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Living the GOSHO

“One” Is the Mother of All

If we inquire into the origin of Mount Sumeru, we find that it began with a single speck of dust; and likewise, the great ocean began with a single drop of dew. One added to one becomes two, two becomes three, and so on to make ten, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, or an asamkha.¹ Yet “one” is the mother of all.

- “The Blessings of the Lotus Sutra” (WND-1, 667).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- *Daisaku Ikeda*

A magnificent new era of worldwide kosen-rufu also begins with each of us taking one step forward.

In the family, when one person stands up in faith, all their family members, even those who are not practicing Nichiren Buddhism, will be embraced in the light of the Mystic Law without fail.

And in the community, when one person takes initiative to share Buddhism with those they are connected to, kosen-rufu will unfold substantially from there. As such honorable pioneers, let’s each take another small, yet significant, step forward again today!

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SGI President Ikeda’s Editorial

Never Forgetting the Original Spirit of Our Vow for Kosen-rufu

We have all been born with the power to become happy, with the power to triumph over every trial and adversity. A positive philosophy and beliefs enable us to unlock that power.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), philosopher and poet of the American Renaissance, declared that a hero is one who is “immovably centered.”

The members of the SGI, who are “immovably centered” in their faith in the unsurpassed teachings of Nichiren Buddhism, are heroes beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Ordinary people who follow the teachings of perfect and immediate enlightenment [i.e., the Lotus Sutra] understand this [i.e., the fact that the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo make up the entity of the individual] even when only beginners in religious practice, and therefore they are able to attain Buddhahood in their present form, to enjoy the entity that is diamond-hard and indestructible” (WND-2, 850).

Once we embrace faith in the Mystic Law, boundless and inexhaustible life-force for creating happiness and victory wells forth from within us.

In the early days of our movement, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda encouraged a sincere member who had joined the organization in the face of family opposition and others’ criticism: “There’s no need to worry. Practicing the

Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches us how to attain supreme happiness. It sets us on the course to ultimate victory. It paves a solid way to peace. You have encountered the great Law, which you can have absolute faith in. Those who have found a path to which they can dedicate their lives without regret are strong!”

The Lotus Sutra describes the “benefit of the fiftieth hearer” in a chain of propagation (LSOC18, 286–91). In other words, a person who rejoices on learning of the Mystic Law shares it with a second, who then joyfully shares it with a third, and so on. Even the fiftieth person in that sequence who responds with joy receives immeasurable and boundless benefit. How infinitely greater, then, is the benefit that accrues to the first hearer who rejoices and initiates this process, the sutra states.

We of the SGI have accelerated the momentum of kosen-rufu by spreading waves of joy through new members happily sharing Nichiren Buddhism with others.

Looking back at our membership records, in December 1957—when we achieved Mr. Toda’s cherished goal of 750,000 member households—80 percent of the membership had joined

A life of value creation is a battle against inertia. The golden rule for a life of continuous advance and progress is never forgetting our original purpose and resolve.

within just the preceding three years. This made the Soka Gakkai a very new movement.

One of the members who joined the Gakkai at that time, a women’s division member from Yamaguchi Prefecture, has steadfastly maintained her original joy-filled spirit of faith, like flowing water. She refused to be daunted by the harassment of ungrateful and arrogant priests. She also overcame financial hardship, and today enjoys widespread trust in her community as the director of a children’s day care center. Her entire family is actively engaged in sharing Nichiren Buddhism with others, and in warmly encouraging and fostering new members. This admirable women’s division member says: “I love the Soka Gakkai, which taught me that by overcoming suffering and becoming truly happy ourselves based on Nichiren Buddhism, we can help many others. ‘One is the mother of ten thousand’ (WND-1, 131)—fostering a single new member is the starting point for creating a great multitude of capable people.”

I am happy to say that precious new members are now emerging in a steady stream throughout Japan and around the world. They are all noble Bodhisattvas of the Earth who are linked by wondrous ties from time without beginning and have joyously appeared at this moment in accord with their vow.

Many of our new members have eagerly challenged the introductory study exam and begun initiating Buddhist dialogue with others. Their fresh, vibrant



spirit of faith is the driving force of hope for opening a new era of worldwide kosen-rufu.

A life of value creation is a battle against inertia. The golden rule for a life of continuous advance and progress is never forgetting our original purpose and resolve.

By chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and always returning to the original essence of our life—our inner Buddhahood—that has existed since time without beginning, we start afresh and renew our vow for kosen-rufu.

Let’s adorn February—our traditional month of propagation—with joy, as we chant, study, and talk with our new members, the treasures of the SGI family.

Let’s forge ahead powerfully on the path to fresh victories! Constantly rejoicing, we strive together as comrades from time without beginning.

(Translated from the February 2014 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal)



Striving with Energy, Joy, and a Powerful Sense of Mission

We have made a fresh, dynamic start to the year with our wonderfully vibrant New Year's gongyo meetings. Unperturbed by the winter cold, our members are brimming with eager enthusiasm to spread our movement for kosen-rufu.

To all our members in snowbound regions such as Hokkaido, Tohoku, Shin'etsu, and Hokuriku, please make your health and safety your first priority as you carry out your activities.

I am praying earnestly every day for the health, happiness, and victory of all our members.

Nichiren Daishonin, who propagated the Mystic Law while enduring great hardships, declared: "The blessings of the Lotus Sutra, which I have recited over these many years, must be vaster even than the sky" (WND-1, 1070). When we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo infused with a vow for kosen-rufu, our lives will overflow with blessings.

All of our present efforts to engage in dialogue and spread the great philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, inspired by the wish to help others become happy, endow our lives with boundless and immeasurable benefit.

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Let's each boldly take the lead for kosen-rufu, striving and winning together.

Let's create a personal record of achievement of which we can declare, "I have no regrets!"

Our extraordinary members are making great contributions all over Japan and throughout the world. They are developing strongly. Our movement shines with beautiful bonds of friendship and is advancing at a truly astonishing pace.

LEARNING FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN: THE TEACHINGS FOR VICTORY

Special Lecture Commemorating November 18, Soka Gakkai Foundation Day

Our Mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and the Dynamic Development of the SGI toward a Humanistic Century of Peace

Bodhisattvas emerging from the earth—what a powerful, vibrant, free, and dynamic image! Great bodhisattvas completely without pretense or conceit, infinitely honorable and noble!

Bodhisattvas of the Earth—the very name conveys the inherent, underlying strength of human life.

Bodhisattvas of the Earth—here we find the starting point of the Soka Gakkai's mission.

In 192 countries and territories around the world today, our admirable members, Bodhisattvas of the Earth one and all, are joyously active, holding high the banner of the Mystic Law.

The self-confident strides of ordinary people awakened to their noble mission for kosen-rufu and to their inherent potential as they forge ahead, breaking through every obstacle!

The vigor of our young men's division members, burning with a commitment to truth and justice!

The inspiring endeavors of our pure-hearted young women's division members!

The shining smiles of our cheerful women's division members!

The purposeful steps of our dauntless men's division members!

The ringing voices of our lively future division members!

Our great Soka movement, a gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth, is forging ahead steadily everywhere—in North and South America; in Europe; in Russia; in Africa; in the birthplace of Buddhism, India; and in all of Asia, in Oceania, and all around the globe.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The sun rises in the east and casts its rays to the west. The same is true of Buddhism" (WND-1, 401).

The sun of the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism has risen high in the sky and is beginning to brightly illuminate the world. The westward transmission of Buddhism has become a reality through the unprecedented development of our Soka movement.

Toward a New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu

In January 1998, in an essay sharing my feelings on turning 70, I wrote that my goal by the age of 80 was "the completion of the foundations for worldwide kosen-rufu."

With the completion of our grand citadel dedicated to the great vow for kosen-rufu [the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, which opened in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, in November 2013], the time has come for all SGI members to joyously make fresh strides forward. I declare that we have now solidly secured the magnificent foundations for kosen-rufu, and embarked vigorously on the second phase of worldwide kosen-rufu.

On this momentous fresh departure, let us study a section from Nichiren Daishonin's writing "The True Aspect of All Phenomena," and pledge together to open new horizons in our movement. In this month's installment, I will diverge slightly from our normal lecture format and share my thoughts with you in a more conversational manner as if we were studying together in a small group.

The section I would like to study with you this time is a very famous passage in which the Daishonin proclaims the great mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Now, no matter what, strive in faith and be known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and remain my disciple for the rest of your life. If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And if you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past. The [Lotus] sutra states, "Ever since the long distant past I have been teaching and converting this multitude [of bodhisattvas that has emerged from the earth]" [LSOC15, 261 (LS15, 220)]. 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. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku. At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-enge-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"? At the time when the Law has spread far and wide, the entire Japanese nation will chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, as surely as an arrow aimed at the earth cannot miss the target. But now you must build your reputation on the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-enge-kyo] and give yourself up to it. (WND-1, 385)

Demonstrating the Principle of “Emerging from the Earth”

The SGI has put this passage from “The True Aspect of All Phenomena” into practice in its entirety.

The Daishonin writes: “Now, no matter what, strive in faith and be known as a votary of the Lotus Sutra, and remain my disciple for the rest of your life” (WND-1, 385). We of the SGI have calmly and steadily followed our chosen path with complete self-assurance.

The Daishonin goes on to state that “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren”—in other words, if one strives for kosen-rufu in the same spirit as he does—you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” and “a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past” (WND-1, 385).

As disciples directly linked to the Daishonin through eternal ties that can never be severed, we of the SGI are comrades who have joined together in dedicating our lives to the vow of kosen-rufu. We have striven selflessly, in “the same mind as Nichiren,” to realize the Daishonin’s will and decree.

Moreover, we are fulfilling our noble mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth to propagate “the five characters of Myohorenge-kyo,” or the Mystic Law, in a spirit of equality and mutual respect, according with the Daishonin’s admonition that there should be no discrimination between men or women (cf. WND-1, 385).

The Daishonin further states: “At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo, but then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well” (WND-1, 385). We, too, are practicing in exact accord with this eternal and unchanging formula for the progression of kosen-rufu.

The spirit to stand up alone, to take personal initiative, is the core spirit and essence of the SGI. My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, called out to young people: “Youth, just one of you stand! A second and then a third will definitely follow!” Our members around the world have indeed demonstrated that when one pioneering individual takes the lead, “two, three, and a hundred will follow” (cf. WND-1, 385). In many localities and regions, kosen-rufu has started from a single individual, and from there spread to another person and then another. Through such steady, persevering efforts to share Buddhism with others, we have created the great current of kosen-rufu we have today.

Most importantly, the pioneering spirit of the early days of our movement is now being faithfully carried on by our youth division members. Youthful Bodhisattvas of the Earth everywhere are energetically taking the lead in propagating the Daishonin’s Buddhism with a sense of responsibility for realizing kosen-rufu in the areas where they live. What a wonderful age this is! What deep karmic ties these young people share!

The SGI has indisputably demonstrated the Daishonin’s principle of “emerging from the earth” (WND-1, 385). The Daishonin’s assertion that “Propagation will unfold this way in the future as well” (WND-1, 385) is, I believe, nothing other than a prediction of the future emergence of the members of the SGI.

Disciples Showing the Greatness of Their Teacher

In this section of “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” Nichiren Daishonin quotes some lines from the “Emerging from the Earth” (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra: “Ever since the long distant past / I [Shakyamuni] have been teaching and converting this multitude [of bodhisattvas that has emerged from the earth]” (LSOC15, 261 [LS15, 220]).

This is an important statement indicating that the Buddha and the newly arrived bodhisattvas who are his true disciples share ties from the infinite past. It also prepares the way for his preaching of the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (16th) chapter, which is the heart of the essential teaching (latter 14 chapters) of the Lotus Sutra.

In order to clarify the significance of Shakyamuni’s statement, let us reconfirm the progression of events in the preceding “Emerging from the Earth” (15th) chapter, in which the Bodhisattvas of the Earth first appear in the sutra.

The essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra begins by clarifying who will spread the sutra after the Buddha’s passing. Initially, the bodhisattvas already gathered at the assembly (the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, namely, the first 14 chapters of the Lotus Sutra) volunteer to do this, but Shakyamuni rejects their offer and reveals that “in this saha world of mine there are bodhisattvas mahasattva who are as numerous as the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers” (LSOC15, 252 [LS15, 212–13]) and that they will spread the Lotus Sutra after his death.

In response to Shakyamuni’s words, a vast multitude of bodhisattvas emerges from the earth. Each of them, the sutra states, is “the leader of [their] own great assembly,” and in addition, “each brought with [them] a retinue equal in number to the sands of sixty thousand Ganges Rivers” (LSOC15, 253 [LS15, 213]). This is a number of truly astronomical proportions, infinitely greater than the population of our planet.

Incidentally, in some transcriptions or copies of the Lotus Sutra translated into Chinese, the word “emerge” is written with two characters that literally mean “spring forth” or “come out dancing.”

The sudden, dynamic appearance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth startles the bodhisattvas already present and causes them to doubt. On behalf of the perplexed assembly, the bodhisattva Maitreya asks Shakyamuni about the identity of these new arrivals that none of them have ever seen or heard of before, and declares what a wondrous being the Buddha must be to have converted and taught so many followers.

In response, Shakyamuni makes the statement that we examined earlier: “Ever since the long distant past / I have been teaching and converting this multitude [of bodhisattvas that has emerged from the earth]” (LSOC15, 261 [LS15, 220]).

Later, in the “Life Span” (16th) chapter, Shakyamuni discloses that his attainment of enlightenment for the first time in this world is just the provisional revelation of his enlightenment, and that in reality he has attained enlightenment in the inconceivably remote past. This is the “casting off the transient and revealing the true” by the Buddha.

The appearance of these remarkable disciples, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, is the occasion for showing the true greatness of their teacher.

At this point, I would like to stress again that the awareness of being Bodhisattvas of the Earth is the starting point of our Soka movement.

The actions of the Soka Gakkai’s founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi themselves embodied the practice of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, meanwhile, stood up amid the devastated ruins of postwar Japan with the awareness that he was a Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Through his efforts based on this awareness and commitment, the Daishonin’s teachings came to pulse vibrantly in our organization and a great path for the development of kosen-rufu in Japan was opened. And today the SGI has built a network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth that extends all around the globe.

Kosen-rufu Is the Mission of Soka

At a general meeting of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Soka Value-Creating Education Society; the forerunner of today’s Soka Gakkai) in May 1942, Mr. Makiguchi declared: “We must guide the country in the direction of great good. This is like making a landing in the face of the enemy.” He delivered this statement at a time when the Japanese nation was engaged in an insane war. By using the expression “making a landing in the face of the enemy,” Mr. Makiguchi was saying that Gakkai members had to throw themselves into the midst of a Japanese society that was ignorant of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and boldly share its teachings with those around them. In other words, he was calling on each member to courageously engage in dialogue, confidently proclaiming the truth of Buddhism and sharing their personal experiences in faith.

He urged that only through this tenacious and persevering process of spreading the correct teaching of Buddhism could Japan be saved: “I believe that . . . we can help our families and society, and contribute in small part to the realization of kosen-rufu.”

In prison, after being arrested during the wartime crackdown on the Soka Gakkai by the ruling militarist authorities, he steadfastly replied to the interrogating officers that kosen-rufu is the process of

purifying the philosophy and ideals prevalent in the corrupt age of the Latter Day with the truth of the Mystic Law.

Mr. Makiguchi had a profound awareness of kosen-rufu as the Gakkai’s mission.

In the months leading up to his arrest (in July 1943), Mr. Makiguchi began to repeatedly insist to his disciples that the organization must “cast off the transient and reveal the true.” What did he mean by that?

Mr. Toda, who was also imprisoned, had a deep awakening to its meaning.

“The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai”

Soon after he was inaugurated as second Soka Gakkai president in May 1951, Mr. Toda published a lengthy essay titled, “The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai.” In it, he wrote of the undying Soka Gakkai spirit as follows:

Our life is eternal, without beginning and without end. I am now aware that we have all appeared in this world with the great mission to propagate Nam-myoho-rengé-kyo, or the seven-character Lotus Sutra, in the Latter Day of the Law. If I define our status in accord with this conviction, we are all Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

This was the conviction of Mr. Toda, who was released from prison on July 3, 1945, heir to the spirit of his mentor who died in prison for his beliefs. He noted that he alone had this awareness—with few of his disciples truly able to grasp his state of mind—and “the Soka Gakkai itself had not yet cast off the transient and revealed the true.”

Subsequently, after overcoming various hardships—including the collapse of his businesses and stepping down from his position as Soka Gakkai general director [to protect the organization from being adversely affected by his business troubles]—Mr. Toda became the Gakkai’s second president. The Soka Gakkai was reborn. He wrote: “Soon, a great awareness emerged within the Gakkai as a whole, and action began based on that great conviction [that we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth].” He also said: “In terms of the teachings—in other words, in our outward activities—we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, while in terms of faith, we are the followers and descendant disciples of Nichiren Daishonin.” It was with this conviction and resolve, he asserted, that we must strive selflessly and tirelessly for kosen-rufu.

He further stated: “This conviction is the central philosophy of the Soka Gakkai and is now coming to pervade it. This indeed is ‘casting off the transient and revealing the true,’ is it not?”

The entire Soka Gakkai rose up to engage in the shared struggle of mentor and disciple, aware of their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and vowing to

realize kosen-rufu through their own efforts.

I also took my mentor's spirit and vow as my own and, with the powerful dynamism of a charging lion, fought my hardest. I rose to the most daunting of challenges and blazed new trails for kosen-rufu. I sought out one capable person after another who would fight alongside me, fostered them, encouraged them, and worked together with them to build a magnificent people's movement.

“My Disciples, Form Your Ranks and Follow Me”

As the “Emerging from the Earth” (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra clearly indicates, when Bodhisattva Superior Practices—the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—appears in the world to carry out the widespread propagation of the Law in the evil latter age after the Buddha's passing, innumerable legions of bodhisattvas are also certain to come forth in a steady stream to share his noble mission.

The Daishonin writes: “Nichiren alone took the lead in carrying out the task of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth” (WND-1, 385); and “Now, at the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, I, Nichiren, am the first to embark on propagating, throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world], the five characters of Myōho-renge-kyō. . . My disciples, form your ranks and follow me, and surpass even Mahakāshyapa or Ananda, T'ien-t'ai or Dengyo!” (WND-1, 764–65). The Daishonin appears as the forerunner, and then encourages his disciples to rally together and follow his lead.

The place where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth carry out their activities is this saha world, which is also known as “a world in which one must exercise forbearance and learn to endure” (OTT, 169). The Lotus Sutra was expounded to guide to enlightenment all living beings in this suffering-filled world in which we live.

In the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni's voice-hearer disciples have the great fortune of receiving prophecies of their future attainment of Buddhahood. Yet, later, when they make a vow to spread the Lotus Sutra after Shakyamuni's passing, they show disdain for this saha world by expressing their wish to teach the Lotus Sutra in worlds other than this one (cf. LSOC13, 229–30 [LS13, 191]).

This highlights how difficult it is to teach the Lotus Sutra in the saha world in the Latter Day of the Law. As the sutra makes eminently clear, teaching and spreading the sutra will inevitably result in the rise of the three powerful enemies and every other sort of persecution.

Only the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who have practiced at one with the Buddha since the remote past, are able to persist in the struggle for kosen-rufu in the face of these harsh tempests of persecution and opposition.

Referring to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and their momentous mission, the

Daishonin explains to his followers: “These bodhisattvas are the ones who had thoroughly forged their resolve” (WND-1, 953).

The Miraculous Emergence of the Soka Gakkai

The “time” for the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to carry out their mission is the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law, and the “place” where they will do so is this saha world. Having chosen the most challenging circumstances, they rise into action here and now to help those experiencing the greatest suffering attain enlightenment.

Nichiren Buddhism teaches the principle of “voluntarily assuming the appropriate karma.” This represents the transformation from a passive life to an active, self-motivated life—one based on the conviction that we have voluntarily chosen to be born into difficult and challenging circumstances to lead others to enlightenment. By making a vow for kosen-rufu based on this principle, we can transform our karma into our mission. When we awaken to our mission from the remote past, we will gain a new sense of self. We will be able to “cast off the transient and reveal the true” in our own life, and enable our real potential to shine forth.

Those who have awakened to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth fear nothing. When we take on the mission to help others become happy, courage and strength well up spontaneously from within us.

How wondrous are the karmic ties we share as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and how noble the vow for kosen-rufu!

I will never forget the impassioned words of Chingiz Aitmatov (1928–2008), the Kyrgyz writer with whom I met and spoke on many occasions:

Is there no end to animosity and hatred in this human world? We are always looking for enemies, forced into feelings of mutual hostility. Many behave self-righteously, too, rejecting dialogue, insisting on their own truth, and refusing to

recognize the good in anyone else. Ours is a world of darkness in which fellow human beings war with one another and destroy nature.

Amid this stark reality, the SGI—an ideal organization that could rightly be called a modern utopia—has emerged, a fact that may be difficult to immediately fathom.

Mr. Aitmatov also lauded the SGI for “not destroying others, but spreading the light of humanism to every corner of the world through a flexible approach based on firm convictions, and building a network of mutual understanding that allows others to live fully and freely.” He further declared: “The Soka Gakkai emerged in a time of great upheavals in human history [such as war, conflict, and unending bloodshed]. That is truly amazing. Its emergence is the hope of humanity.”

The mission of Bodhisattvas of the Earth is truly great and noble beyond measure. It transcends all differences, including those of ethnicity, race, nationality, and gender. It is a mission that emanates from the vast creative life-force that pervades the very depths of the lives of all human beings. One who is awakened to this is called a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

Each person is an entity endowed with the supreme Buddha nature. By encouraging and respecting one another as fellow human beings living together on this planet, we can bring forth the power to tap the limitless potential within ourselves and others and to create the values of happiness and peace. This is also our profound mission.

We of the SGI have appeared in this world, having vowed to dedicate our lives to this mission.

The Great March of the People in the 20th Century

The great march of the people has been a powerful groundswell for change on many occasions throughout history.

The Salt March, with Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) and his direct

disciples in the lead, was a major breakthrough that served as a powerful momentum for the movement for Indian independence from the colonial rule of Great Britain. It stirred waves of courage that spread out to inspire people throughout India.

Coincidentally, the Salt March took place in 1930, the year the Soka Gakkai was established.

Another example of such a march was the historic civil rights march on Washington, D.C., in 1963, 50 years ago. This march, in which close to 250,000 ordinary people “stood in majestic dignity,” is vividly described by one of its leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–68): “The enormous multitude was the living, beating heart of an infinitely noble movement. It was an army without guns, but not without strength.” The gathering that day was one that transcended differences of class, profession, and religious affiliation, all its participants “united by a single ideal,” King observed.

Though on a different level, our SGI movement for kosen-rufu is also a great march of the people—one that has called forth Bodhisattvas of the Earth all around the world, spreading an enormous groundswell for peace and hope.

After calmly stating, “When great evil occurs, great good follows. . . . What could any of you have to lament?” (WND-1, 1119), the Daishonin points out: “When Bodhisattva Superior Practices emerged from the earth, did he not emerge dancing?” (WND-1, 1119).

Bodhisattva Superior Practices, the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, is said to have sprung forth dynamically from the earth as if he were dancing. And he was not alone. The Lotus Sutra states that immeasurable Bodhisattvas of the Earth “emerged at the same instant” (LSOC15, 252 [LS15, 213]).

The sutra also goes on to say that the assembly (which was gathered at the Ceremony in the Air) subsequently saw this immeasurable legion of bodhisattvas that had emerged from the earth fill the sky over countless lands (cf. LSOC15, 254 [LS15, 214]). To me, this depicts the great march of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth overflowing with unsurpassed joy—a scene of utter freedom and vibrant energy, yet also of solemn calm, played out on a stage of unfathomable scale.

Encouraging the Person Right in Front of Us

In the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (21st) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni transfers the essence of the Lotus Sutra to Bodhisattva Superior Practices as the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. The characteristic of Bodhisattva Superior Practices is described as follows:

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The New Human Revolution

Volume 24, Chapter 2
Vigilant Safeguarding



SGI President Ikeda's ongoing novel *The New Human Revolution*, which he began writing in 1993, depicts the historical progress of the Soka Gakkai following his inauguration as its third president, as well as records the modern development of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI. It also serves as a practical guide on how to further expand our movement for Kosen-rufu (achieving peace and happiness for all people).



of Niigata, four brothers, who were all Gajokai members and employees of a local printing plant, immediately ran to the scene with buckets in hand to help put out the fire. They assisted the firefighters, acting with cool-headedness and speed to bring the flames under control.

In September of that year, in Komae, Tokyo, the dikes along the Tama River broke during heavy rains, and several dozen Gajokai members and other Soka Gakkai members assisted with relief efforts. Their selfless efforts to carry sandbags and help residents remove their household goods to safety in the soaking rain earned the

admiration, praise, and gratitude of their fellow residents.

That October, in Sugunami Ward, Tokyo, on the way home from a discussion meeting, some Gajokai members heard someone shout, "Help! Thief!" The Gajokai members chased after the suspect for about 100 meters

(100 yards) and captured him. The Tokyo Metropolitan Police commissioner presented these youth with a certificate of commendation for their courageous service.

In September 1976, after 9:00 in the evening, a fire started in a hilly wooded area behind the Hiroshima Culture Center. When they received reports of the incident from residents, some 50 Gajokai and young men's division members immediately rushed to the scene and valiantly battled the blaze with fire extinguishers and a bucket brigade.

Such actions by Gajokai members are too numerous to mention. Youth have a mission to take the initiative to protect others. Without learning such lessons, egotism prevails and society is corrupted from its foundations. Training young people to serve society and the people is one of the major roles of the Soka Gakkai.

Vigilant Safeguarding 12

The parents of Katsumi Miyasaka took the greatest pride in their son, who had dedicated himself wholeheartedly to kosen-rufu as a member of the Gajokai. They strongly believed that though he had died young, he had been able to transform

his karma in this lifetime.

The Gajokai members' spirit of vigilant safeguarding was not limited to the Soka Gakkai but extended also to the people in general, and these young men demonstrated that spirit in various ways.

In January 1974, when a major fire broke out in a densely populated area

of Niigata, four brothers, who were all Gajokai members and employees of a local printing plant, immediately ran to the scene with buckets in hand to help put out the fire. They assisted the firefighters, acting with cool-headedness and speed to bring the flames under control.

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Vigilant Safeguarding 13

Dedication to fostering young people and allowing them to take the lead in all activities are traditions of the Soka

Gakkai. The organization will be able to enjoy eternal growth and development if it remains youthful.

With the 21st century only a quarter-century away, Shin'ichi

Yamamoto believed it was time to place even greater emphasis on fostering youth. In the coming century, those youth would assume primary roles on the main stage of kosen-rufu. They would also carry on the Soka Gakkai spirit and become core individuals who would protect the organization's members. In fact, many youth division members who were Gajokai at that time have gone on to become, in the 21st century, members of the Ojokai [the men's division equivalent of the Gajokai in Japan], who are today busy protecting the Soka Gakkai and its facilities.

Several days after Shin'ichi patrolled around the Shinanomachi area with the two young men of the Gajokai checking on Soka Gakkai facilities, he happened to meet another young man in a hallway of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. The youth's name was Masaaki Kato, and he had recently been appointed as the first leader of the Soka Group on November 4 of that year.

When Kato saw Shin'ichi he said:

"President Yamamoto! Since the Traffic Control Group became the Soka Group, everyone is brimming with renewed determination."

"I've heard," said Shin'ichi. "Incidentally, there is something I want to discuss with you. Let's have a general meeting to mark the full-fledged start for the new Soka Group. It will be the 1st Soka Group General Meeting. Let's have it on January 6—that's the only date that will do. I'll also attend. It will still be within the New Year's holiday period, but I want to start the new year with all of you."

"Yes, by all means!" replied Kato with a big smile.

The news quickly spread across the nation that President Yamamoto had suggested holding a Soka Group General Meeting on January 6.

Kato thought, "Why did Sensei chose January 6?" At first he assumed it was simply a matter of Shin'ichi's schedule. But when he investigated further, he discovered something that astonished and profoundly moved him. January 6 was the day in 1951 on which Shin'ichi was called to the home of Josei Toda and entrusted with all of his mentor's private and business matters.



ceased operations. It was a time of challenges on all fronts, and some of Toda's creditors were even suing him. Depending on how things worked out, it was conceivable that Toda could be arrested. Toda had also started the Daito Commerce Company, of which he was the executive advisor for, in order to find a way out of his business difficulties. But that company wasn't going well, either.

With his wife Ikue at his side, Toda said to Shin'ichi: "Just in case anything should happen, I'd like to entrust the Soka Gakkai, Toko Construction Credit Union, and Daito Commerce Company to you. Will you accept this proposal? And, if possible, I would also like you to look after my family."

It was an enormous responsibility. Listening to Toda's words, the 23-year-old Shin'ichi felt goose bumps and indescribable emotion.

"You may think I am giving you a terrible gift, but the mission that I was born to fulfill in this life is also your mission. You understand that, don't you? Be

steadfast, no matter what happens.

"If you and I remain dedicated to our mission, the time is certain to come when the will of Nichiren Daishonin can be fulfilled. No matter what anyone says, let's advance resolutely together!"

Shin'ichi lifted his tear-filled eyes and said to Toda: "Sensei, please don't worry about anything. I have always been prepared to give my entire life to you without the slightest regret, and this will never change, for all eternity."

In his diary that day, Shin'ichi wrote: "Mr. Toda is like Masashige, while I am like Masatsura. His wife wept. Never throughout my life will I forget the emotion, solemnity, tears, sense of mission, of karmic bonds and of life's worth that I have experienced today. It has been decided that I will be his successor."

The genuine ties of mentor and disciple shine with a brilliant golden light at the most trying of times.

Vigilant Safeguarding 14

January 6, 1951, was a Saturday. Toda called Shin'ichi to his house to discuss winding up the remaining business of the Toko Construction Credit Union, which had



assistant Josei Toda's sole successor, a thrill ran through his body.

"President Yamamoto has suggested that that profoundly meaningful date should be the 1st Soka Group General Meeting. He is entrusting us, as his successors, with full responsibility for the Soka Gakkai. We must find a way to open up a new age for the Soka Gakkai through the efforts of the Soka Group."

Shin'ichi had renamed the Traffic Control Group (TCG)—composed of young men's division members entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the transport of members making pilgrimages to the head temple—to the Soka Group

on November 2, 1976.

The TCG began operation when President Toda initiated monthly pilgrimages to the head temple in October 1952. It started as a group of young men's division members who, in the spirit of youth standing up to take full responsibility, took charge of regulating the number of participants on the monthly pilgrimages and

assisting members at train stations and during transit.

In those days, members traveled on these pilgrimages in regular train cars, not specially reserved ones, which made it tougher for the TCG to fulfill their responsibilities. They had to make sure that every member of each group was able to board the train and find seats. They also looked after members who weren't feeling well, and made sure the pilgrimage groups didn't cause trouble for the other, non-member passengers on the trains.

In those days, sometimes non-member passengers would react negatively—based on prejudice and misunderstanding—when they learned that a Gakkai group was on the train making a pilgrimage. Such passengers sometimes behaved scornfully or insulted the members. In such situations, the young men of the TCG had to react with gentle and forbearing smiles, quick wit, and a dignified, restrained manner, to protect the members and ensure their safe travel.

As the monthly pilgrimages continued, the TCG became more and more organized. Shin'ichi gave his all to fostering and advising the members of the group.

Vigilant Safeguarding 15

When Soka Group leader Masaaki Kato read Shin'ichi's *A Youthful Diary* and *The Human Revolution* and learned that January 6 was the historic date that Shin'ichi deeply realized that he was second Soka Gakkai



speed, commitment, and sincerity: "Taking to heart the concept that though unnoticed by others, everything is observed by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe, it is my earnest wish that you will carry out the Buddhist practice of your youth through engaging in TCG activities, applying what you learn there to your efforts within the youth division and at your places of work."

The concept that the attitudes and actions of all living beings are clearly perceived by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe is another way of saying that the impartial law of the causality of life applies to all. Through the guidance, the young men of the TCG deepened their sense of mission,

and they made this concept their basic spirit.

After being inaugurated as the third president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1960, Shin'ichi concentrated even more energy on fostering the TCG. Shin'ichi believed that the members of the TCG like himself, shouldered the mission to lead members toward fulfilling the great vow of kosen-rufu. He was deeply resolved to make whatever sacrifices necessary to take care of those who supported the organization behind the scenes. Shin'ichi's

determination is what spurred the development of this training group. Occasionally he would even give such supplies as white trousers for them to wear while they were on duty.

In March 1965, when the three-million-member general pilgrimage to commemorate the completion of the Grand Reception Hall was over, Shin'ichi sent 8,000 copies of volume 12 of *Kaicho Koen-shu* (Collected Lectures of the President) to TCG members as well as to a group of young women's division members who supported the events that took place at the head temple. The frontispiece featured the word "pillar" printed in Shin'ichi's handwriting, and the back of the book displayed the names of each recipient of the special edition, a list that reached some 50 pages.

Shin'ichi gave his all to training and encouraging young people, many of whom developed into exemplary members of the youth division.

Vigilant Safeguarding 16

In October 1955, as the chief of staff of the youth division, Shin'ichi presented guidance titled "For the Traffic Control Group of the Young Men's Division" to its members.

The guidance praised the TCG for caring for each member and conducting their duties with accuracy,



Vigilant Safeguarding 17

In the fall of 1969, at Shin'ichi Yamamoto's suggestion, a Traffic Control Group (TCG) Academy was established to train young men's division members into leaders. More than 3,000 members were enrolled in the first class.

Shin'ichi believed that training in groups such as the TCG was indispensable for becoming core leaders in the young men's division. This was his realization based on his own personal experience.

In May 1954, Shin'ichi took complete charge of the general pilgrimage of 5,000 youth division members to the head temple, an event that took place under driving rains. He also oversaw the general pilgrimage of 10,000 youth division members to the head temple in October of that same year.

During the May 1954 pilgrimage, a traffic accident occurred that led to a shortage of buses, creating an emergency situation in which transportation had to be shifted from bus to train. As a result, members were extremely late to arrive and the ceremonies had to be delayed by four and a half hours. But Shin'ichi

responded coolly and steadily to each development and surmounted every obstacle. It turned out to be a most valuable experience for him.

He was made keenly aware of the heavy responsibility entailed in organizing a large event and the

importance of checking and rechecking every last detail. He came to understand the difference between plans on paper and the way they actually unfold. He was also able to learn how to respond in the best way to unanticipated developments. These experiences proved incalculable in preparing him to later take the helm of the kosen-rufu movement.

As Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) once observed: "In all departments of life there is no apprenticeship except in the workshop."

Shin'ichi, after discussing the matter with representative young men's division leaders, decided to establish the Traffic Control Group Academy to foster the next generation of leaders.

At the beginning, the training period was six months to become a full-fledged TCG member. As part of their training, candidates were required to serve TCG duty once a month, and study such writings as *The Human Revolution* to learn about the Gakkai spirit.

Shin'ichi planned to continue developing the Traffic Control Group, along with its ancillary Traffic Control Group Academy, into a major institution within the young men's division for fostering capable individuals who will shoulder the future of the Soka Gakkai.



Vigilant Safeguarding 18

The construction of new Soka Gakkai facilities moved forward according to schedule, and in the late 1970s, large-scale centers of reinforced-concrete were built one

after another in every prefecture and ward. In addition, from 1974, summer training courses began to be held at training centers and culture centers around the country.

The Gajokai, with the responsibility of patrolling and safeguarding the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and other Gakkai facilities, had been established in 1971, and a plan was implemented for them to care for the new, larger facilities.

However, there was still not enough support available for all the training courses and events taking place at the new facilities around the country.

Given that situation, Shin'ichi thought it was necessary to rethink the role of the TCG and to expand it as a means for fostering

capable individuals.

From the spring of 1976, he initiated discussions about the future of the TCG with core leaders of the young men's division. It was concluded that membership should be increased dramatically and the group renamed,

with a clearer focus on developing capable individuals who would become central leaders in the young men's division.

On November 2, while further discussing the matter with young men's division leaders, Shin'ichi said as he wrote the words "Soka Group" on a memo pad: "The young men's division has proposed many names, but I'd like to suggest renaming the Traffic Control Group the Soka Group, and renaming the Traffic Control Group Academy the Soka Group Academy."

"This name signifies that the members of this group are the pride of the Soka Gakkai, and will take responsibility for the organization as a whole as well as everything necessary for advancing kosen-rufu. Their mission, first and foremost, is to protect the Soka Gakkai. As such, I have given them the name Soka, calling them the Soka Group, because a name expresses the essence of a thing.

"From now on, the Soka Group will open up a new era for the Soka Gakkai. Let's appoint a new person to be the leader of the Soka Group. We should announce these changes as soon as possible."



Vigilant Safeguarding 19

The assembled members were astonished at the announcements. They erupted in joy, their applause reverberating throughout the hall. It was the evening of November 4, 1976, and the Traffic Control Group Leaders Meeting was under way at the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The young men's division leader had just announced that the TCG was being disbanded and simultaneously reconstituted as the Soka

Group. The new group's responsibilities would be expanded to include not only its original function of assisting with transport during pilgrimages to the head temple but also the task of supporting the operations of various activities and events taking place at the Headquarters and Soka Gakkai facilities around the country. The Traffic Control Group Leaders Meeting became the historic kick-off of the Soka Group.

Masaaki Kato, who had become the first Soka Group leader, was a robust young man. After studying in the graduate program at Waseda University, he started working at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, during which time he took on concurrent roles as the elementary school division leader and young men's division assistant vice leader.

Kato spoke enthusiastically to the assembled members: "President Yamamoto has given us the wonderful name of Soka Group. What a proud honor for us all!"

"This name doubtlessly expresses President Yamamoto's high hopes that, as the innermost core of the Soka Gakkai, we will resolutely protect the organization and its members. Let's join President Yamamoto in vigilantly safeguarding the Soka Gakkai

and dedicating ourselves to the path of mentor and disciple for the rest of our lives!

"I pledge to spare no effort to take the lead at all times and strive with all I've got. I humbly ask for your support."

On this day, the Traffic Control Group was reborn as the Soka Group and soared into a new age.

It was one month after this event that Shin'ichi encountered Kato in a hallway at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and suggested that they hold the first Soka Group General Meeting on January 6 of the following year.

Shin'ichi envisioned the Soka Group and the Gajokai as two wheels supporting the Soka Gakkai as it advanced energetically into a new era of kosen-rufu.

As José Ingenieros (1877–1925), an Argentine intellectual, physician, and scientist, wrote: "It is the privilege of the youth to sow fecund seeds in virgin fields, as if history were to commence in the precise moment in which they forge their dreams."



of building peace, and of ensuring the prosperity of society. It is the noble path of Bodhisattvas of the Earth forging a life-state of absolute happiness that brings innumerable flowers of benefit into bloom.

“Why does the Buddhist faith and practice of the Soka Gakkai produce such great benefits and good fortune? There are three reasons,” said President Yamamoto, his courageous voice reverberating in the main Gohonzon room at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. His words rang out with the proud conviction of a lion of Soka. He was speaking at the New Year’s Gongyo Meeting of 1977, which had been designated the “Year of Study.”

“The first reason,” Shin’ichi explained, “is that the Soka Gakkai is the only organization practicing and advancing in complete accord with the writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

“The Soka Gakkai fought against the oppression of Japan’s militarist authorities during World War II in the spirit of selflessly dedicating one’s life to protecting

and upholding the correct philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It has continued to strive over the years, embodying the Daishonin’s teaching of ‘establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.’ Furthermore, it has sown the seeds of Buddhism around the world in order to achieve global kosen-rufu. Its members have practiced in accord with the Daishonin’s teachings and the Buddha’s will. It would be no exaggeration to say that if the Soka Gakkai had not appeared in this world, the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin’s words would have been rendered false.

“Nonetheless, the Soka Gakkai’s history is one of continuous persecutions, advancing amid harsh criticism and abuse in the face of storms of devilish obstacles. In the light of the Daishonin’s words—‘If they [devils] did not [arise], there would be no way of knowing that this is the correct teaching’ (WND-1, 501)—this is in itself further proof of the correctness of the Soka Gakkai’s path.

“Those who dedicate their lives to the faith and practice of the Soka Gakkai are certain to attain Buddhahood. I declare here and now that they cannot fail to receive great benefit!”

Vigilant Safeguarding 20

The path of Soka is the path of kosen-rufu. It is the path of unity of mentor and disciple. It is the path of human revolution, of creating hope, of transforming one’s karma,



with excitement, they waited anxiously for what he would say next.

Shin’ichi gave the second reason why the faith and practice of the Soka Gakkai results in great benefits and good fortune: “Next, from the aspect of the financial contributions we’ve made to Buddhism, the Soka Gakkai has been completely sincere in demonstrating its gratitude and in making offerings to protect the teachings.

“The Soka Gakkai was once sneered at and criticized by the public as ‘a gathering of the sick and the poor,’ but in spite of that we have pushed ahead with an unwavering commitment to furthering kosen-rufu.

“Through our heartfelt financial donations, we have contributed numerous facilities to the head temple, including the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple), which is the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching called for by the Daishonin; the Daikyakuden (Grand Reception Hall); the Daikodo (Grand Lecture Hall); the Daikejo (Great Transient Castle); and the So-bo (lodging temples). We’ve also supported the priesthood by building many temples, thereby establishing the firm foundation they enjoy today.

“This degree of financial contribution, based on our pure desire to achieve kosen-rufu, is absolutely unprecedented in the history of Nichiren Buddhism.

“I proclaim for all to hear that if the teachings of Buddhism are true, then the Soka Gakkai members who have made these financial contributions are certain to receive great benefits, pouring down upon them like bright sunshine. Flowers of tremendous good fortune will surely bloom in their lives.”

The members nodded in agreement and leaned forward intently to hear what Shin’ichi would say next.

“The third reason is that the members of the Soka Gakkai have spared nothing in serving the Law, which is to say, in carrying out activities to introduce others to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, a most vital task in the light of the teachings.

“During World War II, when Japan was ruled by a militarist government, and in the turbulent times following the country’s defeat, up through to the present, we have striven courageously to share this Buddhism with others despite continual persecution and abuse, thereby advancing kosen-rufu. As a result, in Japan alone, several million member households are now joyously practicing this Buddhism.”

Vigilant Safeguarding 21

Shin’ichi Yamamoto’s words were filled with inspiring conviction. His listeners felt his indomitable will and enormous self-assurance, as firm as a mighty rock withstanding the sea’s breakers assailing it. Many also thought to themselves, “President Yamamoto clearly has powerful aspirations. I have to do my best, too!” Stirred



solid foundation for global kosen-rufu has been established.

“Our pioneering overseas members, having many different languages, cultures, customs, and traditions, are all striving tirelessly to communicate our philosophy of peace and happiness in each of their respective countries and regions. Prominent world thinkers and leaders are expressing keen interest in the SGI, and the number of those who appreciate and sympathize with Buddhist ideals is expanding.

“On the basis of these facts alone, we can say that the Soka Gakkai’s contributions to the propagation of the Law are incomparable. Those immense benefits, naturally, are passed on to all our members.”

The more Shin’ichi thought of the Soka Gakkai’s outstanding contributions to kosen-rufu, the more convinced he was that its members would all share in its infinite benefits and good fortune.

“The fact that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism has been widely propagated throughout Japan and around the world through the efforts of the Soka Gakkai and is becoming the rising tide of a new age is indisputable proof that the members of the Soka Gakkai are carrying out faith and practice in exact accord with the spirit of

Nichiren Daishonin.

“On this meaningful first day of the New Year, I wish to declare here before the Joju Gohonzon installed in the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, bearing the inscription, ‘For the Fulfillment of the Great Desire for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law,’ that the Buddhist faith and practice of the Soka Gakkai is the source of the greatest benefits in the world and the entire universe.

“Further, I want you to know that you have built the foundation for receiving, and indeed deserve to receive, thousands and tens of thousands of times more benefit than what you’ve experienced so far. I bring these New Year’s remarks to a close with my sincere wish that in the coming year you will continue to advance alongside me with ever-increasing courage as we strive for the sake of Buddhism, society, and the prosperity of our families.”

Shin’ichi’s unshakable conviction awoke similar conviction in the hearts of his listeners. The applause of all present, filled with determination, resounded throughout the hall.

Vigilant Safeguarding 22

Reflecting on the Soka Gakkai’s monumental progress in the face of daunting trials and tribulations over the years, the members attending the New Year’s Gongyo Meeting listened carefully to President Yamamoto.

“Today countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth are emerging not only in Japan but around the world, and a

Practice for Oneself and Others

"The bodhisattva's practice is one of ardent commitment to self-development while also seeking to ease the suffering of others and bring happiness and benefit to them."

Nichiren Buddhism promises that one can attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. But what does it mean to attain Buddhahood or enlightenment?

Shakyamuni, the historical founder of Buddhism, became known in his time as the Buddha because of his ability to understand people's sufferings, to show them that they possessed the inner resources to overcome their problems and to awaken them to a greater vision of themselves and their possibilities. His towering character was a profound inspiration to all. Over time, however, the ideal of Buddhahood shown in Shakyamuni's living example became increasingly abstract and distant. An apparently unbridgeable gap developed between the Buddha and ordinary people as the Buddha came to be seen as an otherworldly being.

While the aim of Shakyamuni's teaching was, in the words of the Lotus Sutra, to "make all beings equal to me," in some schools of Buddhism he became regarded as a unique being, and the goal of religious practice became the attainment of stages of enlightenment less complete than that of Buddhahood. For others, Buddhahood came to be viewed as an extremely distant goal requiring many lifetimes of effort, something not within the capabilities of all people.

In Nichiren Buddhism, Buddhahood is not a static end point of eventual attainment—one does not become a Buddha at some future point in time. Rather, the qualities of Buddhahood are seen as naturally inherent in all people. Buddhist practice is about manifesting those qualities—which could be summed up as compassion, wisdom, courage and creative life-force—amidst the challenging realities of our ordinary lives, here and now.

What enables people to manifest Buddhahood with ever-greater consistency is bodhisattva practice—practice for oneself and others. In Mahayana Buddhist sutras, bodhisattvas are disciples of the Buddha who are described as having devoted themselves to Buddhist practice, learning from and following the example of the Buddha. Through their individual practice and experience they have developed various marvelous qualities and characteristics which they employ to help people suf-

fering from particular kinds of problems. These qualities, and the bodhisattvas themselves, are symbolic of the rich qualities of Buddhahood inherent in the lives of all people as well as the limitless variety of ways that this can express itself.

The bodhisattva's practice is one of ardent commitment to self-development while also seeking to ease the suffering of others and bring happiness and benefit to them.

The model of the bodhisattva provides a practical bridge between the abstract ideal of Buddhahood and our mundane lives. This is because, ultimately, the way of life of the bodhisattva is the way of life of the Buddha himself.

The Buddha's life was both one of continuous self-development and of rigorous engagement with people and their problems. This engagement was based on a deep conviction in the dignity of each person's life. A Buddha is thus one who continually strives to awaken people to faith in their inherent capacity to overcome any difficulty—to inspire people to use challenges and suffering as a springboard to develop this strength and attain an unshakable happiness.

Ultimately, it is through our interactions with others—through our efforts to help others and through the good influences of mentors and friends—that we are able to bring forth the life condition of the Buddha, to bring our lives into the joyful "orbit" of Buddhahood, as SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has described it: "Carrying out actions for the sake of others strengthens, develops and solidifies the Buddhahood in our own life. When our Buddhahood is strengthened, we can inspire people's lives on an even profounder level. The royal path of our human revolution lies in this ongoing process of developing ourselves and helping others do likewise."

The behavior of the Buddha is itself the practice for becoming, or being, a Buddha.

[Courtesy October 2011 SGI Quarterly]



Write a "Wonderful Story" That Will Endure for All Time!

(SGI President Ikeda sent the following message to the 3rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting of the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu, held in conjunction with the Nationwide Youth Division Leaders Meeting, the Soka Group, Gajokai, and Byakuren Joint General Meeting, and the Nationwide Seikyo Shimbun Correspondents General Meeting, at the Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, Tokyo, on January 11, 2014. Among those attending were 127 SGI representatives from 16 countries and territories.)

Congratulations on this Headquarters leaders meeting vibrantly heralding a new era of Soka youth!

My deepest appreciation to the members of the Soka Group, Gajokai, and Byakuren (behind-the-scenes support groups) in Japan and around the world for all their dedicated efforts!

I am also delighted that so many new young adults are attending today [ahead of Coming-of-Age Day, which is celebrated in Japan on January 13 this year].

And thank you to our precious future division members!

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all the admirable members who serve as volunteer correspondents in each region throughout Japan for the *Seikyo Shimbun*, which is the people's bastion of the pen.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome the visiting SGI members from 16 countries and territories who have traveled such long distances to attend today's meeting at the coldest time of the year here in Japan.

*

There are three quotes from Nichiren Daishonin that I have always engraved in my heart at the start of the New Year since the days of my youth, along with a fresh personal determination.

The first is: "You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come" (WND-1, 622).

The second is: "Life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land" (WND-1, 214).

Our lives are finite. Our time in this world passes by before we know it, one year quickly following another. That is why I have been determined to strive to the fullest each year, day after day, wholeheartedly devoting my life to realizing the great vow for kosen-rufu—together with the eternal and indestructible Mystic Law and my

mentor who was selflessly committed to spreading the correct teaching. That has been my resolve from my youth, a resolve that remains unchanged to this day.

The third quote from Nichiren Daishonin that I have engraved in my heart each New Year is a passage from "Letter to the Brothers": "Could there ever be a more wonderful story [in all future time] than your own?" (WND-1, 499). These were words of praise for the Ikegami brothers who, by uniting together with courageous faith, had persevered steadfastly in their Buddhist practice, even when the elder brother was disowned by their father, who had allowed himself to fall under the influence of scheming priests hostile to the Daishonin.

In this way, the Daishonin assures and encourages us that all our present challenges, hardships, efforts, victories, and our sense of fellowship as SGI members, will never fade—all shining on gloriously forever as "wonderful stories" of our own lives.

*

Why do obstacles arise in the course of our struggle to fulfill our vow for kosen-rufu? Why are our lives, dedicated to our mission, assailed by various trials? Obstacles and trials exist so that we can positively transform them, one after another, based on the Buddhist principle of changing poison into medicine, and thereby attain the boundless and eternally indestructible life-state of Buddhahood.

They also enable us to demonstrate, not only to those living in the present but also those yet to come, the resounding victories over all adversity—whether in the form of hardship, persecution, or negative karma—that can unflinchingly be achieved by courageous individuals who uphold the Mystic Law and dedicate their lives to the noble cause of kosen-rufu.

In addition, they enable us to continue imparting limitless courage and

hope to the world far into the distant future.

No matter how powerful or wealthy a person may be, they cannot avoid the ever-changing impermanence of this life. No matter how learned or intelligent a person may be, they cannot know what lies ahead or predict the future with certainty. Nor can they escape the fundamental sufferings of birth, aging, illness, and death.

How infinitely profound, therefore, are the karmic ties that we of the SGI share as fellow members who uphold the great vow for kosen-rufu from time without beginning and confidently show people the world over the path of life that is imbued with eternity, happiness, true self, and purity throughout the three existences of past, present, and future.

*

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, envisioned that in the Buddhist scriptures of the future our organization would be described as Soka Gakkai Buddha.

From the perspective of our momentous endeavor that will continue on into the eternal future of the Latter Day of the Law, it is no exaggeration to say that we are still in the early, pioneering days of worldwide kosen-rufu.

Having the courage to share the Mystic Law with one person today, teaching them about Nichiren Buddhism to the best of our ability, will produce numberless multitudes of fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the future.

Having the unwavering perseverance to remain steadfast in faith today, undefeated by even the most inexpressible calamity, will brightly illuminate a way forward for society in the future.

Being solidly united in purpose today, as we forge ahead with fellow members of rich diversity, encouraging and supporting one another, will build a realm of true human harmony in the future.

And spending one's youth working with dedication and pride in accord with one's beliefs today will open the way to success and victory in life for millions of young people in the future.

Chanting resonant daimoku that is like "the sound of white horses neighing" (cf. WND-1, 985-86), let's bring forth a strong and vigorous life-force and together make this a historic year—writing a "wonderful story" that will be passed on and endure for all time!

May you all be healthy throughout the four seasons! Please take care not to catch cold.

(Translated from the January 12, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shinbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

Our Mission as Bodhisattvas...

..... Continued from page 4

As the light of the sun and moon can banish all obscurity and gloom, so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings. (LSOC21, 318 [LS21, 276])

Mr. Makiguchi heavily underlined this passage in his personal copy of the Goshō.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are a source of great light imparting courage and strength. They warmly illuminate the way ahead for those walking through the night of loneliness and anxiety. They wipe away people's tears of despair and give hope to them. They dispel the darkness of ignorance and brighten people's lives with the light of compassion and wisdom.

This reference to "the darkness of living beings" is not something abstract. The important thing is to actually help banish the darkness of suffering shrouding the lives of individuals in our immediate environment.

Reaching out to the person in front of us, engaging with them, giving them hope and courage for living, and empowering them to attain happiness through their own efforts—this is truly the definition of a world religion. It ultimately comes down to whether or not the teaching has the power to revitalize the lives of individuals right in front of us. The Daishonin writes: "Here a single individual has been used as an example, but the same thing applies equally to all living beings" (WND-2, 844). The SGI has been undertaking this effort all around the world.

When the 19th-century Italian thinker and revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72) heard people say that someone was just, he tested that claim by asking: "How many souls are saved by him?" Indeed, action for the sake of good and the welfare of others is what defines a truly just person. As Mazzini put it: "It is not enough that thought be grounded on truth; the thinker's life must visibly express it in his acts."

Expanding the Network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth around the World

The renowned American journalist Norman Cousins (1915-90), with whom

I engaged in a dialogue, said that simply speaking of brotherly love and compassion will not suffice; the crucial thing is to "reach out and take hold of the one who happens to be nearest."

The SGI movement has overcome every imaginable barrier—differences of national boundaries and social systems, of ethnicity and language, of ideology and philosophical background; of gender and age; of social class and standing. Its members have also overcome barriers created by illness, disabilities, and all other kinds of challenging circumstances. Through sharing and encouraging one another with the message that all, irrespective of their present sufferings or hardships, have a right to become happy, the SGI has spread a beautiful network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth around the globe.

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Here, I would like to reconfirm the SGI's mission with you as follows:

1. As an organization of Bodhisattvas of the Earth directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin, the SGI will forever be dedicated to realizing the great vow for kosen-rufu and work tirelessly for world peace and the happiness of humanity.
2. With faith based on the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple and the unity of "many in body, one in mind," the SGI will forever strive to open the way to the triumph of humanity.
3. Acting with a spirit of self-initiative and respect for each individual, the SGI will forever illuminate people's lives and society with the light of courage and hope.
4. Standing on the side of the people, the SGI will forever champion the welfare of the people and advance together with them.
5. Transcending all forms of discrimination and prejudice, the SGI will forever spread its network of human equality.

A New Age Has Now Come

The path of humanism that we are walking stretches widely before us. No matter when or where we begin our journey, the

path is waiting for us. It is a path we can follow without hesitation or fear.

The warm and encouraging words of the great American poet Walt Whitman (1819-92) resound in my heart:

Camerado, I give you my hand!
I give you my love more precise
than money,
I give you myself before preaching
or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you
come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as
long as we live?

The gaze of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the Lotus Sutra, filled with gratitude for the eternal ties linking them to their teacher Shakyamuni, is always directed toward the future, as is the gaze of the Buddha. They are brimming with the dynamism of "dancing forth" to take part in the great struggle of spreading the Law.

In his "History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai," Mr. Toda wrote: "In the past seven hundred years, has there ever been an organization like the Soka Gakkai?... The time has now come. The time has now come for great propagation [of the Law]."

Standing up now with fresh determination and commitment as Bodhisattvas of the Earth constitutes our own personal challenge to "cast off the transient and reveal the true," a truly fitting challenge as we prepare to enter a new era of worldwide kosen-rufu.

All people in the depths of their lives are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, a fact to which they can be awakened through contact with other Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

My disciples, rise up and set forth with fresh vitality and vigor to take your places on a new stage where you will carry out your human revolution.

The world of tomorrow is waiting. Humanity of the future is waiting for the great march of the Soka Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Let your victory cheers, filled with the supreme joy of a life dedicated to kosen-rufu, resound proudly in the place where you are and in every part of the world, as we make our way together toward a humanistic century of peace.

(Translated from the November 2013 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the monthly Soka Gakkai study journal)

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are a source of great light imparting courage and strength. They warmly illuminate the way ahead for those walking through the night of loneliness and anxiety. They wipe away people's tears of despair and give hope to them. They dispel the darkness of ignorance and brighten people's lives with the light of compassion and wisdom.



SGI - South Africa Holds Memorial Prayer Meetings for Mandela and Participates in Day of Reconciliation

On the evening of December 6, following news of the passing of former South African President Nelson Mandela the previous day, SGI-South Africa (SGI-SA) held a prayer meeting at its national center in Johannesburg.



An SGI-SA member offers incense at a prayer service for former South African President Nelson Mandela

On December 8, responding to a call from the government for a national day of prayer and reflection to remember Mr. Mandela, SGI-SA held a second prayer meeting. After the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and the offering of incense, participants shared their thoughts and memories of the former president. Among these was an SGI member, Douglas Myanya, who was imprisoned together with Mr. Mandela on Robben Island and recalled him urging fellow inmates to study and develop themselves while in prison. A poetry reading was also included, and participants sang well-known Mandela-related songs.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's statement on the passing of Mr. Mandela was read out and an account of the relationship between the two was also given. Mr. Ikeda and Mr. Mandela met twice in Tokyo, first in October 1990, following Mr. Mandela's release from prison, when he visited Japan as vice president of the African National Congress (ANC), and again in 1995 when Mr. Mandela visited Japan as president of South Africa. Mr. Ikeda's suggestion at the initial meeting to develop a human rights exhibition in Japan highlighting the struggle of the South African liberation movement was the genesis of SGI's international activities for the promotion of human rights education.



SGI-SA General Director Loren Braithwaite Kabosha (left) with other SGI-SA members at the Reconciliation Day event on December 16

The prayer service provided an opportunity to share and unite in the deep sense of appreciation for Mr. Mandela's contributions and the profound sense of loss at his passing.

On December 16, a national interfaith prayer ceremony was held at Freedom Park in Pretoria marking the Day of Reconciliation, a national public holiday in South Africa promoting reconciliation and national unity. SGI-SA leaders were invited to represent South Africa's Buddhist community at the event.

The interfaith prayer ceremony was at-

tended by Deputy President of South Africa Kgalema Motlanthe, Minister of Arts and Culture Paul Mashatile and the City of Tshwane Executive Mayor Kgosisentso David Ramokgopa. SGI-SA General Director Loren Braithwaite Kabosha and several other SGI-SA members participated in the ceremony. Representatives from African traditional religious communities as well as from Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Rastafarian, Bahá'í, and Hare Krishna faiths were also present.

The ceremony was held at Isivivane, a sacred space within Freedom Park that is regarded as the spiritual resting place of those who died in the struggle to liberate South Africa. The various religious leaders offered prayers and brief messages of reconciliation. The SGI-SA representatives chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and read a message recalling former South African President Nelson Mandela's great efforts for national reconciliation and affirming the will of ordinary South Africans to continue his legacy.

[Adapted from reports from SGI-South Africa; photos courtesy of SGI-SA]

Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting Held in Okinawa



Participants at the meeting held in the grounds of the Soka Gakkai Okinawa Training Center

On December 8, in conjunction with the Soka Gakkai Okinawa General Meeting, the second Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting of the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu was held in the grounds of the Soka Gakkai Okinawa Training Center, a former missile launch site.

The meeting was streamed live to the Soka International Friendship Hall in Sendagaya, Tokyo, where it was viewed by some 127 SGI representatives from 28 countries and territories who were in Japan for SGI training sessions. It was also broadcast live to 11 Soka Gakkai centers around Okinawa Prefecture and some of its outlying islands.

"Everything begins with the courageous and noble dance of human revolution in which each person strives to make their life shine its brightest in the place where they are right now"

Eisa

The Eisa dance performance Koyu Teruya, a Soka Gakkai member who lives and works in Naha City, Okinawa, shared his experience of how he was able to overcome financial and health problems through faith. Other members of his family also described how they drew on their Buddhist practice to surmount various challenges.



The Eisa dance performance

Soka Gakkai Okinawa young women's group members performed a traditional Okinawan Ryukyu dance accompanied by sanshin, three-stringed guitar-like instruments. Young men's group members also performed a traditional Okinawa dance called Eisa.

Including those who viewed the meetings by live link-ups, a total of some 7,000 members took part in the meeting.

SGI President Ikeda sent a congratulatory message to the meeting's participants. In the message he commended their efforts in all spheres of daily life, stating,

[Adapted from articles in the December 10 and 13, 2013, issues of Seikyo Shimbun, Soka Gakkai, Japan; photos courtesy of Seikyo Shimbun]

Treasures of the Heart

Among the vast number of parables in Buddhist literature, SGI President Ikeda wrote an essay around the core teachings of Buddhism and their relevance to our daily lives.

The Treasures of the Heart

Boys, whose eyes always sparkle with inexhaustible curiosity and wonder, regardless of the weather-rain, snow, sunshine or storms - are invaluable treasures of this earth. Their liveliness and vitality are like the life force of roots which, after persevering in the winter blizzards and snow, sprout and break the crust of the earth when spring arrives.

The French writer Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), in his famous immortal work, *Emile*, portrays a boy who has reached puberty:

As the roaring of the waves precedes the tempest, so the murmur of rising passions announces this tumultuous change; a suppressed excitement warns us of the approaching danger. A change of temper, frequent outbreaks of anger, a perpetual stirring of the mind, make the child almost ungovernable. He becomes deaf to the voice he used to obey; he is a lion in fever; he distrusts his keeper and refuses to be controlled.

As is well-known to many people, this literary master piece portrays a boy, Emile, who grows up with what Rousseau defined as an ideal education, and this work is universally accepted as a pedagogical classic. But I think those who are concerned about human beings in general, not just those involved in education, should read this book at least once.

In any event, "a lion in fever" is an exquisite and superb portrayal of a boy

In our times, children graduate from junior high schools and enter senior high schools when they are around the age of fifteen. It is a very important stage because children become adults around this time. Rousseau termed this stage "the second birth,"

who has just reached the age of fifteen. In our times, children graduate from junior high schools and enter senior high schools when they are around the age of fifteen. It is a very important stage because children become adults around this time. Rousseau termed this stage "the second birth," and I suspect that it is no easier today to educate children at this age than it was in his day.

"What, then, is the present situation for young people in Japan? Do they have good "doctors" who can cure their "fever" at home and at school? This "fever" is peculiar to adolescents who have tremendous emotional ups and downs; are they being led toward a healthy course which leads to mature growth? Regrettably I cannot offer a positive answer. These days I even suspect that the situation is worse now than ever before.

Particularly in recent years, school violence has become extremely serious, and it is shifting from the senior high schools to the junior high schools. Moreover, the violence occurring among pupils is now being directed even against their teachers, and the incidents of such violence are rapidly increasing. I hear that, because of this violence, some junior high schools even find it difficult to conduct classes normally.

Only a short time ago, it was only the colleges and universities that called in uniformed police officers to subdue the violence on campus, but these days even some of the junior high schools have begun summoning the police. Parents who have children of this age must worry about yet another violence problem, possibly in addition to the one at home.

I myself have read some of the on-the-scene reports and articles from violence-ravaged schools, and one of the most impressive insights into the core of this problem is one written by a

journalist. What he said in effect was: "Today's adults have become very insensitive to the inner aspects of human beings; the number of those adults who are extremely enthusiastic about developing the outer aspects of their children while negligent about their inner qualities is increasing." This is a very penetrating insight.

Rousseau also stated in his *Emile*:

Do you desire to stimulate and nourish the first stirrings of awakening sensibility in the heart of a young man ; do you desire to incline his disposition towards kindly deed and thoughts; do not cause the seeds of pride, vanity and envy to spring up in him through the misleading picture of the happiness of mankind; do not show him, to begin with, the pomp of courts, the pride of palaces, the delights of pageants; do not take him into society and into brilliant assemblies; do not show him the outside of society till you have made him capable of estimating it at its true worth. To show him the world before he is acquainted with men, is not to train him, but to corrupt him; not to teach, but to mislead.

"To be acquainted with men" is, as I understand it, to pay attention to the inner qualities of human beings and establish one's self-identity. This is the most important factor for the growth of children. If adults forget this point and make frantic efforts to get their children into the so-called elitist groups, they are most likely to create only arrogant and incomplete human beings who are insensitive to the minds and feelings of other people. Indeed, children are the clear mirrors which reflect their parents and society at large.

Around the time Shakyamuni Buddha preached at the Jetavana Monastery in ancient India, there existed a man who was stupid. One day, his master ordered him to take charge of the mansion during his absence, telling him to watch not only the gate but also the donkey of the house. However, on the very day the master was out, a concert happened to take place next door. He could not resist the temptation of listening to the concert, so he dismantled the gate, bound it on the donkey's back, possibly tied the animal to a pillar and then went next door. While he was away, the mansion was entered into, and all the furniture was stolen. Needless to say, when the master returned home, the poor man was severely scolded.

This is an allegory mentioned in a Buddhist scripture, but the folly of a man who forgot the essential purpose of watching the gate is not completely separated from the present educational situation. What is the goal of education and what is the purpose of learning? It seems to me that those children who are on the rampage are tacitly remonstrating with our contemporary society which is negligent about the essential meaning of learning and education.

Nichiren Daishonin states in one of his writings: "More valuable than the treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the

treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all." By "treasures of the heart"

Nichiren Daishonin

means the supreme value inherent within the life of human

beings. Now is the time we need to realize, though belatedly,

the confusion of our contemporary civilization, which has pursued the betterment of only the outer aspects of the human being. Only this understanding will enable us to blaze the path along which "a lion in fever" can become cured and grow to be as gallant as the king of beasts.

