



THE NSGI TIMES

2014 January

Living the GOSHO

From a mundane view, I am the poorest person in Jpan, but in the light of Buddhism, I am the wealthiest person in all Jambudvīpa [the entire world]. When I consider that this is all because the time is right, I am overwhelmed with joy and cannot restrain my tears. It is impossible to repay my debt of gratitude to Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings.

From 'On Establishing the Four Bodhisattvas as the Object of Devotion' (WND - 1, 977)

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Daishaku Ikeda

A person's true wealth is not determined by money or status, but by their inner state of life.

We, who follow the Daishonin's lead in upholding and practising the Mystic Law, are also the wealthiest people in all the world. An indestructible Soka Gakkai has been built by ordinary people whose hearts are filled with joy of propagating the Law.

Let's confidently continue to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, with the happy pride of those who possess unsurpassed inner riches.

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SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

Engaging in Dialogue to Foster Friendship and Trust

We have friends with whom we can share our joys and sufferings and a solidly united community of fellow practitioners with which we can advance toward the realization of our vow for kosen-rufu. There is no more inspiring or uplifting sense of fellowship than this.

The French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) declared: "Friendship and truth *must* triumph over hatred and perfidy."

The saha world in which we dwell is filled with the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death, and rife with negative influences that can lead to misfortune and misery. But all people possess within them the sun of time without beginning—the Buddha nature—that can break through all sorrow and positively transform any kind of karma, just as darkness vanishes when the morning sun rises in the sky.

The sublime melody of friendship we create through our Buddhist practice awakens this sun in both ourselves and others, filling each new year and each new day with the light of joy.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Bodhisattva Never Disparaging of old said that all people have the Buddha nature and that, if they embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will never fail to attain Buddhahood. He further stated that to slight a person is to slight the Buddha himself. Thus, his practice was to revere all people" (WND-1, 756).

In the Lotus Sutra, Bodhisattva

Never Disparaging reaches out to greet and talk with others, conveying his respect for their Buddha nature and awakening them to it.

Anyone who embraces the Mystic Law will attain Buddhahood. Therefore, even when Bodhisattva Never Disparaging meets with antagonism and hostility, he never lets it deter him from his efforts. He just summons even more life-force, and continues to go about teaching and spreading the Law. His tireless struggle eventually inspires even those who initially scorned him to become his followers and join the ranks of those who uphold the correct teaching of the Lotus Sutra (cf. LSOC20, 310).

We of the SGI, a gathering of modern-day Bodhisattvas Never Disparaging, are carrying on this effort of showing all people the highest respect.

A women's division member, who has long dedicated herself to the development of kosen-rufu in Hyogo Prefecture, lost her home in the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, as did her two daughters, young women's division leaders, who lived together nearby. She did not lose her smile, however, and threw herself into working for the reconstruction of her community.

Today, having transformed all poison into medicine, she says cheerfully: "My painful experience changed the way I look at life. When I think that everyone possesses the Buddha nature, a warm feeling fills my heart. Courage wells up inside me. I feel that I am responsible for

the happiness of my friends and fellow members. It gives me joy that we can praise and support one another, declaring that we were not beaten, that we won." With youthful energy and vigor, this sincere women's division member continues to reach out to others in dialogue, with the personal goal of making 10 new friends.

Nothing is as noble, profound, and strong as prayers for the welfare and happiness of others. In Japan and around the world, the confident and compassionate voices of our members are revitalizing the lives of all those they come in contact with.

Each and every person is a supremely noble entity of the Mystic Law, embodying the principles of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the hundred worlds and thousand factors, and the three thousand realms in a single moment of life (cf. WND-1, 235). Because of the profound ties we share with others in our environment, therefore, we can also transform our communities and our countries.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, declared: "We will never run out of people to share this Buddhism with, because each of us has been born in this world together with a great retinue of karmic companions—people bound to us by ties from the distant past. Let's sow the seeds of Buddhahood. Even though not everyone may listen to us at first, the time is sure to come when the seeds we have planted in their lives will blossom."



Our great movement of Bodhisattvas of the Earth, individuals who have courageously risen up to fulfill the vow for the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, is advancing anew with even greater enthusiasm and dynamism.

The lion's roar of the Soka family chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is reverberating from the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu.

Innumerable companions whose lives are deeply connected to ours are waiting to hear our words.

Let's confidently engage in dialogue with many others to foster friendship and trust!

On the proud stage of our vow, let's make precious friends who will share our eternal joy, never sparing our voices.

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

Let's Make Fresh Strides toward World Peace!

A new era of worldwide kosen-rufu has begun—a new era of expanding our life-affirming network for the sake of world peace, the flourishing of society, and the happiness of humanity.

I call out to my admirable fellow members and all our precious friends everywhere: Let's strive together once again in this new year, with unflagging health and vigor, vitality and youth, harmony and friendship!

*

Why were we born into this world? A line from the "Life Span" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra that we recite daily in gongyo reads: "... where living beings enjoy themselves at ease."

We were not born into this world to suffer and be miserable. We were born to be happy and savor true joy, never allowing any suffering or misfortune to defeat us. This is the essential message of the Lotus Sutra.

Citing this sutra passage, Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that the phrase "enjoy themselves at ease" means making our lives shine as entities of the supreme Mystic Law and attaining the state of limitless freedom of the Buddha. He also indicates that "living beings" refers to all human beings, while "where" refers to Jambudvīpa, or the entire world.

As such, anyone anywhere, no matter how troubled the times, can attain a state of absolute happiness—in which life itself is a joy—in the place where they are right now.

We of the SGI, while warmly encouraging and supporting one another in faith, are reaching out to one person after another and helping them realize such a life of triumph filled with hope and joy. This is the heart of our great movement for kosen-rufu.

*

SGI members in 192 countries and territories around the world are now enjoying actual proof of happiness in their lives.

There is a dedicated women's division member who, for more than 50 years, has contributed to the development of kosen-rufu in her country in South America, opening paths where none existed before. She reports that her life and community have changed dramatically from those early pioneering days, now brimming with an abundance of good fortune and benefit.

At the beginning, she says, she had to walk everywhere to carry out her SGI activities, but now she drives in her own car. She is also able to gather together with fellow members and friends in a fine SGI center. When she first began to share Buddhism with others, she often encountered hostility arising from ignorance and prejudice, but now the SGI enjoys widespread trust and respect in society. This, she feels, is the result of the members' thorough commitment to faith, practice, and study, and their steadfastly holding regular discussion meetings. All her strenuous efforts for kosen-rufu, she declares, enabled her to change her karma, transforming everything into a source of boundless good fortune. What makes her happiest, she says, is that, in tandem with the growth of the SGI movement for peace, culture, and education, her community has developed vibrantly and her country has flourished.

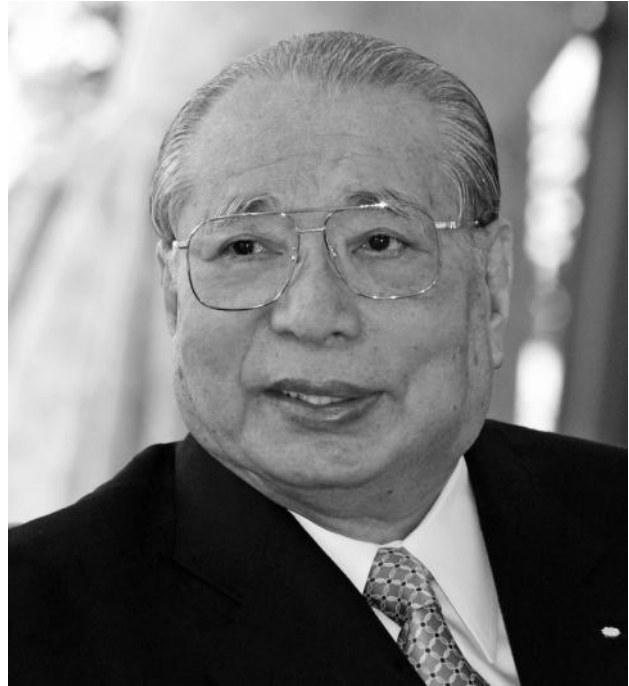
I wish to heartily applaud and praise all of my dedicated fellow members around the globe who, as good citizens of their communities, are striving tirelessly for kosen-rufu and making positive contributions to their societies.

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Nichiren Daishonin writes: "There is definitely something extraordinary in the ebb and flow of the tide, the rising and setting of the moon, and the way in which summer, autumn, winter, and spring give way to each other. Something uncommon also occurs when an ordinary person attains Buddhahood. At such a time, the three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat."

Life and human society are filled with endless trials and tribulations. But the wise eagerly take on every challenge, no matter how daunting, triumph in each one, and keep forging ahead on the great path of human revolution.

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin fosters people of true wisdom and links them together. In our world today, faced with so many difficult and complex problems, it is the mission of the SGI, as a truly global religious movement,



to harmoniously and positively spread an indestructible alliance of wise individuals, transcending all differences.

*

I am presently engaged in a dialogue with Prof. Kevin Clements, chair of peace and conflict studies at New Zealand's University of Otago. Inheriting the antiwar convictions of his father, who was jailed as a conscientious objector during World War II, Professor Clements has fought vigorously against war and for the abolition of nuclear weapons. I was deeply struck by his assertion that what we need most to build a truly peaceful and compassionate society is courage.

The essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism, too, is courage. Now, vast numbers of youthful global citizens filled with courage—noble Bodhisattvas of the Earth—are emerging in every region and striving dynamically to build a world of peace and harmonious coexistence, just as described in the Lotus Sutra.

"Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion," declares the Daishonin. The sound of daimoku is the ultimate embodiment of courage.

Now, the lion's roar of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, infused with a fervent vow for peace, resounds in our newly completed Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu—an edifice symbolizing the victory of the mentors and disciples of Soka. In fact, it resounds powerfully in countries and territories all over the globe, enveloping every corner of our beautiful blue planet.

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At this perfect time for the SGI to embark on a new phase of development as a world religion, let us set forth confidently, sharing our convictions with others and imparting warm encouragement and hope to those who are suffering. Let us create a world "where living beings enjoy themselves at ease"—a world where all people can lead happy and fulfilling lives.

I am sincerely praying for your good health and longevity and for the happiness and well-being of your families.

Daisaku Ikeda
President
Soka Gakkai International

New Year Messages from Nepal SGI Leaders

NSGI General Director Sahana Shrestha writes:

Congratulations to all of you, my precious Bodhisattvas on the Year of a New Era of Worldwide Kosenrufu. We are overwhelmed to be able to welcome this year together with SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and Madame Kaneko Ikeda. Thanking you for all the efforts in 2013, let us move to the New Year with more hope and enthusiasm.

In Nov 2013, the new worldwide headquarters building in Shinanomachi, Tokyo was completed. This special building has eight pillars on its southern and northern sides. These symbolize the eight characters in the passage that expresses the heart of the Lotus Sutra: 'You should rise and greet them from afar, showing them the same respect you would a Buddha'. This is also the spirit of Soka Gakkai, treasuring each member as if they were a Buddha. In this new building, there is a hall which will be forever known as the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosenrufu. This hall will be the place where visitors go to renew their pledge for what they are going to do as individuals in the future of kosenrufu. Our leaders Mr. Sagar Thapa and Mr. Prabal K. Manandhar had the great opportunity to attend the first gongyo ceremony in this hall on Nov 8, 2013 and pledged to widen the circle of Kosenrufu in Nepal.



In his message to the opening ceremony of this building President Ikeda confirmed that, "The heart of the great vow for kosenrufu and the life state of Buddhahood are one and same." So if we want to reveal our Buddhahood, we must make a vow and if we make a vow, we are revealing our Buddhahood. In this start of the New Year, let us join together by refreshing, renewing and deepening our vow and consider what action we will take in our respective division and district, our community, our family and in our own personal life and move one step further along the path of kosenrufu. Let us successfully complete our quarterly campaigns (daimoku, study, home visit and shakabuku) with a strong vow and make this year 2014 a very remarkable one.

NSGI Men's Division Leader Prabal Kiran Manandhar writes:

Happy New Year 2014 to all the Bodhisattvas of the earth. Let's pray resolutely and work wholeheartedly with determination to make it a memorable year in the annals of the history of Nepal SGI and for the peace, security and well being of our country and happiness of fellow countryman. Try even harder to show the actual proof of victory in our own lives to prove that Nichiren and Sensei's teachings are true.

NSGI Women's Division Leader Ujwal Nayan Ranjit writes:

With the beginning of each new morning let's write new pages of victory. Wishing for your growth and development in this New year 2014



New Year Messages for Young Women and Young Men

NSGI Youth Leader Matina Shakya writes:



With the completion of yet another victorious year of 2013, we are stepping towards 2014 as a fresh

departure upholding our life's mission of kosenrufu all over Nepal. May the year 2014 be marked as a year of remarkable growth for each one of us. May each one of our hearts be filled with absolute happiness and may we be able to touch lives of everyone associated to us with it in every possible way.

We all are exerting ourselves incredibly in every facet of our lives, and starting afresh in order to renew ourselves to do our best every year. Hence for the year 2014 let us challenge ourselves as bodhisattvas of earth, hand in hand with a spirit of many in body one in mind in order to actualize our unique missions and achieve kosenrufu in our country.

Lastly, Let us **CHANT** to fight back to our fundamental darkness Let us **SMILE** at every obstacle that comes into play Let us **LOVE** to spread warmth and hope Let us **GROW** to make our lives ever more beautiful .. A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR !!

NSGI Young Men's Division Leader Arzun Rakhil writes:



Happy New Year 2014. We are very fortunate to be engaged in this Nichiren Buddhism because of our past good karma. We are in the movement of human

revolution so let's work together for the sake of Humanity and build Nepal SGI as a fortress of peace in our country. Let's all unite and work hard with deepest prayer (Faith), Practice and Study. Our single involvement would help for Peace and Development of our country. I would also like to thank you all for your efforts in 2013. Finally, I take a pledge to foster capable YMD's in 2014 with lots of encouraging experience.

NSGI Young Women's Division Leader Sabina Shrestha writes:



Dear all the beautiful YWDs of Nepal SGI, wishing you all a very happy new year

2014. Thank you all for your efforts to make 2013 a remarkable year and we will definitely advance more in 2014. With the sense of mission we carried out last year and we will continue the same in 2014 more vigorously. I know all of us have faced a lot of obstacles on the way to achieve the great victory and many of us had won with our actual proof and some of you are still continuing to face challenges this year too. I hope this year we will find actual proof based on faith and you will report your victory to Sensei.

Nichiren Daishonin's Goshu says, "many in body one in mind" and as we all know many of us are from different cultures, religions, and paths in life but our mission is to achieve the kosen-rufu movement of Nepal SGI. We all are so grateful that we have encountered the life philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism so let's advance together and introduce as many of your friends and let's shine in their lives.

This year Nepal SGI has focused on 4 main key areas; Daimoku Campaign, Study Campaign, Home Visit Campaign and Shakabuku Campaign. Without all your support victory cannot be achieved so let's all start this fresh year with sonorous chanting of daimoku and please give your very best in all our campaigns.

From today itself let's all take the responsibility in each of your district and advance in 2014 with hope and joy throughout the year to achieve victory and then when we report back we will make sensei feel proud.

Once again happy new year and wishing you a very wonderful year ahead!!!!

SGI President Ikeda's Dedication

The following is the text of SGI President Ikeda's dedication on the monument that graces the entrance lobby of the newly opened Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. The dedication is inscribed in both Japanese and English.

The Vow for Kosen-rufu

Worldwide kosen-rufu is the will of Nichiren Daishonin, and the Soka Gakkai is fulfilling the unique mission of actualizing this noble vision in accord with the Daishonin's true intent.

November 18, 1930 — The Soka Gakkai emerged out of the efforts of a mentor and disciple who shared deep karmic bonds. Founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi spread Nichiren Buddhism and its teaching of respect for the dignity of life in wartime Japan. For these actions, he was arrested and jailed by the militarist authorities and died in prison for his beliefs. His disciple, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, was likewise imprisoned, but survived the ordeal to devote the rest of his life to eliminating misery from the world.

Carrying on President Toda's spirit of selfless dedication to propagating Nichiren Buddhism, I stood up as his disciple to become the third president of the Soka Gakkai. My fellow members and I, united in the struggle for kosen-rufu, have written a brilliant history of brave and vigorous exertion, sowing the seeds of happiness of the Mystic Law far and wide. These efforts have given rise to a magnificent flowering of peace, culture, and education in 192 countries and territories around the globe.

November 18, 2013 — Here in Shinanomachi, Tokyo—the home of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters,

where President Toda took leadership for kosen-rufu in keeping with his mentor's noble spirit—the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, which I proposed and named, has now been erected.

Enshrined herein is the Soka Gakkai Kosen-rufu Gohonzon, which bears the inscription "For the Fulfillment of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law."

This lofty citadel, dedicated to the shared vow of mentor and disciple, is a place for offering our profound prayers for the realization of a peaceful world through spreading the humanistic teachings and ideals of Nichiren Buddhism. It is a place for resolving anew to triumph in our personal human revolution, undaunted by all obstacles and challenges, and to help others do the same.

In "On Repaying Debts of Gratitude," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "If Nichiren's compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity."

Kosen-rufu is the path to attaining universal peace and prosperity. It is our great vow from time without beginning for the enlightenment of all people. Today, a steady stream of Bodhisattvas of the Earth is vibrantly emerging and illuminating every corner of the globe with the great light of humanism of the Lotus Sutra.



It is my most heartfelt wish that all our precious members, directly linked to Nichiren Daishonin and following the lead of the three founding presidents of the Soka Gakkai, will unite in the spirit of "many in body, one in mind" to build an ever stronger groundswell for kosen-rufu, for world peace, into the eternal future.

With deepest gratitude to my mentors, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda,

Daisaku Ikeda Third President of the Soka Gakkai
(Translated from the November 18, 2013, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

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).



Vigilant Safeguarding 1

It was a late autumn evening in 1976. Having completed his work at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Shin'ichi Yamamoto went outside.

Winter was approaching, and the night air had become chilly. In Japan, fires often occur during the winter. Shin'ichi decided to check on various Gakkai facilities in the area before making his way home. There had just been a major fire

in Sakata, Yamagata Prefecture, on October 29. It was a disastrous fire burning for close to 12 hours, destroying 1,774 buildings and houses in a 22.5-hectare (55.6-acre) area, and killing 1 and injuring 1,003 people. On the day of the fire, Shin'ichi was at the Tohoku General Training Center (present-day Tohoku Training Center) in Aomori Prefecture. When he learned of the incident, he gave instructions for relief activities and did everything in his power to respond to the emergency.

The fire had started at a local movie theater. At first it was thought that a boiler had overheated, but later it was suspected that something went wrong with the electrical system. Despite an investigation, it was difficult to establish the actual cause, and in the end the origins of the fire remained unclear.

But whether it had been the boiler or the electrical system, the fact remained that if the building's equipment had been

carefully checked on a daily basis, in all likelihood the most terrible of consequences, a fire, could have been prevented.

Some people tend to take things for granted. They assume that the present situation will continue unchanged, and since nothing bad has happened so far, they don't have to worry about what might happen next, even though in actuality some danger may be growing in their midst. In fact, they even forget to think about possible threats and dangers. They stop paying attention to important telltale signs and become careless.

Overcoming that mindset is the first step in preventing accidents. Nichiren Daishonin writes: "A wise person, while dwelling in security, anticipates danger" (WND-1, 621). Astute people will always be prepared for an emergency, even when the situation seems safe.

With the approach of December, a month in which fires and various other accidents increase in Japan, Shin'ichi decided to take the initiative and check on the Gakkai facilities in the headquarters area.



Vigilant Safeguarding 2

When Shin'ichi arrived at the building next to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, two

young men just happened to be walking out of it. Their badges with the logo "G" gleamed. They were members of the Gajokai.

The Gajokai is a group formed to foster the youth, entrusted with duties such as protecting the Soka Gakkai Headquarters as well as other Gakkai facilities around the country.

"You're Gajokai members, I see. Thank you for your hard work."

The two were young men's division members from Suginami Ward, Tokyo, and they were patrolling the headquarters area.

"Let's check on things together," said Shin'ichi, setting out ahead of them. As they walked, he asked them about their jobs and families and their local Soka Gakkai organization. They were valiant youths who had rushed over after a busy day at work to fulfill their Gajokai duties.

Shin'ichi remarked: "You're giving your all amid trying circumstances, and for that I am grateful. But remember that all your efforts for kosen-rufu and to support the members will return to you as great

good fortune. As Buddhists, we strive based on that conviction. And those efforts will also ensure your final victory."

There seemed to be no meetings at the headquarters that day, and there weren't many people on the streets.

As he carefully checked whether any windows in Gakkai buildings had been left open or strange objects were left lying about on the streets, Shin'ichi said to the young men: "The Gajokai Group has the solemn mission to protect the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, our culture and community centers, and our members. That's the same as my mission. To accomplish that mission, you need to be fully alert at all times, pay attention to every detail, and not overlook anything, no matter how minor it may seem.

"The ability to pay careful attention starts with your attitude. It then needs to be backed up by prayer filled with a sense of responsibility and the determination not to overlook anything that could lead to an accident. Through that prayer the positive forces of the universe will be activated, augmenting your wisdom and focus."



Vigilant Safeguarding 3

Heading toward the Seikyo Shimbun building together with the two young men of the Gajokai, Shin'ichi explained to them the basics of the task of inspecting.

"One of the iron rules is to make sure nothing has been left around the perimeter of buildings, especially

anything that could burn easily, such as newspapers or bundles of magazines. If such materials were to catch fire, it could have serious consequences."

When they came upon a two-story Gakkai building, Shin'ichi checked the storage room inside. "You need to pay attention to places that people rarely open, such as this. Some things to confirm are whether or not it's locked, anything unusual is inside, and the ventilation fan is still left running.

"It's vital to keep these kinds of areas tidy, so someone can easily spot an item that doesn't belong there. If the objects in a storage space are just strewn about, or there are cardboard boxes without labeled contents, it can be dangerous as you won't be able to notice if someone has placed any suspicious objects there. By observing how neat and orderly a place is, you can tell how alert to trouble and how responsible the people using it are."

Shin'ichi carried out a detailed inspection, including making sure that the stove burners in kitchen

facilities and the lights and electrical appliances in rooms not in use were all shut off. Outside he directed the light of a flashlight toward the base of the plants and flowers in front of the buildings to make sure no dangerous materials had been placed there.

"You may think this is overdoing it, but if an accident were to happen because you missed something, it would be too late. Eyes that notice the littlest things can prevent the biggest accidents.

"To prevent accidents, everyone should consider the matter carefully, decide on a basic roster of things that need to be checked, and then follow it assiduously. For example, the conductors on Japanese trains always carry out a series of checks before departure. Meticulously repeating that routine each time is the key to protecting their riders' safety.

"Once a routine is set, it needs to be carried out faithfully, without skipping or ignoring any part of it. If you allow it to become a mere formality and lose your focus, carelessness will follow. That's the most dangerous thing."

As the German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) said: "Habit can be dangerous."



Vigilant Safeguarding 4

As he continued to inspect the buildings in the area around the headquarters, Shin'ichi spoke to the two youthful

Gajokai members about the dangers of carelessness.

"This period from now to the end of the year is a time when there are not only many fires but also crimes, such as fraud or theft. Still, some tend to think that these kinds of things only happen to other people, never suspecting that they might become victims themselves. In fact, that's the first sign of carelessness, and that way of thinking makes you vulnerable.

"Though we remind members at meetings to be careful not to have traffic accidents, there are plenty of cases when people say to themselves, 'I know that,' and don't really pay attention. What you should do at that time is remind yourselves to be extra careful, and say

the same to those around you. Those riding bicycles also need to put this advice into action by checking their lights and brakes.

"Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo: 'Determine to take every possible precaution' (WND-1, 461). And: 'Be millions of times more careful than

ever' (WND-1, 839). He warned him to pay attention to the smallest details and be more careful than ever before. Being cautious is essential if you are to protect yourselves and be victorious in this harsh world."

Shin'ichi walked with the two Gajokai members through the Seikyo Shimbun building back to his home, which was nearby. His wife Mineko was at the entryway to greet him. She politely thanked the Gajokai members. As they parted Shin'ichi said to them: "Thank you for accompanying me today. Please aim for complete safety and security. I'll also wholeheartedly pray for the same thing every day.

"I can't go along with you on your rounds each time, but in my heart I'm always with you. We share the same mission. Please protect our headquarters in my stead. Protect our culture and community centers. Protect our members. Let's meet again."

That evening Shin'ichi and Mineko prayed intently for the Gajokai members to not catch colds and to vigorously carry out their respective missions and fulfill their greatest potential.



Vigilant Safeguarding 5

The Gajokai—
Because of you
our citadel of Soka
flourishes and triumphs
as we carry out kosen-rufu.

The Gajokai was established in February 1971 as a group to train youthful champions of Soka who will protect the Soka Gakkai Headquarters as well as community and culture centers around Japan. About ten years prior to that, young men's division members had begun safeguarding these facilities by performing inspections to ensure that buildings were secure and no fire hazards were present, among other things.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto was deeply appreciative of these members who were consistently striving behind the scenes to protect the Gakkai's various facilities, and from time to time he would offer them encouragement. As the Japanese writer Saneatsu Mushanokoji (1885–1976)

wrote: "We should be more concerned about what cannot be seen than by what can be seen."

Working wholeheartedly behind the scenes to support kosen-rufu and protect the Soka Gakkai is a most noble form of Buddhist practice. Shin'ichi believed it was necessary to officially designate this informal group of members and establish it on a nationwide level in order to preserve their attitude as the eternal spirit of the young men's division.

The large-scale renovation of the head temple grounds, including the construction of the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple), was completed in 1972. Up until this point, the Soka Gakkai had prioritized renovating the head temple and establishing branch temples for the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. It then began focusing on building Gakkai community and culture centers, which had previously taken a back seat.

With the construction of new culture and community centers around the country, fostering members to safeguard these facilities became increasingly important. The leaders of the young men's division had also been thinking of organizing their members to take on this role.

At the beginning of 1971, when the top leaders of the young men's division approached Shin'ichi about forming a team of members to take care of Soka Gakkai facilities, he answered without hesitation: "I agree with the idea of creating a group for this purpose. We should decide on a name for this training group. I'd like to make a suggestion."



Vigilant Safeguarding 6

Shin'ichi explained: "The Soka Gakkai headquarters and community centers are all 'fortresses' for kosen-rufu, so let's call the group to train these young men who will protect these centers the Gajokai (Jpn. *gajo*, lit. "tusk castle" or fortress; and *kai*, lit. "group")."

"A fortress is the base or command center of a great general or leader. In ancient China, the poles of a general's banners were often topped with ornamental ivory carvings from elephant tusks (*ga*), and were called 'tusk banners.' The fortress where these banners were displayed was thus called a 'tusk fortress'—*gajo*."

In the past, Shin'ichi had discussed the term with his mentor Josei Toda, and he had continued to treasure that conversation in his heart.

News soon spread to members throughout the country that a new group for safeguarding Soka Gakkai facilities had been established as the Gajokai. The young men's division members who were engaged in this activity became Gajokai members from February 1, making that the effective day on which the group was established.

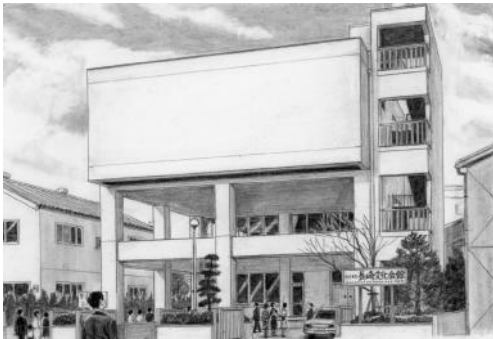
Gold badges were also created to present to Gajokai members, with a design employing the letter "G" which is the first letter in the words Gakkai, *genjo* (Jpn. "vigilantly safeguard"), and Gajokai. *Genjo* is a word that appears in Buddhist sutras, in the phrase "vigilantly safeguarding the citadel of the Law." The spirit of the

Gajokai is to vigilantly safeguard, in the spirit of not begrudging one's life, the citadels of the Law for kosen-rufu—the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and facilities—and the organization and all of its members.

In August 1975, a summer training course was held and attended by 5,500 Gajokai representatives from throughout Japan. A martial arts exhibition was also held at the time, with regional teams competing in the sports of kendo and judo. As Carl Hilty (1833–1909) said: "Forging resilience is especially desirable in one's youth."

At a vice presidents' conference in June 1976, days were chosen to commemorate each of the groups within the youth division, and September 1 was selected as Gajokai Day. That was the day of the completion ceremony of the new Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, when the old mortared-frame building was replaced with a new reinforced-concrete structure in 1963.

Shin'ichi thought that this day would be most appropriate to commemorate the Gajokai, which safeguarded the headquarters and protected the Soka Gakkai.



Vigilant Safeguarding 7

To commemorate the first Gajokai Day on September 1, 1976, a meeting to celebrate the Gajokai was held at the Soka University Central Gymnasium in Hachioji, Tokyo. At the meeting the new maroon uniforms of the Gajokai were introduced.

This day also happened to be the 56th birthday

of Hatsune Miyasaka, a women's division member from Nagasaki, Kyushu, who was wholeheartedly praying for the growth of all Gajokai members. In May of that year she had lost her oldest son Katsumi, who had been a proud Gajokai member. Katsumi had remained true to his Buddhist faith and practice up to his untimely death.

While active as a Soka Gakkai young men's division greater block chief (equivalent today to a young men's division district leader), Katsumi was also exerting himself as a Gajokai member. He had also started to assume the responsibility of safeguarding the new Nagasaki Culture Center that had just opened in November 1975. He would frequently point out: "We've had this wonderful culture center built for us. We must protect it and our fellow members!"

He answered the phone calls that came to the center in a cheerful and courteous manner. The first voice one hears when calling a Soka Gakkai facility can become one's impression of the organization as a whole. He was determined to always answer the phone in a pleasant, polite, and sincere tone.

He also often remarked to other Gajokai members around him: "When people visit our centers while we're on duty, the first person they meet is a Gajokai member. We're the face of the Gakkai. We need to warmly greet visitors with a friendly smile."

He treated all those who visited the center with warm consideration. If someone called and said they thought they'd forgotten something in the building, he'd search for it everywhere and sometimes even deliver the item to the individual. He was more careful than anyone else in his inspection of the building and the area around it. He did this out of his spirit of wanting to protect the Soka Gakkai, aware that the failure to notice suspicious objects near the building could result in a major accident.

Katsumi made the training and lessons he learned in the Gajokai his personal philosophy and code of behavior. That's how a spirit is passed on. Without that attitude, even the best training will not stick.



Vigilant Safeguarding 8

Katsumi Miyasaka had not been feeling well, so in January 1976 he went to the hospital to be examined. It turned out he had rectal cancer, which was already in the terminal stage. He had surgery, but the cancer metastasized and could not be removed. He was told he had about a month to live.

However, he said to his family members: "I am

going to show great actual proof of this Buddhism. Though I may not have long to live, I'm going to survive until May 3, the 16th anniversary of President Yamamoto's inauguration."

Eventually he left the hospital and was cared for at home. Whenever members came to visit him, it was he who encouraged them. "Life is truly amazing when it's dedicated to kosen-rufu, the path of opening the way to happiness for all people. Having been born in this world and encountered Buddhism, we have a mission to keep striving until our last breath to talk to people about the wonder of this philosophy."

On one occasion he said to a young men's division member: "I may not have long to live, but life is eternal. My most heartfelt wish is that in my next life I will be born into a family who has the Gohonzon. But even if I have the Gohonzon, I won't really understand this faith, and I won't be able to strive joyously, unless I also encounter the Soka Gakkai, the organization advancing kosen-rufu, and a mentor like President Yamamoto. That's why I want to be reborn together with President Yamamoto and the Soka Gakkai.

"And if possible, I'd like to be healthy. I want eyes to see the Gohonzon, a mouth to chant daimoku

and share this Buddhism with others, and strong legs, so I can take part in Soka Gakkai activities. That's my greatest wish for my next life.

"But when I think about it, I've had all my wishes fulfilled in this life. I'm very grateful for my life. To me it's exactly as the Lotus Sutra states: 'This cluster of unsurpassed jewels / has come to us unsought' (LSOCA, 124)."

"Life is truly amazing when it's dedicated to kosen-rufu, the path of opening the way to happiness for all people. Having been born in this world and encountered Buddhism, we have a mission to keep striving until our last breath to talk to people about the wonder of this philosophy."



Vigilant Safeguarding 9

Though he had been told he had only a month to live, Katsumi Miyasaka was still alive after two months and then three months. At last, May 3, 1976—the 16th anniversary of Shin'ichi Yamamoto's inauguration as the

third president of the Soka Gakkai—arrived. “I’m alive,” said Katsumi. “I survived to May 3.” From that day on he grew visibly weaker and weaker, but he remained cheerful and upbeat.

“I want to take part in one more Gajokai shift at the Nagasaki Culture Center. I want to see our members arriving happily at the center. I want to once again eat the instant ramen that is provided to on-duty Gajokai as a late-night snack.”

On May 24, hearing that Katsumi's condition had worsened, his younger brother Takeshi, who lived in Saitama Prefecture, and his two sisters, who had married and lived in Nagasaki, came to be with him.

The next morning, May 25, Katsumi asked Takeshi to look after their parents when he was gone. Then he said, “I’d like to do gongyo together as a family.”

They carried Katsumi to the room where the Buddhist altar was and held him up as he recited the sutra and chanted. When gongyo was over, he lay down.

Takeshi opened a pamphlet of President Yamamoto's poem “Song of Youth,” which happened to be resting on a small table in front of the altar. Katsumi liked the poem, and Takeshi decided to read it for him:

Though clouds dot the sky
and the wind blows
the sun rises again today . . .

When Takeshi started reading, Katsumi smiled and closed his eyes. Takeshi's voice resonated in the room.

I have my mission which is mine alone
You too
have a mission which only you can fulfill

About halfway through the poem, with a peaceful smile on his face, Katsumi breathed his last breath, as if drifting off to sleep. Having dedicated his youth to the Gajokai, his 27-year-old life came to an end.

The value of one's life is not necessarily decided by its length. Through dedicating oneself to the noble purpose of kosen-rufu, one's life comes to shine.



Vigilant Safeguarding 10

More than two months had passed since the death of Katsumi Miyasaka. From July 31 to August 2, 1976, the Kyushu Gajokai Summer Training Course was conducted at the Kyushu General Training Center

(present-day 21st Century Nature Conference Center, in Kirishima, Kyushu). There was an outdoor meeting on the first day of the course, and Nagasaki members produced a dramatic presentation based on the life of Miyasaka. The eyes of all the young men there were glued to the stage specially set up for the occasion.

In the play, Miyasaka calls out from his sickbed: “I want to get better and return to duty as a Gajokai member. I'm determined to protect the Soka Gakkai and all its members as a representative of President Yamamoto.”

Tears glistened in everyone's eyes. Some, trying to hold back their emotions, clenched their fists and pressed their lips together. Deeply moved, they all shared Miyasaka's determination.

One individual who serves as an example can stir the hearts of countless others. Don't wait for someone else to set an example. The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of champions precisely because each member strives to become such a model.

The performance came to an end and applause reverberated throughout the venue. The narrator said in

a resonant voice: “Katsumi Miyasaka's father Ayumu sent us a letter that I'd like to share with you now. He says: ‘I feel as if I can see the faces of all of you assembled there in Kirishima. I believe my eldest son Katsumi was looking forward to this day, when he could be together with all of you. Unfortunately, he has gone to Eagle Peak before President Yamamoto or any of you.’”

“Although Katsumi was unable to leave behind an illustrious record of achievements that attract attention, he was second to none in his commitment to protecting President Yamamoto, the citadels of kosen-rufu, and the people.

“He embodied that spirit and silently communicated it to all who knew him. Though he was my own son, I believe I can say he was a fine representative of the Gajokai. I hope that all of you wonderful young people will continue to do your best, on Katsumi's behalf, too. This is my sincere wish.”

Though he was still grieving for his beloved son, Katsumi's father wrote this letter to impart hope to the young men of the Gajokai. His sentiments struck deep into the hearts of all of them.



Vigilant Safeguarding 11

On the second day of the summer training course, a Kyushu Gajokai General Meeting was held. At the meeting, young men's division leader Isamu Nomura, speaking to the group, said that he found Miyasaka to be a model Gajokai and made the following proposal: “I'd like to suggest that the Kyushu Gajokai, as pioneers

of kosen-rufu, create a regional Gajokai flag. We can put the three letters ‘K,’ ‘G,’ and ‘M’—for Kyushu, Gajokai, and Miyasaka—on the flag as a lasting way to commemorate Miyasaka's memory. What do you think?”

The members applauded thunderously in agreement.

On August 7, the same young men's division leader reported about Katsumi Miyasaka to Shin'ichi Yamamoto, who was staying at the Kyushu General Training Center during his guidance tour of the region.

Shin'ichi said: “The Kyushu Gajokai should stand up and carry on in the spirit of Miyasaka. That's how true comrades behave. Without shared ideals, you cannot fulfill your great vow.

“Miyasaka's father responded most admirably, too. Let's plant a cherry tree at the training center in tribute to Miyasaka. Since his name was Katsumi, let's call it the Katsumi Cherry Tree.”

Then Shin'ichi composed a poem and sent it to Miyasaka's father, Ayumu. The poem reads:

In praise of
your steadfast son,
dry your tears

and eternally protect
the Katsumi cherry tree.

Shin'ichi acted with lightning speed. Speed is the manifestation of one's strength of resolve and sincerity. His mentor Josei Toda used to say, “Leaders of kosen-rufu must make ‘Speed’ their motto.”

When she heard the news by telephone, Miyasaka's mother Hatsune tried to suppress her sobs.

Shin'ichi immediately received a letter from Miyasaka's father, who wrote: “I am overcome with gratitude at the wonderful poem you sent me today. How happy Katsumi must be.”

Katsumi's father wrote a poem in response:

Battling cold
winter storms,
reaching the other shore
from where can be seen
beautiful flowers of spring bloom.

JAN 26 : SGI DAY



It was on January 26, 1975, that Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was inaugurated at the First World Peace Conference on the island of Guam—the site of fierce fighting between American and Japanese military forces and of countless deaths of innocent civilians during World War II.

SGI was created as an umbrella organization for the growing membership of Nichiren Buddhists around the world and as a network of individuals committed to promoting understanding between different cultures and actualizing peace. It was then Soka Gakkai President Daisaku Ikeda's vision to make Guam the symbolic starting point for this movement.

Some 158 representatives from 51 countries and territories attended the meeting, which is now celebrated annually as SGI Day, and at their request, Daisaku Ikeda took up the position of president of the newly-formed SGI.

In his speech on that occasion, Ikeda stressed that Buddhism is grounded in the philosophy of respecting the dignity of life and made a powerful declaration stating that he would dedicate his life to the endeavor of promoting a lasting peace. He also encouraged the members to live altruistically: "Rather than seeking to bring your own lives to bloom, devote yourselves to planting the seeds of peace throughout the world."

There are now SGI members in 192 countries and territories, with 90 independent local constituent organizations and a total membership of around 1.8 million members outside Japan. Each local organization develops its activities in

accordance with the culture and characteristics of that society, based on an understanding of the links between individual happiness and the peace and development of all humanity.

The SGI Charter, adopted in 1995, clarifies that the mission of SGI is to respond to current problems in society and the world based on the philosophy of Buddhism:

"We, the constituent organizations and members of the Soka Gakkai International, embrace the fundamental aim and mission of contributing to peace, culture and education based on the philosophy and ideals of the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin . . . We believe that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, a humanistic philosophy of infinite respect for the sanctity of life and all-encompassing compassion, enables individuals to cultivate and bring forth their inherent wisdom and, nurturing the creativity of the human spirit, to surmount the difficulties and crises facing humankind and realize a society of peaceful and prosperous coexistence."

In reference to the inaugural meeting on Guam, Ikeda states, "Since that first gathering, the members of the SGI have consistently upheld the conviction that dialogue represents the sure and certain path to peace."

In this spirit, on January 26 every year since 1983, in commemoration of SGI Day, Ikeda has authored peace proposals exploring the interrelation between core Buddhist concepts and the diverse challenges global society faces in the quest to realize peace and human security.

Prayer in Buddhism

"Buddhist prayer may be thought of as a focused expression of the sentiments of yearning, commitment and appreciation. It is, however, distinguished by the fact that Buddhism locates the divine within the life of the individual practitioner. The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken our innate inner capacities of strength, courage and wisdom rather than to petition external forces."

Prayer in Buddhism is central to the practice of Nichiren Buddhism. SGI members often relate experiences of "offering earnest prayer," or "praying from the bottom of my heart." They also speak of having their prayers "answered." What do SGI members mean when they make such statements?

The Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines prayer as "a solemn and humble approach to Divinity in word or thought, usually involving beseeching, petition, confession, praise, or thanksgiving."

In what ways does the Buddhist understanding of prayer accord with this definition, and how does it differ?

Prayer appears to be a universal human activity. There is evidence to suggest that humans have been engaged in some form of "prayer" since the earliest days of our species. As soon as humans developed a consciousness of their relative powerlessness before the forces of nature, the precariousness of their existence and their own mortality, they no doubt began giving expression to intense feelings of petition, praise or thanksgiving.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has written that religion grew from prayer; that the sentiment and act of prayer precedes the forms which different religious traditions have since given this primordial human act. Buddhist prayer likewise may be thought of as a focused expression of these same sentiments of yearning, commitment and appreciation. It is, however, distinguished by the fact that Buddhism locates the divine within the life of the individual practitioner. The purpose of Buddhist prayer is to awaken our innate inner capacities of strength, courage and wisdom rather than to petition external forces.

Also, as in many Eastern spiritual practices, there is an emphasis on a specific physical form of prayer. For practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism this means the reciting of portions of the Lotus Sutra and the repeated chanting of the phrase "Nam-myoho-rence-kyo," the name of the mystic law that lies within all life derived by Nichiren from the title of the Lotus Sutra. That the chant is audibly intoned expresses the fact that in Nichiren Buddhism prayer is not a purely meditative turning inward, but an act making manifest inner qualities, bringing them out into the real world.

SGI members direct their prayer to the Gohonzon, or object of veneration. This is a mandala, a symbolic representation of the ideal

state of Buddhahood, or enlightenment, in which all the tendencies and impulses of life—from the most debased to the most noble—function in harmony toward happiness and creativity. The Gohonzon is not an "idol" or "god" to be supplicated or appeased but a means for reflection and a catalyst for inner change.

SGI members are encouraged to make their prayers specific, concrete and focused on the real-life problems, hopes and concerns they confront. Nichiren Buddhism stresses the inseparability of "earthly desires" and enlightenment. Nichiren states that it is by burning the "firewood" of our desires—through the act of prayer—that we are able to bring forth the flame of renewed energy and the light of our inner wisdom. Buddhist prayer is the process by which our intensely felt desires and sufferings are transformed into compassion and wisdom. In this sense, it inevitably involves self-reflection, including a sometimes painful confrontation with our own deeply-rooted destructive tendencies. To quote Nichiren again, "Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life."

SGI members are also encouraged to view prayer as fully integrated with the actions and behavior of daily life. Prayer only becomes genuine prayer when it is acted upon. To succeed in life we need determination and prayer, effort and ingenuity.

Most fundamentally, prayer is the process of bringing forth the supreme state of life referred to as our "Buddha nature." A potential possessed equally by all people, the Buddha nature is the fundamental, compassionate life force inherent in the cosmos. Prayer is the process of realigning our individual lives (the lesser self, with all its impulses and desires) with the rhythm of the living cosmos (the greater self). In doing this we unleash previously untapped sources of self-knowledge, wisdom, vitality and perseverance. And because, in Buddhist philosophy, there is no separation between the internal world of human beings and their environment, changes that occur in our inner life are reflected in our external circumstances. The experience of having one's prayers "answered" is the manifest result of this process.

Daisaku Ikeda has written that the ultimate form of prayer is in fact a vow—a vow to contribute to the happiness of others and the development of human society.

It is this vow and pledge to action that most profoundly attunes our lives to the larger life of the universe and brings forth our highest, most noble "selves."

[Courtesy January 2001 SGI Quarterly]

NSGI held 19th Annual General Meeting



Jenisha Manandhar
December 21, 2013

This 19 year long journey of N-SGI has brought many hearts from different parts of country together under a roof to bind them together into a soul. The 19th Annual General Meeting marked this day very beautifully. After the conclusion of prayer led by the guest SGI Director Ong Bon Chai, Ayush Pradhan and

with his welcome speech. Along with members from Kathmandu, there were 18 members from Pokhara, 8 from Hetauda and 5 from Illam.

A new district Makalu has been established at Illam this year and in order to present the victory report of the same district Basanti Lama was called on stage. Then,

the message of Sensei was read by Sagar Thapa to all the members. Sensei's message was full of inspiration: "No matter what bitter adversity we may face, we will never be defeated. Through the power of chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we can transform even the most painful sorrow—transmuting it into the compassion to

encourage and help others who are suffering—and keep moving forward joyfully and positively."

Experiences of members regarding their faith have always been the soul of every N-SGI meetings as it helps inspire members. This time there were

altogether 4 members who shared their journey of life accompanied with prayers. Naina Ranjit gave a very good start to this experience sharing ceremony with her motivating experience. Kendra Kumari Gurung shared her moments of despair and how her prayers helped her go through those moments.

In between, there was ceremony of conferring Gohonzon. This year two members of N-SGI embraced the house Gohonzon while four members took home Omamori Gohonzon. They took a vow after receiving Gohonzon.

After this ceremony, the sharing of experience continued with Sanjana Agrawal. She shared many quotations of Ikeda sensei that had inspired her and shared her experience regarding her family problems and adjustment in new country. Similarly, Ram Mani Aryal from Hetauda shared his experience regarding finance and prayers.

Sahana Shrestha, General Director shared her

determinations for the upcoming year and achievement of the past year to the members along with giving an encouraging message. The determination included Daimoku Campaign, Community Service, Sports Meet and many more. Then it was followed by the distribution of various awards to the members, starting with Sagarmatha Award.

Sagarmatha Award is the most coveted awarded for all the members. It is acknowledgement for those active members of N-SGI who has been



Ms. Basanti Lama shares her victory report on fostering capable successors of Kosenrufu in Illam.

Anina Maharjan as the master of ceremony hosted the meeting. They shared the guidance of the day and after that they welcomed members to sing the Gakkai Song. Gakkai Song was followed by the welcome speech of Devendra Man Singh. He heartily welcomed the audience of around 250



Mr. Rajan B. Thapa and Mr. Narendra Shrestha holding Sagarmatha award with NSGI GD Sahana Shrestha and SGI Director Ong Bon Chai.



Lotusbari- A sprout towards change An initiative towards a clean Kathmandu

working very ardently in the path of Kosen-rufu. Sagarmatha Award winner of this year was Sagar Thapa and Narendra Shrestha. Subsequently Jugal District earned the best district award of the year. Then there was also an additional division in members this year i.e. Young Married Group where all the young married women will be members. Yurika Shakya is the Chief of this group. Similarly, Divya Singh and Dikshya Singh are the vice-chieves. There was also appointment of new chief in the different divisions. Matina Shakya is the Youth Division Chief while Sabina Shrestha is the Young Women Division's Chief along with Niva Shakya and Grishma Chitrakar as the vice-chieves. Later, SGI Director Ong Bon Chai embraced the stage in a very lively manner and shared a very inspiring and motivating guidance. He shared his personal experience and praised the members' involvement in Bagmati Cleaning Campaign. Consequently, cultural segment was started after the guidance of SGI Director.

A General Meeting would always be incomplete without a cultural part in it. This year participation was from



Hetauda, Pokhara and Illam as well. A skit was performed by Kathmanduities showing the importance of patience and determination of life. Then a member from Hetauda showed her dance and so did a member from Illam. Likewise, two members from Pokhara danced to the same song as that of Illam's member that is ever so famous and is called Maitighar. They danced very gracefully. After the end of culture show, the 19th Annual General Meeting of N-SGI was formally concluded by Sansho and a commemorative photograph. All the members seemed proud and happy to be the part of a family which is growing bigger and younger everyday with great enthusiasm.



Sanjana Agarwal
December 20, 2013

Lotusbari, an initiative of Nepal Soka Gakkai International under the Bagmati Cleaning Program was inaugurated on Friday, 20th December, 2013. It is located on the banks of Bagmati river just a little further down from Tilganga Hospital.

NSGI is a part of Soka Gakkai International which is a lay Buddhist movement linking more than 12 million people around the world. As "engaged Buddhists," SGI members aim to create value in any circumstances and contribute to the well-being of others. The promotion of peace, culture and education is central to SGI's activities. Nepal SGI Vice General Director Mr. Sagar Thapa said that NSGI firmly believes in creating value in the society and hence became a part of the cleaning bagmati program. SGI members integrate their Buddhist practice into their daily lives, following the Lotus Sutra Based teachings and hence the garden got its name Lotusbari, with bari meaning garden in nepali.



Mr. Rajan B. Thapa
reciting a poem

humanity towards peace. It was followed by a poem which was a tribute to the Bagmati river.



Dr. Raju Adhikari
highlights the
Bagmati Cleaning
Campaign

informed that the group meets near Min Bhawan bridge every Saturday at 8am for two hours where they work on cleaning and beautifying Bagmati. Lotusbari, is the

The first project that has been completed and is an example asking others to follow the footsteps of SGI.

The garden was inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Guest Mr. Leela Mani Poudyal, Chief Secretary of Government of Nepal.

The chief guest left after addressing the crowd. The people present were further entertained by a musical performance by the Alankar group, a part of NSGI who claimed that it was a matter of pride to play in the laps of Bagmati. Later, the members of NSGI also performed a dance to keep the spirit joyous. The cold winter wind made the atmosphere chilly while the excited spirits made the atmosphere warm.



Chief Guest Mr. Leela Mani Poudyal
encouraging people
to pledge for saving
Bagmati

The meeting was made more vibrant with slogans such as – We CAN clean Bagmati; We WILL clean Bagmati; If WE don't then who will; If not NOW, then when?

The local people present were encouraged not to lose an opportunity to be a part of this program and create a better Kathmandu for the future generations.

It was an inspiring event, and I am definitely joining the Bagmati cleaning program this Saturday at 8 am at Min Bhawan bridge. Are you joining us as well?

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.

A Boar and a Gold Mountain

Mahayana Buddhism describes life on earth as being the place “where living beings enjoy themselves at ease”. It also states that in this life, human beings are “characterized” by the four noble qualities of “eternity, happiness, true self, and purity”. In other words, human beings exist on this earth to enjoy life, which is considered to have the highest value.

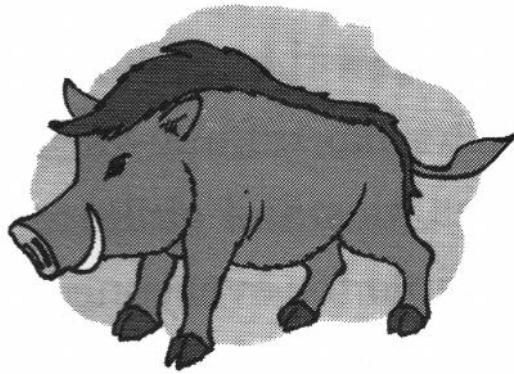
Since I believe in the concepts of Mahayana Buddhism, I am an optimist. The French philosopher Alain left with us the following well-known phrase from one of his major works, *Alain on Happiness*. “Pessimism is based more on feeling while volition or will underlies optimism. Those people, who, because they are resigned to their fate, let things slide, are unhappy.”

The human character has infinite variety, and there are also great differences in qualities and abilities from one individual to the next. It is impossible for everyone to become an Einstein or a Marie Curie, nor do I think everyone should necessarily strive to be such a person.

Willpower, however, is another thing. It is true that, generally speaking, some people can be called strong-willed and other people weak-minded. But the human will cannot be defined as an inborn trait, like ability. I know many people who, though in the past they might have been regarded as weak-minded by other people, at some point made up their minds to be different and continued their efforts until finally they are now living great lives in their own way. I think human will is an asset equally distributed among all, and any individual can allow it to manifest itself from his inner possible resources if he has the mind to do so.

As Alain mentioned, an atmosphere of optimism prevails among those who have lived their lives with a determined mind. The word “optimism” might be misinterpreted, but by optimism, I mean an inner quality that is bright, spontaneous and unrestrained, and yet experienced intimately in the bitterness and sweetness of life. This is probably because those who have lived their lives steadfastly with firm conviction and a strong will are filled with confidence in life.

It is absolutely impossible to live a life without incident. But no matter what difficulty you may encounter in your life, if you are convinced that you can turn the situation into a driving for your progress with the feeling “I’m prepared for any hardship,” that confidence will no doubt



become the basis for true optimism. Generally, those who are able to enjoy life to the maximum are endowed with a brightness which is inexhaustible. I also sense this mystical touch of life whenever I read the superb and playful humour of senryu, or short satirical Japanese poetry.

Recently, I had a chance to read *Haifu yanagidaru*, an anthology of senryu. As I savoured the freshness which lingered even after I finished reading, I renewed my appreciation for the down-to-earth, healthy wisdom of the masses during the Edo period (1603-1867) depicted in this anthology. Here are some of the popular verses:

One takes shelter under the eaves
When it begins to rain
Only to go out
When it begins to pour.
Children of public officials
Are good at learning how
To open and close their hands.
By the time one is ready
To fulfil one’s filial duty,
The parents have already gone.

Adeptly perceptive, capturing the complexities of human nature, these expressions are familiar and relevant even now. Though senryu is not as sophisticated in style as the haiku, which must include a word indicating the season of the year, it is permeated with the undisguised feelings that ordinary people express in their everyday life.

A craftsman nags his apprentice
Even during lunch to add more spice.

Oh, round and glittering coin,
Please stay with me, if only for a night.

Its meaning is this: It was considered admirable for one to show the spirit of “spending his daily earnings, not keeping any of it even overnight”, but if he actually has no money, he cannot survive, and so a man implored a gold coin to keep him company. Is this not a healthy sentiment among ordinary people?

The others are too numerous to mention. I think the living conditions of those times were incomparably harsher than ours. Nevertheless, these people infused the joys and sorrows they felt into 17 syllables and sublimated them into satirical poems which are full of life. They survived tenaciously, just like weeds, by using such witty satires as “lubrication oil” for their daily life. In them I see the tenacious spirit of ordinary people which has remained unchanged throughout the ages.

In one of his writings Nichiren Daishonin quotes a passage from *Great Concentration and Insight*, authored by the Great teacher T’ien-t’ai of China: “It will only be like a boar rubbing against the golden mountain; like the various rivers flowing into the sea; like logs making a fire burn more briskly; or like the wind swelling the body of the kalakula insect.”

A boar, envious of a brightly shining mountain made gold, scrapes at it in an attempt to deprive it of its brilliance. However, the more the boar scrapes at it, the brighter I becomes. This is just like the many rivers which flow into an ocean only to increase in volume, and firewood which is thrown into a fire to make it burn brighter. *Kalakula* is a legendary creature which becomes inflated as it swallows the wind.

The quoted passage admonishes us, in the process of performing Buddhist practice, never to give in to the winds which

blow against us, and instead turn them into winds which carry us forward. However, I also think we can draw a valuable lesson from this passage which applies to every aspect of life.

Josei Toda, whom I have mentioned many times, was my teacher and also like my father. I also have respect for Mr Konosuke Matsushita (1894-1989), an industrial magnate whom I am closely associated with. They shared the same advice about youth: “When young, a man should experience difficulties even if he has to pay for them.” These words may sound old-fashioned to some people these days, but I think it is quite reasonable to assume that a man can never realise great achievement unless he has a firm foundation in life.

The family situations of these two men did not allow them to continue their studies smoothly. Mr Matsushita, who went up to only fifth grade in primary school, has attained the greatest achievements in the business world in Japan. My teacher, Josei Toda, continued his studies in night school, while laboriously pulling a cart to deliver packages in snowbound Hokkaido from early morning till late at night. Yet my teacher attained an excellent academic record, from primary school through night class at a university.

In his late years, Mr Toda used to say this with a hearty laugh which I still remember clearly: “Nobody believes I experienced hardships when I was young.” His smiling face expressed the spontaneous warmth and humorous spirit which are characteristic of one who has scored the victory of life and conquered his weaknesses. April 2nd is the day of his passing, when I enjoy anew the memories of my teacher.

The human character has infinite variety, and there are also great differences in qualities and abilities from one individual to the next. It is impossible for everyone to become an Einstein or a Marie Curie, nor do I think everyone should necessarily strive to be such a person.

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