

Lisa Barnes Young
Great Lakes Region Young
Women's Leader

Hiro Matsui
Philadelphia Region Vice
Young Men's Leader

Katie Sypnieski
Sacramento Region Junior
High/High School Leader

Aisha Williams
East Bay Region Vice Young
Women's Leader

Howard Dunlavy
Midwest Region Men's
Leader

Merlene Rose
Rocky Mountain Region
Women's Leader

David Sypnieski
Sacramento Region Junior
High/High School Leader

Masayoshi Suga
Southeastern Region Vice
Young Men's Leader

Sachiko Sturgeon
Virginia/Carolina Region Vice
Women's Leader

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WE REALLY ARE EQUAL

EDITORIAL

By **JAMIE LIPTAN**
STAFF WRITER

By anointing anyone as inherently superior to ourselves, however subtly or innocently, we inevitably devalue ourselves. As SGI President Ikeda points out, this would be denying the power of our faith to transform our lives, bringing forth our own limitless potential.

Human beings are infinitely complex and unique creatures, endowed with characteristics and tendencies that find expression particular to each and never du-



licated in full by another. As a result, living together can be a beautiful symphony filled with harmonious melodies or an exercise in terribly frustrating discord.

This uniqueness extends into the circumstances in which we are born. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that the exact right mixture of familial strife or security, financial bounty or drought, and so on can inspire us to find the Mystic Law and give us the opportunity to fulfill our mission.

So our particularness should be a source of joy and celebra-

tion, and never be used to assign value judgments. The Daishonin is very clear about this point: "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" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385).

The very fact that we have been born in our circumstances, with the ability to practice and spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, speaks of our innate value and undeniable preciousness. None is greater than another; no one is more inherently fortunate than the person chanting next to them at their district meeting.

But discrimination can be a slippery little negative tendency, creeping in where we might never suspect. For example, there have been some misconceptions in our organization: that those born into SGI families — sometimes called "fortune babies" — are some-

how special, endowed with a charmed life and karmic immunity; that the length of one's practice equals the depth of one's faith; or that the number of times you've met SGI President Ikeda indicates the amount of your fortune.

Of course, these are wonderful things. However, we are all inherently fortunate and valuable, regardless of how our unique karma manifests.

"The Lotus Sutra does not allow for any discrimination," says President Ikeda. "All people are equally entitled to salvation. Thus, to deny equality is to deny the Lotus Sutra" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 25).

By anointing anyone as inherently superior to ourselves, however subtly or innocently, we inevitably devalue ourselves. As President Ikeda points out, this would be denying the power of our faith to transform our lives, bringing forth our own limitless potential. All human beings suffer and experience joy. The quantity of our suffering or joy is only important in our own process of enlightenment, and need not be held up to any standard of comparison.

The key is appreciation. Our

lives — and the lives of those around us — have manifested in the only way they could for our journey toward kosen-rufu to continue. President Ikeda has always encouraged us to understand the significance of our unique situation. Discussing appreciation for one's family, for instance, he told some young people: "You may wonder why you were born into your family, or why your parents aren't as kind as others, or why you are not blessed with a more beautiful home and a better family. You may even want to run away from home. But the fact is you were born to this particular family, in this particular place and on this planet Earth. You were not born into any other family. This fact encompasses the meaning of everything" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 53).

Through appreciating the uniqueness of the entirety of our lives and embracing our inherent value — and the value of everyone else — we can advance forward together without hesitation or doubt. We can help create the beautiful symphony that is kosen-rufu, a world of each person's infinite potential realized. **WT**

EXPERIENCE — SANJAY GAUR, LOS ANGELES

Confronting the Challenges in Front of Me

Sanjay Gaur uses his Buddhist practice to confront his dyslexia and fear of failure as he works for solutions to global environmental problems.

When I was in high school, I had the fortune to be an exchange student to Malaysia for a summer. I was already practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and very much looking forward to the experience of living abroad.

On one of our excursions, we were taken to an oyster farm where we could also view other wildlife. At one point we saw a group of monkeys in a grove of trees. The sight was rather astonishing. Not so much because of the monkeys or the trees, but because of the foot of garbage that lay beneath the trees. Trash that had been thrown into the river close by had collected and was literally piling up under the trees. It was then and there I realized that I wanted to help solve environmental problems throughout the world. Wherever there were people, there would be problems, and I was going to help.

With a new sense of mission, I applied and was accepted to the University of California at Santa Cruz, where I studied environmental issues. It was at this point that I also become more involved in SGI activities, specifically by helping a fellow student with his Buddhist practice.

One day, the student, who happened to be dyslexic, suggested that since I had difficulties reading out loud, I might be dyslexic as well. I ignored his suggestions and went on with life as usual.

We continued to get together to chant every week, and each time he would suggest that I might be dyslexic. I began to research how much it would cost to get tested for dyslexia. The test would cost \$800. I couldn't afford it, so I dismissed the issue.

In my second year of college, I became eligible to pursue both my bachelor's degree (in environmental studies) and master's degree (in economics) in a five-year program. But in order to qualify, I would have to take 20 units a quarter for a year, including the summertime.



While stationed with the Peace Corps in Bulgaria, Sanjay Gaur met his wife, Tatiana, and introduced her to Buddhism.

During this period, I also began to take SGI President Ikeda's guidance to heart. I would read it as if he was writing me a personal letter. In one guidance, he wrote, "I have never made a cowardly compromise." At that moment, I realized that I would be making a cowardly compromise if I did not accept the challenges in front of me. Not only would I need to attack my studies as never before, I needed to get tested for dyslexia.

During my very last quarter, I found a facility where I could test for dyslexia free of charge. Six weeks before receiving two degrees from college, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. I knew college had been difficult, but now I understood why.

After successfully graduating — dyslexia and all — I joined the United States Peace Corps. I was stationed in Bulgaria, where I met my wife, Tatiana Koleva, whom I introduced to Buddhism.

Once I returned to the United States, I was charged up and ready to do some work on environmental policy. Soon I was offered a position for one of the largest water utility organizations in the world. I would be working in a department that was doing cutting edge work on the economics of water. After two months on the job, though, I realized that I was only hired to increase an already excessive empire of employees. I faxed, I copied, but I did not do much more than that. I was a prisoner in a cubicle.

As I chanted about my situation, I realized that I might not

be able create a lot of value at my job, but I could create value by participating in SGI activities. This is when I started to take active responsibility for one of the local SGI-USA community centers. I treated it with the same respect I would my home.

Within a month I found a new job that doubled my salary, allowed me to work at home and came with a boss who continually encouraged me to challenge myself. However, the desire to do the kind of environmental work that could influence society on a grand scale continued to nag at me. I knew that in order for me to have that kind of job, I would need an additional degree from a top university.

The problem was, this meant applying to graduate school — something I was not looking forward to. I feared the numerous rejections that might follow as a result of my learning disability. However, I remembered President Ikeda's guidance about never making a cowardly compromise. Again, the challenge was in front of me. I started to study for the graduate record exam.

I needed high marks to get into the top schools with this exam, and I knew that this would not be easy. When I got my results, I was crushed. I only scored in the 70th percentile. I felt the future looked bleak.

When my wife asked me how I did, I told her that I would not be applying to graduate school. Up to this point, we had agreed that we would both apply to graduate school, and I was particularly insistent in my en-

couragement to her. My wife then informed me that if she had to apply, so did I. Even though I felt defeated, I swallowed my pride and applied.

I applied only to the top schools that would address environmental problems. As I chanted for a successful outcome, I also began to chant to find out why I am dyslexic. I realized that with my learning disability, I had to check and recheck everything I read and wrote. When you are constantly second guessing yourself, humility sets in. If not for the dyslexia, perhaps I would have become a very arrogant person. I started to chant with appreciation for this obstacle.

I began receiving rejection letters one after another. But after all, I was accepted to a school that seemed somewhat out of reach: The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. I also received a \$10,000 scholarship for each year. Above and beyond my own expectations, I am starting in the fall. (My wife was accepted to law school at the University of California at Hastings and will begin the next school year.)

This experience has taught me that through faith in the Gohonzon, anyone can fulfill their dreams. The question is how willing one is to win over themselves and help others become happy.

President Ikeda once wrote: "There may be times when others seem enviable. But others are others and you are you. Rather than comparing your every joy and sorrow to that of others, you should aim to surpass your limits in the situation you currently find yourself in" (*A Conversation With Youth*, p. 34). It would be very easy for me to avoid the challenges that have arisen in my life because of my dyslexia. But if I did, I would not be living in the spirit of the practice, nor would I be living true to myself.

My determination is to continue to pursue my studies with even stronger drive, and one day become an advisor to the president on environmental issues.

I was able to achieve some of my goals before I was aware of my dyslexia, and there is no reason now to allow it to prevent me from achieving my dreams. The challenges that come will not deter me, only spur me to further growth. **WT**

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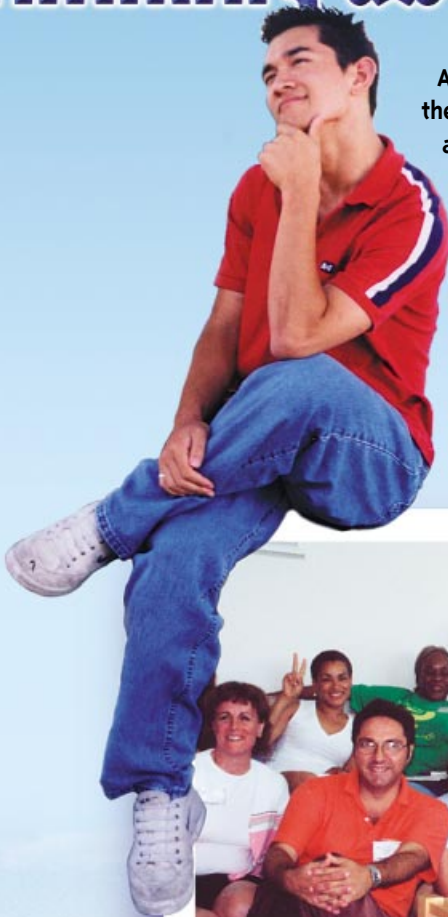
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Thinking about going to the FNCC?

Amid the oak trees and sabal palms native to the Florida landscape, the SGI-USA's Florida Nature and Culture Center conferences offer discussions on Buddhist philosophy and everyday life experience in a relaxing atmosphere. In its first five years, the center has welcomed nearly 20,000 people, providing faith encouragement and rejuvenation to participants from throughout the world.

Come to the FNCC, and leave energized and filled with hope.



*This could be you!

Upcoming Conferences:

Aug. 2-5 Student Division Conference

Aug. 9-12 Jr. High & High School Division Conference

Aug. 16-19 Raising Our Children Conference

Aug. 23-26 Men's Conference

Sept. 6-9 Japanese Language Conference

Sept. 13-16 Thai/Cambodian/Vietnamese Language Conference

Sept. 20-23 Mentor and Disciple Relationship Conference

To sign up for a conference, or for more information, please contact your respective Zone office:

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