



THE NSGI TIMES



Living the GOSHO

Making the Best Possible Causes

Just as flowers open up and bear fruit, just as the moon appears and invariably grows full, just as a lamp becomes brighter when oil is added, and just as plants and trees flourish with rain, so will human beings never fail to prosper when they make good causes.

From "The Third Day of the New Year" (WND-1, 1013).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Nichiren Shōnin

Those who make the best possible causes in their lives through working for kosen-rufu will never fail to enjoy immeasurable good fortune and benefit. Such are the workings of the law of cause and effect in life.

How admirable are the efforts of those who strive tirelessly day after day for the happiness of others and the peace and prosperity of society! They are certain to achieve lives of brilliant victory.

(Translated from the July 4, 2013, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

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SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

Living with the Gosho, Striving with the Same Spirit as the Daishonin

We were all born to shine with happiness. Life, essentially, is an unfolding drama of dispelling the darkness of suffering and misfortune. How long have people been in search of that source of light?

Through our good fortune, we have been able to encounter Nichiren Buddhism. The brilliant, sunlike scripture that fully elucidates this supreme teaching of respect for the dignity of life is none other than the Gosho, the writings of Nichiren Daishonin.

The Daishonin states: "The Buddha's mind found expression as the written words of the Lotus Sutra. These written words are the Buddha's mind in a different form. Therefore, those who read the Lotus Sutra must not regard it as consisting of mere written words, for those words are in themselves the Buddha's mind" (WND-1, 86). Likewise, by reading the Gosho, we can directly perceive the Daishonin's mind or spirit and come into contact with his towering life state, just as it is.

The writings of Nichiren Daishonin constitute the words he set down out of his deeply compassionate wish to lead all people to enlightenment. They were composed in the midst of unceasing struggle, as he battled against the myriad onslaughts of the three powerful enemies and triumphed over one

life-threatening persecution after another.

When we read his writings, our lives are refreshed and revitalized, as if bathed in the brilliant morning sun of time without beginning. A bright flame of courage, hope, strength, and wisdom surges within us.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, declared: "No matter what difficulties we may encounter, if we challenge ourselves as the Daishonin teaches, we'll be able to overcome them. To win by directly connecting our lives with the Daishonin through his writings—that is the Soka Gakkai spirit." With this great light of striving based on the Gosho, the foundation for absolute victory, the mentors and disciples of Soka have continued to illuminate the hearts of suffering individuals.

Encouraging the lay nun Toki, who was struggling with illness, the Daishonin writes: "Even if [your illness were due to karma], you could rely on the power of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] to cure it. . . . Be deeply convinced, then, that your illness cannot possibly persist, and that your life cannot fail to be extended! Take care of yourself, and do not burden your mind with grief" (WND-1, 656).

The most fundamental way to break through the inescapable sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death is clarified in the Gosho.

Following the Daishonin's teachings, we of the SGI encourage and

support one another as we strive to change poison into medicine and show actual proof of transforming our karma. In this manner, we are creating an ever-growing network of people whose lives shine with the four noble virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity.

In the Gosho, the Daishonin also sets forth the principle of "establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land"—a principle for building peaceful and prosperous societies, triumphing even over the harsh adversities of war or natural disasters. It is a compass showing the way for uniting all humanity and building a new global society.

Last year (in November 2013), a long-awaited SGI chapter was formed in Croatia in Eastern Europe, a country recovering from the tragedy of conflict. Dedicated members there are earnestly studying the Gosho and conducting inspiring dialogues with those around them.

The leaders of the new chapter proudly communicate the spirit: "Those who have suffered deeply have an unparalleled capacity to demonstrate the power of the Buddha and make their country a model of worldwide kosen-rufu." "We are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who have voluntarily chosen our mission." "There is no resignation or retreat in Nichiren Buddhism, which teaches the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, through which the



human revolution of a single individual can open the way to happiness for all."

The SGI, whose members diligently strive in the "two ways of practice and study" (WND-1, 386), now exists all over the world, and study exams are regularly held not only in Japan but countries across the globe.

I hope that those taking study exams and those helping them prepare will study together with a vibrant seeking spirit and then put what they have learned into practice.

Living with the Gosho and striving with the same spirit as the Daishonin, let's achieve brilliant victories again today!

We joyfully read the Gosho, strengthening our conviction to withstand the fiercest storms.

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

Opening a New Era of Kosen-rufu Together

(8) Taking Action on Your Own Initiative

To the future division members:

To my young friends of the future division, who are infinitely precious treasures of the world, and to all the leaders who support and assist you, thank you so much for your efforts!

In the northern hemisphere, February is a month when the natural world begins to brim with fresh and vibrant growth, unbeaten by the harsh cold of winter.

In the same way, young people who are not defeated by hardships, trials, and disappointments are genuine victors.

*

Building the foundations for lifelong happiness and victory is the challenge of youth.

There may be times when your hard work and effort do not produce the results you'd hoped for. But even if you should stumble, please remember that experiencing such setbacks helps you become a stronger and bigger person. It also enables you to understand and empathize more deeply with others' feelings.

If you continue to strive with all your might, you will definitely be able to open a way forward. All of your struggles contribute to your personal growth and development.

You, the future division members, are the stars, the leading actors, of the 21st century. Please never ever forget that you have a great mission. I hope you will forge ahead cheerfully, with an

invincible spirit, come what may.

*

Everything starts with taking action on your own initiative; it starts with deciding, "Yes, I'll do it!"

One person's courage can create a future bright with hope. Faith in the Mystic Law is the strongest and deepest form of courage we can possess.

Please chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and take a brave step forward in a fresh challenge. I hope you will also persevere in your studies.

Your growth is my greatest joy. I am sending you daimoku and always thinking of you.

Please be kind to your parents. Stay well!

(Translated from the February 22, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

EVERYTHING STARTS WITH TAKING ACTION ON YOUR OWN INITIATIVE. IT STARTS WITH DECIDING. YES. I'LL DO IT.

(9) Remaining Firmly Committed to the Spirit of Sharing Buddhism with Others

To the student division members:

You, my young friends of the student division, who have such an important mission, are making energetic efforts to expand our movement for kosen-rufu, leading the way for the entire world.

Nothing makes me happier than to see you, our insightful and courageous student division members, achieving such vibrant growth. All of you are my dearest disciples and successors, and I praise and commend your spirited efforts most highly.

Let's continue to win victory after victory together! I hope you will challenge our movement freely to expand our movement. I am always watching over you.

*

In a Goshō passage that I have studied with student division members many times, the Daishonin states: "The Law does not spread by itself: because people propagate it, both people and the Law are respectable" (GZ, 856).

The Mystic Law is a teaching of hope by which anyone can achieve happiness and victory in life; it is the law embodying the highest truth that enables us, regardless of the state of society, to forge a solidarity of people dedicated to peace, culture, and education.

You are students with the singular mission to study the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and communicate them to others. What an incredibly noble and honorable way to spend one's youth!

No matter what happens, it's important that you remain firmly committed to the lofty spirit of sharing Buddhism with others, and that you steadfastly speak out for what is right with strong conviction.

I entrust to you the future of our

movement in its entirety. As such, I say to you: "Always maintain a dauntless spirit!" and "Win through all with deep and earnest prayer!"

Chant daimoku and, with courage and perseverance, open the way to success in your studies and in finding the next step you should take in your life.

I am praying with all my heart that each one of you will lead a youth shining with honor and brilliant victories.

Please be kind and thoughtful to your parents. Take good care of your health, and pay attention to safety so that you can advance without accident.

Three cheers for the student division members, the bright intellects of the Mystic Law in this new era of worldwide kosen-rufu!

(Translated from the March 2, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

THE LAW DOES NOT SPREAD BY ITSELF. BECAUSE PEOPLE PROPAGATE IT, BOTH PEOPLE AND THE LAW ARE RESPECTABLE.
GZ 856

No matter what happens, it's important that you remain firmly committed to the lofty spirit of sharing Buddhism with others, and that you steadfastly speak out for what is right with strong conviction.

THE WISDOM FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND PEACE

SELECTED EXCERPTS OF SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

Editors' Note

This year marks the 54th anniversary of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's inauguration as the third president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1960. That day can also be seen as the start of his journey to spread Nichiren Buddhism around the world. It has been a journey rooted in his commitment to actualize the cherished wish of his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, to rid the world of misery.

President Ikeda has dedicated himself for more than five decades to the realization of world peace and the happiness of humanity. Due to these efforts, and those of countless fellow members who have joined him in this endeavor, the harmonious, humanistic network of the SGI has spread to 192 countries and territories.

President Ikeda has spoken and written tirelessly to bring courage and hope to those weighed down by suffering and sorrow. His words are a source of boundless inspiration, brimming with the passion and energy of a great philosopher of action. In testimony to his prodigious output, the Japanese edition of his collected writings, *Ikeda Daisaku Zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Daisaku Ikeda), will soon reach 150 volumes.

At the start of this new era of worldwide kosen-rufu, we have compiled a selection of excerpts from President Ikeda's guidance, consisting mainly of passages from his collected works. This compilation will be serialized under the title, *The Wisdom for Creating Happiness and Peace*. Translations in various languages will also be produced so that the many new members emerging around the globe will be able to study President Ikeda's thought and philosophy.

The excerpts selected for this new series have been organized into three parts:

- Part 1. Happiness
- Part 2. Human Revolution
- Part 3. Kosen-rufu and World Peace

Part 1—"Happiness"—will discuss the differences between relative and absolute happiness; the teaching of the Ten Worlds as a principle for transforming our lives; the significance of carrying out the daily practice of gongyo and chanting daimoku for effecting that transformation; and the Buddhist view of life and death, in which both

are experienced with joy.

Part 2—"Human Revolution"—will focus on the Buddhist way of life, in which people strive to bring forth their highest potential and shine with courage, wisdom, and compassion.

Part 3—"Kosen-rufu and World Peace"—will take up the ideals and principles of worldwide kosen-rufu; the movement and humanistic organization of the SGI; the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple shared by the first three Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda, and Daisaku Ikeda; world peace; and respect for the dignity of life.

The start of each chapter and each selected excerpt within that chapter will be prefaced with a brief introductory explanation to clarify important points. At the beginning of each excerpt, we will include source details—for example, in the case of speeches, the occasion, place, and date—as a reference for further study.

It is also to be noted that President Ikeda's speeches are always tailored to his audience, addressing the issues that people are facing at that time or in that country, rather than serving as systematic, step-by-step presentations of Buddhism. At the same time, however, they also express a universal message, transcending any particular time or place.

With the approval of President Ikeda, we have made some minor edits and revisions to the selected excerpts to convey his message to readers around the world more clearly and accessibly. In the case of those excerpts that were originally in dialogue format, President Ikeda's remarks have been recast as monologues to read more naturally.

We hope that this series will serve as an opportunity for readers to learn from the wisdom contained in President Ikeda's great body of work, thereby lending support to the movement of human revolution dedicated to the happiness of all people and the realization of world peace.

Selected Excerpts Editorial Committee

April 2014

Part 1: Happiness

Chapter 1: What Is True Happiness?

Introduction to the Chapter:

All of us are searching for happiness in life, but what constitutes happiness is different for each person. Among all the different kinds of happiness, is there a true happiness that offers complete fulfillment to all?

This chapter examines the differences between relative and absolute happiness.

Fulfilling desires for such things as wealth, fame, or social standing constitutes relative happiness. These desires know no limit. Even if we gain such worldly benefits, they are ultimately insubstantial and ephemeral. Their allure can fade in an instant when we compare them with what others may have. And when they fail to deliver the anticipated satisfaction, we may regret ever having pursued them in the first place. If we seek only relative happiness, we cannot build a truly happy life.

In contrast, absolute happiness is attained by developing a state of life characterized by a powerful life force and rich wisdom that enable us to overcome any kind of suffering and adversity—a state of being in which living itself is a joy. Attaining absolute happiness is a fundamental goal for all.

Nichiren Daishonin, born in 13th-century Japan, established a means by which all human beings can bring forth their inherent Buddhahood, the supreme state of life, and thereby attain absolute happiness. Today, the SGI is dynamically spreading the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin on a global scale.

Based on the concept of absolute happiness discussed in this chapter, the chapters that follow will present in concrete terms the principles and means for inner transformation.

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1.1 Faith for Absolute Happiness

Introduction:

How can we live the very best life? Nichiren Buddhism offers a clear and comprehensible answer to this fundamental question. Nichiren Daishonin awakened to the Mystic Law and expressed it in the form of the Gohonzon, the object of devotion, to enable all people to attain happiness. In this excerpt, President Ikeda teaches the importance of seeking absolute happiness, which is indestructible and characterized by supreme joy, wisdom, and compassion, rather than relative happiness, which is destined to fade and disappear with time. In addition, referring to the Buddhist view of the eternity of life, President Ikeda emphasizes that when we chant with unwavering faith in the Gohonzon and bring forth boundless life force from within, we will be able to transform in this present lifetime negative karma we have accumulated in the past and achieve absolute happiness that will continue into the future.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From a speech delivered at the 1st Soka Gakkai Thailand General Meeting, Soka Gakkai Thailand Culture Center, Bangkok, February 6, 1994.

"How do I live my life?" "How can I live the very best life?"—these are fundamental questions. How to live is an inescapable issue that confronts all who are born in this world, one that has been pursued by countless philosophies, ideologies, and religions. At the most basic level, politics, economics, and science, too, are inseparable from this issue. Their original purpose is to help people live the happiest of lives. None of

these areas of human endeavor, however, can provide an answer to the question “What constitutes the best life?” They have no clear or conclusive answer that is rationally convincing.

Buddhism supplies a coherent answer to this question. Shakyamuni Buddha, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai, and Nichiren Daishonin each set forth a clear response. In particular, the conclusions of Shakyamuni and the Daishonin are exactly the same.

Moreover, based on his conclusion, Nichiren Daishonin left behind a concrete “tool” that all people can use to become happy. He bestowed the Gohonzon—which second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda referred to as a “happiness-producing device”—upon all humankind.

What is the definition of human happiness? There is a Thai saying, “False happiness makes people become haughty and arrogant. Real happiness makes people joyful and fills them with wisdom and compassion.”

Is one happy just because one is wealthy? All too many people have allowed money to ruin their lives.

President Toda stressed the importance of absolute happiness over relative happiness. Absolute happiness is not how one stands compared with others, nor is it a transitory, illusory happiness that fades with the passing of time. Mr. Toda taught that we practice Nichiren Buddhism to attain a state of life where, no matter what circumstances we may encounter, we can feel that life itself is a joy. When we attain that state of life, our lives overflow with unsurpassed joy, wisdom, and compassion—just as the Thai proverb says: “Real happiness makes people joyful and fills them with wisdom and compassion.”

The Daishonin states: “Both oneself and others together will take joy in their possession of wisdom and compassion” (OTT, 146). Our practice of Nichiren Buddhism and our organization for kosen-rufu exist so that we, and also others, may attain absolute happiness.

All kinds of things happen in life. There is sorrow, there is suffering. Every day, there are things we may find unpleasant or annoying. Married couples may sometimes quarrel, and some may go through painful divorces. Even if a couple does get on well, they may have a sick child, or one of them may suffer illness. We face all kinds of sufferings and problems. How formidable are the challenges of living!

Faith is the engine that enables us to persevere in life to the very end. Our Buddhist practice serves as the propulsive force for piercing through the clouds of suffering like a rocket and powerfully ascending higher and higher, without limit, to fly serenely through the skies of happiness.

When we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, hope and the strength to always live positively surge within us. Buddhism teaches that earthly desires—deluded impulses that are a cause of suffering—can be a springboard to enlightenment. Through faith in the Mystic Law, we can develop the ability to change all that is negative in our lives into something positive. We can transform all problems into happiness, sufferings into joy, anxiety into hope, and worry into peace of mind. We will always be able to find a way forward.

The Daishonin writes: “*Myo* [of *myoho*, the Mystic Law] means to revive, that is, to return to life” (WND-1, 149). It is the immense power of the Mystic Law that gives vitality to and breathes fresh life into all things, including individuals, organizations, societies, and nations.

As human beings, we also possess our own unique karma. You may wish you could have been born into a wealthier family, but the reality is that you weren’t. Or you may wish you were better looking—but, of course, that doesn’t apply to anyone here in Thailand! You are all so beautiful! [Laughter.] Anyway, these are just some examples, and there are many other areas where karma comes into play. Essentially, the concept of karma can only be understood when viewed from the perspective of life’s eternity over the three existences of past, present, and future. There are past existences and the law of cause and effect to take into account.

And these past existences may not necessarily all have been on this planet. Many in astronomy and related fields today think that, given the enormously vast numbers of stars and planets in the known universe, other intelligent life forms similar to human beings must exist.

In any case, our present reality is that we have been born here on Earth. This is an inalterable fact. How can we discover our true path? How can we change our karma and build a truly wonderful and meaningful existence? The answer is, in short, by embracing faith in the Mystic Law. Through our practice of Nichiren Buddhism, we can change any negative karma and transform the place where we are into the Land of Tranquil Light, a place overflowing with happiness.

Moreover, Nichiren Buddhism focuses on the present and the future. By always moving forward from this moment on, we can develop our lives boundlessly. We can also open up infinite possibilities for our next life and lifetimes after that. We can reveal the immeasurable treasures within us and make our lives shine with the full brilliance of those treasures. Such is the power of practicing Nichiren Buddhism.

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1.2 Absolute Happiness and Relative Happiness

Introduction:

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi said: “The purpose of life is to create supreme value and to attain the greatest possible happiness.” Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said: “Absolute happiness means that being alive itself is a joy.” In this selection, based on those insights, President Ikeda underscores that the SGI is an organization dedicated to helping people attain the greatest possible happiness—absolute happiness.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From a speech delivered at the Rio de Janeiro General Meeting, Rio de Janeiro Culture Center, Brazil, February 13, 1993.

What is the purpose of life? It is happiness. The goal of Buddhism and of faith, too, is to become happy.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “There is no true happiness for human beings other than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The [Lotus Sutra] reads, ‘... where living beings enjoy themselves at ease’ [LSOC16, 272]” (WND-1, 681). “Enjoy themselves at ease” here means being freely able to live the kind of life one desires and wholeheartedly enjoying that life.

If you possess strong life force and abundant wisdom, it is possible to enjoy the challenge of overcoming life’s hardships much in the same way that waves make surfing exhilarating and steep mountains give mountaineering its appeal.

Because the Mystic Law is the source of the life force and wisdom for overcoming life’s difficulties, the Daishonin states that there is no greater happiness than chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Reality is harsh. Please courageously challenge the stern realities of life and win, and win again, in everything—in daily life, work, school, and family relations. The teachings of Buddhism and our practice of faith are the driving force for unlimited improvement.

Where people possess wisdom and life force derived from their Buddhist practice, they can move everything in a brighter, more positive, and more encouraging direction. Wise, genuine practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism are able to enter into a winning rhythm in actuality, not just in theory.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda gave the following guidance on happiness:

I would like to say a few words about happiness. There are two kinds of happiness: absolute happiness and relative happiness. Absolute happiness is attaining Buddhahood. . . . Relative happiness means that your everyday wishes are fulfilled one by one—for instance, to have a million yen, a wonderful spouse, fine children, a nice house or clothes, and so on. . . . Such happiness is not of great consequence. Yet everyone is convinced that this is what being happy is all about.

What, then, is absolute happiness? Absolute happiness means that being alive and here itself is a joy. . . . It also implies a state where one is free of financial worries and enjoys adequate good health, where there is peace and harmony in one’s family and one’s business prospers, and where all that one sees and hears brings one a wonderful sense of pleasure and joy. When we achieve such a state of life, this world, this strife-ridden saha world, will itself become a pure land. This is what we call attaining the state of Buddhahood. . . .

How can we achieve this? We must shift from the pursuit of relative happiness to that of absolute happiness. Only our practice of Nichiren Buddhism can make this happen. I’m working furiously to share this truth with others; so I hope you will have utter confidence in my words and lead such lives [of absolute happiness].”

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi once said: “There are some people who go around saying, ‘I saved the money I wanted, bought the house I wanted, so now I can sit back, enjoy a drink, and indulge in a few luxuries. What more can I want in life than that?’ This kind of person has no understanding of the true purpose of life.” On this point, Mr. Makiguchi clearly stated: “The purpose of life is to create supreme value and to attain the greatest happiness.”

The name Soka Gakkai (lit. Value-Creating Society) means an organization whose members are committed to creating supreme value and attaining the greatest happiness.

The purpose of life is to realize this kind of happiness, in other words, absolute happiness. Absolute happiness is something that doesn’t change with time; it is eternal and unaffected by external factors, welling forth from the depths of one’s life. It is not a transitory thing like worldly status and fortune or some other fleeting satisfaction.

What matters is living in accord with the Law and attaining an elevated state of life based on the Law. The state of life we attain, like the Law itself, is eternal. As practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, we can make our way as champions of life throughout eternity.

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The New Human Revolution

Volume 24, Chapter 3
HUMANISTIC EDUCATION



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).

Humanistic Education 1

Where does the Soka Gakkai exist? Not in some faraway place. The magnificent citadels of Soka exist in our communities, our districts, and our blocks. It is found in our everyday interactions as we engage in our daily struggles and reach out and encourage others. That's why it's so important to make our local organizations into beautiful and joyous examples of harmonious communities of which we can proudly say: "Look at our organization! This is the Soka Gakkai!"

Our local organizations should blossom with inspiring accounts of benefit. They should be filled with joy and conviction in faith, and brimming with the courage to rise to the challenges brought on by the storms of karma. They should be places of dedication to carrying out Buddhist practice, as well as steadfast and encouraging dialogue. Our local organizations should be pervaded with unity and bonds of trust, and pulsing with the pride of Soka mentors and disciples.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The place where the person upholds and honors the Lotus Sutra is the 'place of practice' to which the person proceeds. It is not that he leaves his present place

and goes to some other place" (OTT, 192).

The place where we are active now is our "place of practice," the place where we practice to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. That's why it's a mistake to think that the real Soka Gakkai exists somewhere else, separate from our daily lives and practice.

The development of kosen-rufu starts with making our local organizations strong. It's important for us to courageously engage in that effort. We shouldn't wait for others to do it; we should stand up on our own.

Standing up alone as an individual—that's the start of everything. It's the eternal spirit of Soka. Everyone is the president of the Soka Gakkai, everyone shares the same spirit and commitment as Shin'ichi Yamamoto—that was Shin'ichi's heartfelt message.



The Year of Study, 1977, with the aim of strengthening the greater blocks (equivalent to today's districts), started out with this guideline for activities: "Let's Invigorate Our Greater Blocks through a Discussion Meeting Movement."

In addition, one week each month was designated as a "Greater Block Building Week," and leaders from every level attended greater block discussion meetings, holding planning meetings and taking part in home visits.

Humanistic Education 2

In the first half of January 1977, names were officially given to the various meeting facilities at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. The large meeting room on the third floor of the headquarters building was named Shitei (Mentor-Disciple) Hall; the fifth-floor meeting room of the Soka Culture Center was named Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall; the hall on the building's third and fourth floor was named Kinmai (Shimmering Gold) Hall; the basement meeting room, Jiyu (Emerging from the Earth) Hall; and the large meeting room on the sixth floor of the Seikyo Shimbun Building, Genron (Speech) Hall.

On January 18, gongyo meetings for the training of greater block chiefs were held in Shitei (Mentor-Disciple) Hall and Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall. Several top Gakkai leaders were in charge of the event.

On January 29, Shin'ichi attended a joint gongyo meeting for the greater block women's division chiefs of Koto, Sumida, Arakawa, and Chuo wards in Tokyo. He did this because he believed that the success of the kosen-rufu

movement would hinge on the development of these greater block leaders.

At the meeting, Shin'ichi relayed an experience about a women's division member. He had learned of the story when he visited Wakayama Prefecture in the middle of January.

The woman and her husband had first heard about the Soka Gakkai in Wakayama City in 1954. The woman, however, rejected Buddhism outright and continued to deride the Soka Gakkai. The Soka Gakkai member who had broached the subject to her said in a frank manner: "Buddhism simply teaches us the way to attain genuine happiness based on the universal law of life. If you continue rejecting this law, at some time or another you will find yourself deadlocked." However, the woman would not listen to what that member had to say.

Soon afterward, her husband's business failed and they had to move from Wakayama City to Shingu City under very unfavorable conditions, fleeing creditors. They both worked hard to reestablish their fortunes, but their life only became harder and harder.

They had huge debts, and the



woman was suffering from pleurisy and heart valve disease. Deadlocked on every front, they were very gloomy, couldn't find any hope, and eventually grew tired of life itself.

Nearly three years had passed since they had first heard about practicing Nichiren Buddhism. The woman was contemplating taking her own life along

with those of her two young children. Only when she had reached this point did she remember the Soka Gakkai member talking to her about Buddhism. She recalled the person's words: "There is no prayer that the Gohonzon can't answer. Anyone who practices this faith earnestly can become truly happy."

Humanistic Education 3

The woman said to her husband, "I'm thinking about starting to practice Buddhism."

The husband replied: "Actually, when we first heard about it three years ago, I wanted to start practicing. But you were so opposed to it."

The woman immediately sent a letter by express mail to the person in Wakayama City who had originally told her about the Soka Gakkai. She wrote: "I'd like to begin practicing the Buddhism you talked to me about. Please come and see us right away."

Her entire family at last joined the Soka Gakkai in June 1957.

In the 20 years since then, their family business thrived and they repaid their debts. Striving cheerfully in Gakkai activities, the woman became a prefecture-level leader in the organization. The couple enjoyed a fulfilling and happy life together. And the woman's oldest son,



whom she had contemplated committing suicide with, was now in his fourth year at Soka University and was studying hard to go on to graduate school overseas.

After sharing this experience with the members at the greater block women's division chiefs gongyo

meeting, Shin'ichi said: "The power of the Gohonzon may not be fully apparent overnight, but if you strive earnestly in your Buddhist faith and practice for 10 or 20 years, you will achieve clear and indisputable results."

"Our daily lives are filled with problems. Even when you participate in Soka Gakkai activities, you may also encounter people who show no understanding and make you want to give up. Some of you are no doubt facing problems with your children, or maybe are at odds with your spouse. Others may have a hard time coming up with enough money to travel to meetings, and still others may be struggling with illness."

"But Mr. Toda often said with great conviction: 'If you are diligent in your morning and evening gongyo and your practice of introducing others to the Daishonin's Buddhism, there's no reason you can't succeed at your human revolution. You're certain to become happy. This I guarantee you.'

"As women's division greater block chiefs, please lead happy lives. At the same time, I hope you will do your best to ensure that every single member in your greater blocks will lead a happy life, too. You're responsible for helping them do that."

Humanistic Education 4

Shin'ichi wanted to deeply instill firm confidence in Buddhism in the hearts of all the greater block women's division chiefs who were at the meeting. The first qualification for leaders to advance the movement for kosen-rufu is absolute conviction in their Buddhist faith and practice and in the Gohonzon.

Shin'ichi then changed the subject and began to talk about how to behave in one's family.

"I believe that the majority of you here today are married and have children. I hope you'll all strive to be good mothers and wives.

"Doing our human revolution is not a special thing separate from everyday life. For example, it's in the way you behave toward your children and your husband. Maybe you used to always be irritable toward them, but not anymore. Now you have a smile on your



face when you interact with them. You've become more considerate of them, and you listen to your children and their problems. All of these are manifestations of your human revolution.

"Happiness, too, exists near at hand. For instance, it can come from creating good relationships

with those in your family, in your neighborhood, or in your workplace. Being sincerely grateful for everything and everyone in your life, and feeling fortunate—that's the key to happiness.

"When you get back home, please give my very best regards to your husbands, whether they're practicing Buddhism or not. Eventually the time will come when they awaken to this Buddhism and start practicing, because they have a mystic connection with it. Just chant daimoku in earnest, without trying to force the issue. The important thing is to create trust as people.

"Never allow your practice of Buddhism to be the cause of quarrels with your husband or to harm your relationship. That's foolhardy. It's vital to learn to accept and embrace life, with an open heart."

Shin'ichi fully understood the feelings and the real-world daily struggles of the greater block women's division chiefs. That's precisely why he wished for all of them to live their lives with strength and wisdom, to fulfill their noble missions as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and to attain happiness without fail.

He looked intently at each individual at the meeting, with all the respect one would show toward Buddhas.

Humanistic Education 5

In conclusion, Shin'ichi Yamamoto talked about complaining. "Greater block chiefs are the linchpins of Soka Gakkai activities. I know it can be a lot of hard work. But no matter how diligently you exert yourself, if you're always complaining, you extinguish the benefits and good fortune that you should be receiving. It would be like taking medicine to recover from a cold, but at the same time walking out in the rain without any protection."

The Japanese word for "complaint," *guchi*, is composed of two Chinese characters that mean misguided (*gu*) and foolish (*chi*), or ignorance.

"I know that sometimes we just complain without really thinking about it, but the frightening thing about complaining is that every time you do, a dark cloud descends over your heart, the sun that should illuminate your spirit is obscured, and your inner hope, appreciation, and joy gradually wane. As Nichiren Daishonin writes: 'Misfortune comes from one's mouth and ruins one' (WND-1, 1137).

"People who are always complaining tend to create a gloomy atmosphere and rob the people around them of their enthusiasm, even if they aren't aware of it. In other words, they diminish the momentum for kosen-rufu and drain away the strength for others to strive their

hardest.

"Not only will they not receive benefits, but they won't be able to escape retribution for their negativity. That's why it's important for all of us to remember this point and help each other avoid this pitfall.

"Those who always take the initiative, in contrast, are much more vigorous. They inspire everyone they meet, make them feel like participating, and dispel feelings of stalemate or stagnation.

"As Nichiren Daishonin states, 'It is the heart that is important' (WND-1, 1000).

Your attitude as you practice your Buddhist faith is crucial. If you're always complaining and don't practice with a sense of motivation and initiative, you're only hindering yourself. Let's all try to joyfully and vibrantly advance."

The women's division members are the sun of



the Soka Gakkai. The energetic example of women's division members and their warm and embracing smiles are shining sources of happiness that pour down on and can illuminate the dark and gloomy spirits of those around them who are suffering.

Humanistic Education 6

On January 31, Shin'ichi attended a gongyo meeting for the Soka Gakkai Tokyo No. 1 Headquarters young women's division greater block chiefs, consisting of representatives from Shinjuku, Minato, Chiyoda, Setagaya, Meguro, Nakano, Shibuya, and Sugiyama wards. The meeting was held in Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall at the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

Shin'ichi began his speech by reading a passage from the Daishonin's treatise "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land": "Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil" (WND-1, 15).

"This passage tells us that in order to attain prosperity and peace for our society, rather than debating various methods and programs, it's better to first of all put an end to the 'one evil' of erroneous beliefs, the fundamental cause of all unhappiness. This also applies to our own lives as individuals.

"For example, let's say there's a person who



gets sick because she doesn't get enough sleep or otherwise take care of herself properly. That neglect of her health is the 'one evil' in her life. Unless she remedies that, no amount of proper nourishment will restore her to health. In the same way, there is 'one evil' that obstructs us from carrying out our human revolution and becoming happy."

Everyone listened intently to his words, their eyes shining brightly.

"Your 'one evil' may be becoming careless and belittling yourself when things don't go as you'd hoped. Another 'one evil' is blaming one's own failings and unhappiness on others, and being unable to work together in harmony with others for kosen-rufu. The tendency to give up and try to escape every time a difficulty presents itself is another 'one evil.' There are many other sorts of these 'one evils,' depending upon the person.

"The beginning of the challenge of human revolution starts with identifying the 'one evil' in your own life, deciding to eliminate it, earnestly chanting daimoku, and challenging yourself to succeed."

Shin'ichi then told them that their time in the young women's division is a vital period in their lives, because it's when they build an enduring foundation. He stressed that if they wished to attain happiness in this life, it's essential to train and polish themselves while young and eradicate the 'one evil' in their own lives.

"Strike while the iron is hot!" as the saying goes. Youth who polish their lives will be able to forge the kind of character to overcome any of life's hardships.

Humanistic Education 7

The young women's division members are the beautiful flowers of the Soka Gakkai. Their mere presence and smiling faces at greater block discussion meetings, like a fresh spring breeze, create a cheerful and uplifting environment.

Not only the young women's division but also the young men's and student divisions have their own distinct activities. Naturally, each division should concentrate on their own activities, but at the same time it's also vital to actively participate in discussion meetings, the gatherings of the Soka family, where members of each division assemble together.

Discussion meetings are the "great earth" of the Soka Gakkai. When that ground is well tilled and nourished, trees flourish, flowers bloom, and fruits ripen.

To make discussion meetings meaningful and enjoyable for young women's division members, it is important that they discuss and share their opinions with their fellow men's and women's division members. The men's and women's division members in turn need to listen to their opinions and be supportive in incorporating



their ideas. Young women's division members are the precious treasures of the Soka Gakkai. They're the young successors of Soka who will shoulder the future.

Men's and women's division members need to exercise the greatest care to foster and allow each young women's division member to bring forth her potential. The support of the women's division is especially crucial for their development. Even though these young women may have leadership positions, there may be times when they can't really give sufficient advice about things like

marriage and other problems in life, because they may not have the depth of experiences a women's division member may have.

Women's division leaders, with their wealth of life experience, are a valuable resource in such instances. When young women share the Daishonin's Buddhism with their friends, the words of the women's division members are often very reassuring. And when a new member decides to join the Soka Gakkai and start practicing this Buddhism in Japan, the assistance of women's division members in gaining the permission of their parents can be indispensable.

Women's division members need to sincerely encourage young women's division members, keeping in mind their roles as "elder sisters" or "mothers."

It's probably a good idea for women's division leaders to occasionally participate in home visits with young women's division leaders when they go to offer encouragement to their members.

When the greater block is brimming with the spirit of youth, the future is hopeful and dynamic. In many cases, the cheerful determination expressed by the young women's division enlivens and imparts courage to everyone around them.

Humanistic Education 8

When the top leaders returned to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters after participating in greater block discussion meetings, Shin'ichi would always ask them how many youth division members had attended, and especially, whether the young women's division members were in high spirits.

Shin'ichi would be overjoyed when he heard that young women's division members of the greater block had cheerfully presented reports on their studies, personal experiences, or reports on activities.

On one occasion he said, "I'm glad to hear that. It means our organization has a bright future. One of the reasons the Soka Gakkai has grown to the extent we see today is that we have consistently valued youth and enabled them to be active in the forefront of the organization, fostering them.

"The times are rapidly changing. The fundamental essence of our faith won't change, but the way we operate, and the style of our organization, has to adapt with the times. The Soka Gakkai has always gained the spirit of the times from its youth, using their energy to take the lead and be the momentum for new advances.

"The men's and women's division members can sometimes be attached to the way they've done things in

the past and don't think of looking for fresh approaches. But that's how one falls behind the times.

"We have to keep up with the changes in our society and learn about new ways of thinking from our youth. That's another reason why we need to make sure our organization encourages young men's and young women's division members to freely express their ideas to the men's and women's division members."

Shin'ichi was always thinking about the future, especially the 21st century, from every conceivable angle.

Buddhism, for example, teaches principles that enable us to solve every possible problem that an individual or a society may face. But the way in which we articulate those principles, the approach we take, differs from age to age.

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who established the theory of value, emphasized the importance of warning about the negative consequences of loss or retribution that arises from failing to create value. Second president Josei Toda, in order



to make the general public aware of the greatness of Buddhism in the aftermath of World War II, emphasized that Buddhism is the way to overcome poverty, illness, and family problems and stressed the power of the Gohonzon. For us the question is, what do people seek from Buddhism now, and what aspect of Buddhism should we emphasize when we share it with others?

Humanistic Education 9

Having engaged in open and unaffected conversations with young people, Shin'ichi Yamamoto felt that individuals, society, and the world were seeking human revolution—the process of becoming a person who is strong at heart and takes on life's hardships in a positive way—and regarding Nichiren Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai with expectation. While it was apparent that people were still looking to Buddhism as a means of resolving such things as economic difficulties and illness, he noticed that young people in particular were focused on transforming themselves and their ways of living. He sensed the approach of an era of human revolution.

In addition, with advances in medicine and such, average life spans would lengthen in the 21st century and societies would become grayer. That would in turn lead to an increasing interest in the issue of death, and Buddhism's view of life and death, which teaches the



eternity of life, would most definitely attract attention.

Shin'ichi's emphasis on study was based on his strong belief that Buddhism, as a philosophy of hope responding to the needs of the times, should be revived in our modern-day societies. And he felt that the young men and women of the youth division were the ones who

would carry out that task.

Shin'ichi said to a group of top Gakkai leaders: "When I was youth division chief of staff, I undertook the planning for all our activities and took responsibility for conducting every major event. Through that, the Soka Gakkai made a great advance. That's why I hope that the members of the young men's and young women's divisions will succeed me in taking responsibility for all our activities, with each of them having the spirit that they are the youth division chief of staff themselves. This is my sincere wish.

"If that happens, the Soka Gakkai will continue to grow and develop forever as a youthful Soka Gakkai. To ensure this, when leaders meet with our young people, it is vital that they reach out and sincerely encourage them."

As Madame Soong Ching-ling (1892–1981), the wife of Chinese revolutionary leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), once noted: "Youth are the cornerstone of the revolution. They are the defenders of the achievements of the revolution, as well as the force that propels history toward a better world."

Humanistic Education 10

Gongyo meetings for divisional greater block chiefs were held throughout Japan, and were attended by Shin'ichi and other top leaders.

One of the gongyo meetings Shin'ichi attended was for representative women's division greater block chiefs from Musashino, Tachikawa, Nishitama, Murayama, and other areas within Tokyo No. 2 Headquarters. It was held on February 1 in Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

At the meeting, he mentioned that while the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death are unavoidable, Buddhism teaches that "They [who have heard the Law] will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences" (LSOC5, 136).

He remarked: "As human beings, we can't escape from the sufferings of aging, sickness, and death, but that doesn't necessarily mean our lives will be unhappy. What we need to do is build an invincible, strong, expansive, rich state of life that doesn't succumb to such



sufferings as sickness and aging. Our Buddhist faith and practice are key to achieving that. Through our faith and practice we can open the way to enjoying peace and security in our present existence and good circumstances in future existences.

"Those who polish and train their spirits and dedicate themselves to the mission of kosen-rufu will be

fulfilled and brimming with joy day after day, even though they may be old and in poor health."

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, no matter what happens" (WND-1, 681).

"Suffer what there is to suffer" doesn't mean ignoring the existence of suffering; rather, it means facing reality head-on, viewing it from a Buddhist perspective. When perceived in that light, sickness and aging are more than meaningless suffering; instead, they become opportunities to rouse and deepen our faith. At the same time, we come to realize that sickness and aging are part of our mission to demonstrate to others the effectiveness of Buddhism.

"Enjoy what there is to enjoy" means to elevate the joys we experience in life to the level of eternal joy. The way to do that is to assiduously chant to the Gohonzon in a spirit of gratitude, elevate our life-state, and establish a condition of absolute happiness. The great path to indestructible happiness is found in consistent chanting of daimoku, in times of both suffering and joy.

Humanistic Education 11

Shin'ichi continued to attend greater block chiefs gongyo meetings, moving on to gatherings for the men's and young men's divisions. In March, he started to attend gongyo meetings held for block chiefs.

In his efforts to strengthen the Soka Gakkai, Shin'ichi focused on the front lines of the organization. This is the main arena of the Gakkai's efforts, the place where victory in the movement for kosen-rufu is decided. The mission of leaders is to heartily encourage the members at the forefront of the organization, inspiring as many as possible to stand up and take action.

In 1952, when Shin'ichi was taking the lead in the February Campaign as the adviser of Tokyo's Kamata chapter, he focused entirely on the unit level, the front lines of the organization. Propagation goals were set and discussion meetings held by unit. The campaign proceeded by clarifying the daily activities of each member in the unit and mutually reconfirming their determination.

Shin'ichi visited the units and encouraged the members. He spoke one-on-one, in small groups. He



also made a wholehearted effort to talk with members who didn't have a firm self-awareness of belonging to the Soka Gakkai yet. It was hard, grassroots-oriented work that went largely unseen. None of it was attention-grabbing or in the spotlight. However, it was through those efforts that members awakened to their mission and stood up to trigger a new wave of expansion, resulting in the unprecedented achievement of introducing more than 200 new member households in a single chapter in

one month. This opened the way for the accomplishment of the goal of 750,000 member households set forth by Shin'ichi's mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda.

Kosen-rufu and Buddhist practice take place on the front lines of the organization.

The Soka Gakkai is a place for humanistic education, teaching people how to polish and elevate themselves, live in a genuinely humane way, and work for the good of society.

Toda thought of the Soka Gakkai as a university without a campus, and as such we could consider the front lines of our organization as the classrooms and study halls of that university.

The Soka Gakkai is a place for humanistic education, teaching people how to polish and elevate themselves, live in a genuinely humane way, and work for the good of society.

Lifespan and Bodhisattva Vow

"... genuine joy lies not in simply being able to avoid or escape from one's own suffering, but in freeing others from their suffering. In other words, the greatest value in life lies in the desire to live and work for the benefit of others. Buddhism terms this desire the 'bodhisattva vow.'"

Buddhism traditionally offers two broad ways of understanding a person's lifespan. One is that everything about our lives, from birth to death, is determined by karma, the effects of causes made in past lives and up until this point. A virtuous way of life would have created the causes to be born in pleasant circumstances and enjoy a long life. Destructive and harmful actions, on the other hand, diminish one's vitality, shortening the time one can enjoy life as a human being.

In many Buddhist traditions, because birth into this impure world is itself regarded as a form of suffering, the goal is to purify one's life and karma until one can completely escape the cycle of birth and death.

From another perspective, however, genuine joy lies not in simply being able to avoid or escape from one's own suffering, but in freeing others from their suffering. In other words, the greatest value in life lies in the desire to live and work for the benefit of others. Buddhism terms this desire the "bodhisattva vow," and it is this motivation that determines the nature and course of our lives.

The bodhisattva vow could be described as the original impetus of our

lives. Buddhist practice is a way of "remembering" this vow, of engraving it ever deeper in our hearts.

The "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, parts of which are recited daily by SGI members around the world, clarifies that the Buddha nature--the universal law, or dharma, to which the Buddha awakened--is inherent in the lives of all people. This Buddha nature is the essence of life, and to awaken to it is to awaken to the eternal aspect of our own lives.

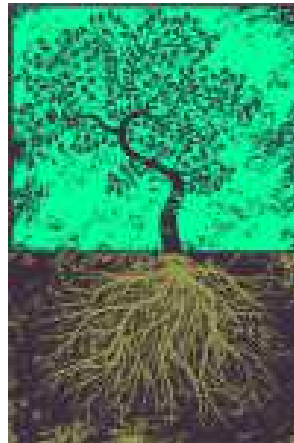
From this perspective, our original essence is pure and undefiled, but we willingly take on negative karma, choosing to be born in difficult circumstances or with various physical or psychological challenges in order to give hope to others by triumphing over these difficulties. By showing proof of the inherent power of our humanity to overcome suffering, we open the way for others to do the same. Likewise, we are able to give real support to people who suffer from similar difficulties. In each new life, we again awaken to our original vow and joyfully embrace whatever challenges it presents us.

Such awakening transforms our experience of life from a cycle of suffering

to one of mission.

According to this understanding, even a short life may create lasting value in the lives of those with whom one is connected. A child who dies young, for example, may inspire her parents to think deeply about the nature of life, causing them to live more purposefully.

It is not, then, simply the length of one's lifespan that determines the value of



[John Woodcock/Getty Images]

one's life, but the extent to which we are able to create positive value, enhancing our own happiness and that of others.

More than simply an intellectual belief or understanding, an awakening to the eternal nature of our lives is felt as a deep sense of confidence in the face of life's constant and inevitable challenges.

Such awareness does not remove us from the difficult realities of living and dying but it empowers us to confront them with renewed courage and confidence. As Nichiren describes it, we are able to repeat the cycle of birth and death secure upon the "earth" of our intrinsic enlightened nature.

A belief in the eternal nature of our lives does not diminish the significance of our present lives, which Buddhism sees as infinitely precious. Buddhism teaches, rather, that we should strive to live as long as possible, for each day presents new opportunities to pursue a noble and contributive way of life. It is when we live with a dedication to this ideal that we are able to bring forth the luster of our humanity, extend our lifespan and enjoy the most fulfilling and meaningful existence.

[Courtesy October 2012 SGI Quarterly]

[Continued from Page 4 \[Happiness\]](#)

Some people say that happiness is just a state of mind and that if you think you're happy you will be, even if you're suffering from illness or poverty. But if it's just something you're telling yourself without actually feeling any real sense of happiness in the depths of your being, then it's ultimately meaningless.

The "treasures of the heart" that we accumulate through our practice of Nichiren Buddhism will manifest in our lives over time as "treasures of the body" and "treasures of the storehouse" (cf. WND-1, 851).

Every day, I am earnestly praying that you may enjoy comfortable lives, good health, and longevity. And I will continue to pray wholeheartedly for this as long as I live. It is my ardent wish that you each fulfill all of your heart's desires, so that you can declare in your closing days, "My life has been a happy one. I have no regrets. It has been a satisfying life."

*

1.3 Becoming Happy Where We Are Right Now

Introduction:

People tend to think of happiness as existing somewhere or sometime beyond their present circumstances. But true happiness exists in the here and now, and is realized by pressing forward with hope in our ongoing struggles with daily realities. In this selection, President Ikeda discusses the attitude in faith we need in order to transform the place where we are now into a place of victory and happiness.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From a speech delivered at the University Groups and Toshima Ward Joint Training Session, Soka Culture Center, Shinanomachi, Tokyo, December 7, 1986.

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren Daishonin explains the following passage from the "Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worth" (28th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "Before long this person will proceed to the place of enlightenment" (LSOC28, 364), stating:

The words "this person" refer to the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. The place where the person upholds and honors the Lotus Sutra is the "place of enlightenment" to which the person proceeds. It is not that he leaves his present place and goes to some other place. The "place of enlightenment" is the place where the living beings of the Ten Worlds reside. And now the place where Nichiren and his followers chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, "whether . . . in mountain valleys or the wide wilderness" [LSOC21, 316], these places are all the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. This is what is meant by the "place of enlightenment." (cf. OTT, 192)

"This person" refers to the practitioner, or votary, of the Lotus Sutra. In the specific sense, it indicates Nichiren Daishonin himself, while in the more general sense, it refers to all people who embrace and practice Nam-myoho-enge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws. The place where people embrace and practice the correct teaching of Buddhism is the "place of enlightenment" to which the person proceeds," in other words, the place where we strive to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

There is no need to leave this trouble-filled saha world for some otherworldly pure land or ideal paradise. The “place of enlightenment” is none other than the dwelling place of living beings of the Ten Worlds. Now, the place where Nichiren Daishonin and his disciples who chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo reside is the land of Eternally Tranquil Light, or the Buddha land, whether it be “in mountain valleys or the wide wilderness” (LSOC21, 316). It is the “place of enlightenment,” the Daishonin asserts. The place where each practitioner lives becomes the Land of Tranquil Light. This passage alludes to the profound transformative power inherent in a single life-moment.

People often tend to think of happiness as something abstract and removed from their present realities. They imagine, for example, that they would be happier if they could move to another place, or that they would enjoy more comfortable and pleasant lives if they could change jobs. They always feel that the grass is greener on the other side and place their hopes on a change of external circumstances. Young people are particularly susceptible to this tendency.

However, we all have different missions to fulfill in life and different places where we need to live to fulfill them. Those who decide to put down solid roots where they are and continue to live their lives with perseverance and hope while struggling with reality will be victors in life. It’s important not to live aimlessly, lacking any clear purpose. I therefore say to you: “Dig beneath your feet, there you will find a spring,” and “Live in a way that is true to yourself.”

In short, a real sense of happiness and deep satisfaction in life can only be found within us. The Mystic Law is the fundamental law of life. Through our Buddhist practice, we can tap the power of the Mystic Law to propel our lives forward. This is why the place where we carry out our Buddhist practice and also society become the Buddha land. We are able to transform where we live right now into a place of victory and happiness.

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1.4 Happiness Lies within Us

Introduction:

In this excerpt, President Ikeda stresses that all people possess within them an eternal and indestructible “palace of happiness.” This is our Buddhahood. Yet, all too many people seek their “palace of happiness” in such things as wealth, fame, and social standing. By opening the “palace” of Buddhahood within us through our Buddhist practice, however, we can secure both material and spiritual happiness.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From a speech delivered at the 1st Nagano Prefecture General Meeting, Nagano Training Center, Karuizawa, Japan, August 12, 1990.

Where is the palace of happiness, the indestructible bastion of happiness, that so many are eagerly seeking? And how is it to be acquired?

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren Daishonin states: “Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is what is meant by entering the palace of oneself” (OTT, 209).

The indestructible life state of Buddhahood exists within us all. It could be described as an everlasting palace of happiness, adorned with countless glittering treasures. By embracing faith in the Mystic Law and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we can enter this palace within our lives. In other words, the Daishonin teaches that we have the capacity to make the “palace of oneself” shine with supreme brilliance.

People seek all kinds of worldly “palaces of happiness.” Some seek wealth or social standing, while others wish for fame, celebrity, or popularity. But none of those things have the permanence of a steadfast mountain peak. In our ever-changing existences, they are like the light of fireflies, flickering beautifully but destined to fade and disappear all too soon.

A life spent in pursuit of the ephemeral, transitory glories of the world is also ephemeral and transitory. Chasing eagerly after forms of happiness that are insubstantial and impermanent is a sad and empty way to live.

As the Daishonin says, one’s own highest state of life is an eternal and indestructible palace, a true bastion of happiness.

People may live in fine houses or possess great wealth, but if their hearts are mean and their life conditions are low, they will not be truly happy; they will be dwelling in palaces of misery. In contrast, people who have beautiful, generous hearts and a high life condition, irrespective of their present circumstances, are certain to attain both material and spiritual happiness. This accords with the Buddhist principle of the oneness of life and its environment—that our lives and our surroundings are one and inseparable.

When we open the palace of our own lives, it will eventually lead to the “palace of happiness” opening in others’ lives and the “palace of prosperity” opening in society. There is an underlying continuity between the process of opening one’s own

palace and others doing likewise. This is a wonderful principle of Buddhism.

In today’s complex society, where it is all too easy to succumb to negative influences, the wisdom to live mindfully and meaningfully is crucial. Our Buddhist practice enables us to open up our lives and become happy. By continuing to develop and deepen our faith and wisdom, we can become true champions as human beings and ongoing victors in the journey of life.

Supreme happiness is savored by those who, through practicing Nichiren Buddhism, make the palace of their lives shine eternally throughout the three existences of past, present, and future.

You are each building and opening your own palace of happiness day by day through your activities for kosen-rufu. You are certain, as a result, to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime and to become noble champions of happiness dwelling in a great palace of life as vast as the universe itself. I hope you will continue forging ahead on the great path of faith with confidence and optimism, filled with strong conviction and pride.

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1.5 The Six Conditions for Happiness

This selection considers the nature of relative happiness and absolute happiness, offering six concrete conditions for happiness: fulfillment, a profound philosophy, conviction, cheer and vibrancy, courage, and tolerance. All six of these conditions are encompassed in faith in the Mystic Law. A life dedicated to practicing Nichiren Buddhism is one of supreme happiness.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From a speech delivered at the 21st SGI General Meeting, Florida Nature and Culture Center, Florida, U.S.A., June 23, 1996.

In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin states, “You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come” (WND-1, 622).

How should we live our lives? What is the most valuable and worthwhile way to live? A well-known Japanese poem goes: “The life of a flower is short / Sufferings only are there many.” The meaning of these lines is that flowers suddenly come into bloom and then, just as suddenly, their petals fall and scatter; ultimately, the one thing that lasts for a long time is suffering. Life, indeed, may be like that in some ways.

A philosopher once remarked that perhaps the only way to determine happiness or unhappiness in life is by adding up, at the end of one’s days, all the joys and all the sorrows one had experienced and basing one’s final evaluation on whichever figure was larger.

Despite having illustrious positions in society or great material wealth, there are many people who fail to become happy. Despite enjoying wonderfully happy marriages or relationships, people must ultimately be parted from the person they love through death. Being separated from loved ones is one of the unavoidable sufferings inherent in the human condition. There are many who, despite gaining great fame and popularity, die after long, agonizing illnesses. Despite being born with exceptional beauty, not a few have been brought to misery by this seeming advantage.

Where is happiness to be found? How can we become happy? These are fundamental questions of life, and human beings are no doubt destined to pursue them eternally. The teachings of Nichiren Buddhism and faith in the Mystic Law provide fundamental answers to these questions.

Ultimately, happiness rests on our establishing a solid sense of self. Happiness based on such externals as possessing a fine house or a good reputation is “relative happiness.” It is not a firm, unchanging “absolute happiness.” Some might seem to be in the most fortunate circumstances, but if they feel only emptiness and pain, then they cannot be considered happy.

Some people live in truly splendid houses yet do nothing but fight in them. Some people work for famous companies and enjoy a prestige that many envy yet are always being shouted at by their superiors, left exhausted from heavy workloads and feel no sense of joy or fulfillment in life.

Happiness does not lie in outward appearances or in vanity. It is a matter of what we feel inside; it is a deep resonance in our lives. I would venture, therefore, that the first condition for happiness is fulfillment.

To be filled each day with a rewarding sense of exhilaration and purpose, a sense of tasks accomplished and deep fulfillment—people who feel this way are happy. Those who have this sense of satisfaction even if they are extremely busy are much happier than those who have free time on their hands but feel empty inside.

As practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, we get up in the morning and do gongyo. Some perhaps may do so rather reluctantly . . . [Laughter.] Nevertheless, doing gongyo is itself a truly great and noble thing. Gongyo is a solemn ceremony in which we are, in a manner of speaking, gazing out across the universe; it is a dialogue with the universe.

Doing gongyo and chanting daimoku before the Gohonzon represent the

dawn, the start of a new day, in our lives; it is the sun rising; it gives us a profound sense of contentment in the depths of our being that nothing can surpass. Even on this point alone, we are truly fortunate.

Some people appear to be happy but actually start off the day feeling depressed. A husband might be admonished by his wife in the morning and begin his day dejected, wondering, "How on earth did I get into such a marriage?" He will savor neither happiness nor contentment. Just by looking at our mornings, it is clear that we in the SGI lead lives of profound worth and satisfaction.

In addition, each of you is striving to do your best in your job or other responsibilities and to win in all areas of life while using your spare time to work for Buddhism, kosen-rufu, people's happiness, and the welfare of society. In this Latter Day of the Law teeming with perverse individuals, you are exerting yourselves energetically, often amid many hardships and obstacles, chanting daimoku for others' happiness, traveling long distances to talk with friends and show them warm concern and understanding. You are truly bodhisattvas. There is no nobler life, no life based on a loftier philosophy. Each of you is translating this unsurpassed philosophy into action and spreading its message far and wide. To possess a philosophy of such profound value is itself the greatest fortune. Accordingly, the second condition for happiness is to possess a profound philosophy.

The third condition for happiness is to possess conviction. We live in an age in which people can no longer clearly distinguish what is right or wrong, good or evil. This is a global trend. If things continue in this way, humanity is destined for chaos and moral decay. In the midst of such times, you are upholding and earnestly practicing Nichiren Buddhism, a teaching of the highest good.

In "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin writes: "This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law" (WND-1, 280). In this same letter, he instructs his believers not to be swayed by temptations or threats, however great—such as being offered the rulership of Japan or being told that one's parents will be beheaded (cf. WND-1, 280).

The important thing is holding on resolutely to one's convictions, come what may, just as the Daishonin teaches. People who possess such unwavering conviction will definitely become happy. Each of you is such an individual.

The fourth condition is living cheerfully and vibrantly. Those who are always complaining and grumbling make not only themselves but everyone else around them miserable and unhappy. By contrast, those who always live positively and filled with enthusiasm—those who possess a cheerful and sunny disposition that lifts the spirits and brightens the hearts of everyone they meet—are not only happy themselves but are a source of hope and inspiration for others.

Those who are always wearing long, gloomy expressions whenever you meet them, and who have lost the ability to rejoice and feel genuine delight or wonder, lead dark, cheerless existences.

On the other hand, those who possess good cheer can view even a scolding by a loved one, such as a spouse or partner, as sweet music to their ears, or they can greet a child's poor report card as a sign of great potential for improvement! [Laughter.] Viewing events and situations in this kind of positive light is important. The strength, wisdom, and cheerfulness that accompany such an attitude lead to happiness.

To regard everything in a positive light or with a spirit of goodwill, however, does not mean being foolishly gullible and allowing people to take advantage of our good nature. It means having the wisdom and perception to actually move things in a positive direction by seeing things in their best light, while all the time keeping our eyes firmly focused on reality.

Faith and the teachings of Buddhism enable us to develop that kind of character. The acquisition of such character is a more priceless treasure than any other possession in life.

The fifth condition for happiness is courage. Courageous people can overcome anything. The cowardly, on the other hand, because of their lack of courage, fail to savor the true, profound joys of life. This is most unfortunate.

The sixth condition for happiness is tolerance. Those who are tolerant and broad-minded make people feel comfortable and at ease. Narrow and intolerant people who berate others for the slightest thing or who make a great commotion each time some problem arises just exhaust and intimidate everyone. Leaders, in particular, must absolutely not intimidate or exhaust others. They must be tolerant and have a warm approachability that makes people feel relaxed and comfortable. Not only are those who possess a heart as wide as the ocean happy themselves, but all those around them are happy, too.

The six conditions I have just mentioned are all ultimately encompassed in the single word *faith*. A life based on faith in the Mystic Law is a life of unsurpassed happiness.

The Daishonin writes, "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the greatest of all joys" (OTT, 212). I hope all of you will savor the truth of these words deep in your lives and show vibrant actual proof of that joy.

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



3rd NSGI Student Division General Meeting

Ms. Rakshya Shrestha

The 3rd Nepal SGI Student division general meeting was conducted on Saturday June 28, 2014 at the Nepal SGI Peace Centre. There were more than 40 members including youth division, women division & Vice General Director Mr. Devendra Man Singh in attendance. All the Student members were very excited to attend. The meeting began with 15 minutes of Daimoku.

Buddhism by her fathers encouragement to participate in NSGI meetings and cultural programs.

A performance by student division boys group (Prabesh, Prajit, Paribesh, Pratik & Puran) singing the Nepali song 'Yo Man ta mero Nepali ho' encouraged everyone. Being born in a middle class family with many problems



Then emcee Jesica Katuwal formally started things off by requesting everyone to sing the Gakkai Song. Then, following a warm welcome a discussion was led by Ms Sital Bishwokarma on the topics; What is Buddhism, Why do we follow this philosophy, and What is the meaning of Nam myoho rengo kyo?

SGI President Ikeda's message was then read by Rakshya Shrestha congratulating all the student members for celebrating the general meeting on behalf of sensei. Kajol Bajracharya then discussed the significance of the month of June through a slide show pointing out the important dates & events of the month.

Manish Maharjan gave his experience of how he came to improve his studies through chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo beginning during his school days, and how he transformed his angry nature to an enjoyment of every moment of life. Then a song was enjoyed by all as Sital performed wonderfully for the audience. Priya Thapa gave her experience of being introduced to this

and struggling through life with a heart problem; Menuka Thapa shared her experience of how she encountered this Buddhism through her sister, recovered from her disease by chanting a lot, participating in NSGI meetings and getting guidance from her district leaders.

Anuska then came on stage to sing a song which was very nice. Boys & girls group performed a lively dance which was very entertaining.

Lastly Vice General Director Mr. Devendra Man Singh mounted the stage to give guidance for all the members, starting in a light hearted way explaining the importance of children to their parents and how they are aware in every moment whether their children are going the 'right way' or not. Student division is most important for the SGI. So, we must always be ready to face challenges, never be defeated and always think of our families & NSGI members. Then Jesica ended the meeting by thanking everyone for being part of the meeting and ended with Daimoku Sanso.



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 Vacuum of the Human Mind

Nothing is as illusive as the human mind. However, it is only the human mind that can grasp and move the human mind. This seems obvious, but it is not as easy as it would seem to be. I am afraid that the mind tends to be influenced by money, profit, honour and vanity. The mind is, I believe, an inexhaustible storehouse of potential, but in our daily life, surges of emotion such as love and hatred often govern and suppress the vast field of the mind's other potentials.

These impediments which obstruct the true potential of the human mind are called the "eight winds" in Buddhism — prosperity, decline, disgrace, honour, praise, censure, suffering and pleasure. Among them, prosperity, honour, praise and pleasure are called the "four amenities", and people crave them and have a strong attachment to them. On the contrary, decline, disgrace, censure and suffering are called the "four aversions", and people recoil from them.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches us that there is a way of living which will enable one to become invulnerable to such forces, saying, "Worthy persons... are not carried away by the eight winds." It is very difficult for a man to be impervious to these influences. But where there are people who always try to deeply inspire each other and develop each other's mind, there are certainly people who become spiritually strong enough to resist the influences of the eight winds. A story about the boy Snow Mountains is mentioned in the Nirvana Sutra. It teaches us about the severity of Buddhist practice which Shakyamuni Buddha carried out in a previous life when he was still at the stage of a practitioner:

A young seeker of the Way called the boy Snow Mountains lived in the Snow Mountains (the Himalayas towering to the north of India). He aspired for nothing but the Law and single mindedly dedicated himself to Buddhist austerities, totally undistracted by material wealth such as gold and silver. Moreover, the young man was prepared to discard not only his wife and children but also himself for the sake of the Law if the occasion should ever arise.

However, the heavenly god Shakra harboured some doubt about his faith. The god thought of how to test him. He disguised himself as a demon and appeared before the boy Snow Mountains, who calmly confronted the demon because he feared nothing. After a while, the demon recited half of a verse a Buddha had preached in the past: "All is changeable, nothing is constant. This is the law of birth and death." Delighted to hear this, the young seeker implored the demon to recite the other half. At the demon's demand, the boy Snow Mountains promised to give him his flesh and blood in return for the other half of the verse. He heard: "Extinguishing the cycle of birth and death, one enters the joy of nirvana." As soon as he heard it, the boy Snow Mountains engraved the teaching on nearby rocks and trees in order to transmit it to others. Then he climbed up a tall tree and threw himself into the demon's mouth. Instantly, however, the demon transformed himself back into the heavenly god Shakra and caught the boy Snow Mountains,



placing him safely on the ground and praising him for his strong seeking spirit.

What the boy Snow Mountains sought was a strong mind like a great tree which never bends or breaks in the storm of the eight winds; it is the foundation based on the strict law of causality. This kind of life is the life of a man of wisdom. There is either a life which is at the mercy of the eight winds, or there is life which is impervious to them.

Many literary masterpieces of the world depict a dramatic and vehement confrontation between these two ways of living, although they may differ from Buddhism in their presentation. Especially during my youth, I had many occasions to read such literary pieces, and I made them food for my spiritual growth. One of the most impressive literary works which struck me was *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo; the life-or-death battle which was tenaciously fought between the protagonist Jean Valjean and the police inspector Javert is still strongly imprinted in my mind.

When I was a boy I harboured an extreme dislike towards Javert, who chased after Jean Valjean with a snake-like tenacity and trapped him, although Jean Valjean tried to live a correct life. However, Jean Valjean's firm, virtuous mind, which was filled with love and compassion, finally penetrated Javert's mind which was as relentless and as immovable as the frozen land.

This is a great victory for the innate goodness of the human being. In the mind

of Javert there must have been a gap like a fathomless hollow which broke wide open. The horror and futility suddenly struck Javert, who for the first time realized that his life was influenced by the eight winds, and he became distraught. Victor Hugo vividly depicts the change which took place in Javert's mind:

There had been a new thing, a revolution, a catastrophe in the depths of his being; and there was matter for self-examination... His supreme anguish was the loss of all certainty. He felt that he was uprooted... He perceived in the darkness the fearful rising of an unknown moral sun; he was horrified and blinded by it. An owl compelled by an eagle's gaze.

Overwhelmed by this sun of moral consciousness, Javert finally committed suicide by throwing himself into the Seine River.

Spinoza says, "Nature abhors a vacuum." In the same way, the human mind cannot endure a vacuum once it has perceived its existence in it. Therefore, the ardent seeking spirit of the boy Snow Mountains who aspired for an indestructible foundation in his mind is, I think, a model for everyone to follow. Every single human being in the depths of his heart longs for spiritual contentment as the foundation of his life, even though he may not be conscious of it. Devoid of this spiritual foundation, he will eventually become aware of the vacuum, no matter how much he may try to appear important or insist on his own righteousness; his pretentiousness will sooner or later become evident. I hope that every one of us will spend each day seeking the truth of life so that none of us repeats the tragedy of Javert.

AUGUST				NSGI Monthly Meeting Schedule			SEPTEMBER		
Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	Date	Time	Meeting	Venue		
Aug 1	17:00	Friday Peace Prayer	NPC	Sep 5	17:00	All Leaders Meeting	NPC		
Aug 2	08:00	Dhaulagiri Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC	Sep 6	08:00	Machhapuchhre Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC		
Aug 9	08:00	New Era District Zankai Meeting	District	Sep 13	08:00	New Era District Zankai Meeting	District		
Aug 16	08:00	Men Division 15th General Meeting	District	Sep 20	08:00	District Leaders Planning Meeting	District		
Aug 17-22		All District Divisional Meeting	Member's Home	Sep 21-26		All District Divisional Meeting	Member's Home		
Aug 23	08:00	District Study Meeting	District	Sep 27	08:00	District Gosho Meeting	District		
Aug 25		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District	Sep 29		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District		
Aug 29	17:30	Introductory Meeting	NPC						
Aug 30	08:00	Divisional Meeting	NPC						

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