



Living the GOSHO

Seeds of the Mystic Law Will Blossom as Benefit

Even one seed, when planted, multiplies.

From "Cloth for a Robe and an Unlined Robe" (WND-2, 602).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Ikeda Sensei

When we talk about Buddhism with our friends, we are planting and nurturing seeds of happiness in their lives as well as in our own. Let's make every effort to engage in conversation with one person after another.

These seeds planted through sincere and courageous efforts will produce beautiful flowers and fruit of benefit beyond anything we can imagine, bringing both our own lives and others' to shine brilliantly.

(Translated from the May 28, 2011, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

Bring Forth Your Precious Youthful Potential

Youth is the courage to take on any challenge. Indeed, the joy, fulfillment, and pride of youth can be found in bravely challenging life's difficulties. Therefore, those who are always ready for a challenge are youthful, no matter what their age.

Walt Whitman (1819-92), poet of the American Renaissance, once said to a young friend: "I try and try and try again, and then try all over if necessary, until the approvable result is secured."

We of the Soka family, upholding the vow for kosen-rufu, continue to challenge ourselves dauntlessly day after day, while warmly supporting and encouraging one another.

I hope that our youth division members, as well as our men's and women's division members, will all join together with bright energy and cheer to enact a joyous drama of youthful challenge as Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

There are many obstacles and barriers in society that rob young people of their relaxed confidence and discourage them from taking on new challenges. But please don't let yourselves be defeated.

What is the most precious treasure, the most reliable driving force for the future of humanity? It is vibrant young lives.

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In "The Doctrine of Three Thousand Realms in a Single Moment of Life,"

Nichiren Daishonin offers the following allegory:

Suppose, for example, that there are ten persons all of whom have treasures piled up in their respective storehouses. But, being unaware that they have such treasures in their storehouses, they are on the point of starving to death or dying of the cold. Among these ten, however, there is one clever person who awakens to the true situation. The other nine are utterly unable to do so, and must be enlightened by the clever person. . . . (WND-2, 84)

The treasures in the storehouse correspond to the Buddha nature, the supremely noble potential that all people inherently possess. Awakening to this inner treasure, the wise person takes action to help others do the same. Such action is the heart of Buddhism.

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Through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and bringing forth the precious potential within them, each of our youth division members is striving to make both their own lives and those of others shine their brightest. This is the essence of the SGI's movement of human revolution.

I hope you will share the great philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism with as many other young people as you can, and together confidently achieve lives of hope, fulfillment, and success. That will also bring

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youthful creative energy to flow forth in your families, workplaces, and communities.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, always warmly encouraged sincere members who were struggling with difficulties, telling them: "You have definitely been born into this world with a mission to fulfill." He would also say: "You were born here as Bodhisattvas of the Earth based on your own wish and vow to realize kosen-rufu. If you can squarely accept that, you will be able to realize boundless good fortune and benefit."

A women's division member from the pioneering days of our movement experienced the air raids of World War II when she lived in Kochi, Shikoku. She joined the Soka Gakkai after the war, amid a life of great difficulty and privation. She laughed off the scorn and abuse that people in society directed at the Gakkai in those days. With the motto "You can't succeed if you don't try," she pursued her studies despite economic hardship and eventually became a school teacher. Shining as a sun of humanistic education, she is now in her 70s. She continues to actively talk to people about Buddhism, determined to keep working alongside the youth and for the happiness of the youth. She says: "No matter what people are like at present, they can change. I'm not afraid of others' negative reactions. That is because I can hear the true voice within them—the voice of the heart that longs for happiness and yearns for the teachings



of Buddhism."

The noble members of the Many Treasures Group cannot help but envelop everyone in the fragrant breeze of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity that emanates from the magnificent treasure towers of their lives.

My youthful successors, joining hands with your fellow members around the world who share the great vow for kosen-rufu—a vast network of like-minded friends spanning 192 countries and territories—please strive ceaselessly to help all humanity reveal the supreme treasure of their lives.

Win victory after victory!

The power of the Buddha resides in the great life state of those who have vowed to dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu.

(Translated from the June 2014 issue of *Daikyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal)

Opening a New Era of Kosen-rufu Together

(6) Nothing Surpasses the Power of Earnest Prayer

I am delighted to see the wonderful efforts you are making as leaders following in my footsteps. You are strongly united in faith. Therefore, I have every confidence that you will blaze new trails for our movement.

What matters is that we keep advancing kosen-rufu, that we foster capable people, and that all our members become happy. Toward that end, let's win through all with deep and earnest prayer to the Gohonzon.

As leaders, I hope you will sincerely praise and encourage your fellow members, who are infinitely precious, and joyfully advance together in harmony.

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There are many noble pioneer members who, while surmounting one struggle after another, have made incredible contributions to the development of kosen-rufu since the early days of our movement.

Members of the Many Treasures Group, I truly thank you for your long years of dedicated effort that shine as a brilliant testimony to your strong faith and commitment! I am always thinking of you, my dear friends, and in my heart shaking hands with each one of you.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "There is no true happiness . . . other than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (WND-1, 681). You possess in your hearts a happiness that fame and fortune can never bring.

Let's continue to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, strive together, and

No matter what happens, the important thing is not to be swayed, but to always continue chanting to the Gohonzon without retreating a single step.

lead joyful lives of great victory!

I pray that you will take good care of yourselves each day, so that you can continue to enjoy long, healthy, fulfilling lives.

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There are also members who are struggling with illness. In one of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin fiercely admonishes the devil of illness for attacking a beloved disciple (cf. WND-1, 1109). The important thing is not to let your spirit be defeated. Because all of you are striving for kosen-rufu, the heavenly deities are certain to protect you.

Everything definitely has meaning. Having to deal with great struggles and challenges allows us to grow and makes it possible for us to attain Buddhahood. The power of the Mystic Law enables us to change poison into medicine.

No matter what happens, the important thing is not to be swayed, but to always continue chanting to the Gohonzon without retreating a single step. It's vital that we break through our problems and proudly live out our lives in a way that is true to ourselves, regardless of what others say or do.

Faith in the Mystic Law means to live with eternal hope.

(Translated from the February 9, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)



(7) The Noble Vow to Strive for Kosen-rufu

I would like to once again express my deepest appreciation to all of you, our admirable uncrowned heroes who deliver the *Seikyo Shimbun* to our homes every morning, even on snowy days.

I am praying earnestly for your health and absolute safety each day.

lives.

Nichiren Buddhism is a teaching that allows the ordinary people, long downtrodden and oppressed, to shine with unsurpassed greatness and dignity.

There is no more honorable or hope-filled gathering than the SGI.

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February 16 is the birthday of Nichiren Daishonin. The Daishonin was proud to have been born among the ordinary people, openly declaring that he was "the son of a commoner" (WND-1, 1006) and "the son of a chandala family" (WND-1, 202). He cherished a fervent wish for the happiness of the ordinary people, proclaiming that the sufferings of all living beings are "Nichiren's own sufferings" (OTT, 138).

How infinitely noble is the Daishonin's inner state of being! Among the virtues most illustrative of this, Nichikan Shonin (1665-1726), who is known as a great restorer of the Daishonin's Buddhism, lists the Daishonin's noble wisdom, noble compassion, and noble vow, or commitment.

The great vow to strive wholeheartedly and unflinchingly for the cause of kosen-rufu is the essence of Nichiren Buddhism.

As heirs to the Daishonin's teachings, exerting ourselves with this same vow, we are also able to lead truly noble

Buddhism shines in our behavior as human beings. Those who chant with a deep prayer for kosen-rufu can turn everyday interactions into opportunities for connecting others to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

In a letter to his disciple Shijo Kingo, the Daishonin writes: "Live so that all the people of Kamakura will say in your praise that [Shijo Kingo] is diligent in the service of his lord, in the service of Buddhism, and in his concern for other people" (WND-1, 851). Become individuals whose efforts in their work and in society, whose conduct and activities as SGI members, and whose contributions to the community are valued and admired. By doing so, you will create boundless treasures of the heart.

I hope you will challenge yourselves in your human revolution, so that you can become people who win trust and respect in the chosen field of your mission.

(Translated from the February 16, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)



Commemorating the start of a new era in the movement for worldwide kosen-rufu, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal, *Daibyakurenge*, has introduced a special three-part series from January 2014 titled, “Advancing Worldwide Kosen-rufu through One-on-One Interactions.” This series chronicles, through the testimonials of individual members, how kosen-rufu began and developed in each country and territory with SGI President Ikeda’s encouragement of each person he encountered. The first installment focuses on North and South America; the second, Asia; and the third, Europe and Africa.

Part 1—The United States, Canada, and Brazil

The mentor’s grand vision is actualized through the disciples’ efforts. Disciples who internalize their mentor’s call as their own personal vow make it a reality.

The 7th Young Men’s Division General Meeting was held at the Nihon University Auditorium in Ryogoku, Tokyo, on December 7, 1958. There, President Ikeda, who was then the Soka Gakkai general administrator, declared: “Let us report to President Toda that, through our united efforts, we have achieved the goal of 100,000 young men’s division members that he entrusted to us!”

This goal had been announced by second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda in his October 1954 editorial in the Soka Gakkai study journal, *Daibyakurenge*, titled “Youth, Be Patriotic!” He had written: “Once 100,000 young men have gathered, then clearer than light, it will be possible to bring happiness to those suffering throughout the land!”

From that time on, the young men’s division members engraved those words in their hearts, and many were able to recite them from memory. Now, the realization of that dream had been announced. The 35,000 young men attending the general meeting were overcome with joy.

Touching on the profound significance of their mentor’s vision, General Administrator Ikeda continued: “President Toda said: ‘Things will be very exciting once we have 100,000 young men’s division members. I can’t wait to see what they will accomplish.’ These words have profound meaning. Let us do our utmost to understand his true intent and actualize it without fail.”

What was Mr. Toda’s intent that they needed to understand and actualize without fail?

General Administrator Ikeda continued: “At the meeting where the youth division was established, which was held at the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo’s Nishi-Kanda, President Toda said: ‘Of course we must carry out kosen-rufu in Japan, but the Daishonin also instructed us to carry out kosen-rufu in Asia, and to realize happiness for people throughout world. Please never forget this.’”

At the time when the youth division was established, President Toda had already entrusted his grand vision to Daisaku Ikeda, who did not forget a single word of what he said.

The time is of the utmost importance. General Administrator Ikeda had been waiting for and creating the right time. Now that the goal of 100,000 young men’s division members had been reached, he wanted to impress upon them the true significance of his mentor’s words: “The Soka Gakkai’s mission is to bring happiness to the people of Japan, as well as to Asia and the entire world!”

Worldwide kosen-rufu! The eyes of all listening shone with excitement at this dream for the future.

Akira Kuroyanagi (Soka Gakkai ward advisor): I’ll never forget the first time I heard President Ikeda, then general administrator, talk about worldwide kosen-rufu. It was during his remarks at the 7th Young Men’s Division General Meeting.

We were all quite familiar with President Toda’s use of the phrase “kosen-rufu in Asia,” which we took as our goal. We had even composed a song, the “Song of Kosen-rufu in Asia.” Also, in his writing “On Reprimanding Hachiman,” the Daishonin says: “The sun rises in the east, an auspicious sign of how the Buddhism of Japan is destined to return to the Land of the Moon [India]” (WND-2, 936). We all had a conceptual understanding of the westward transmission of Buddhism, or kosen-rufu in Asia.

At the time, however, we were fully engaged in our struggle for kosen-rufu in Japan, so kosen-rufu in Asia remained a vague abstraction for us. Then, General Administrator Ikeda presented us with the idea of worldwide kosen-rufu.

I was later further surprised to learn that, in a diary entry he made in 1954, President Ikeda had written: “Must enable them [youth division members] to someday become active on the grand stage of world affairs, not [just] Japan.” This entry was dated

a short time before the publication of President Toda’s editorial “Youth, Be Patriotic!” [in October 1954]. It was clear that, in the same spirit as President Toda, General Administrator Ikeda was boldly moving ahead with a vision encompassing the entire world.

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A former staff member of the Overseas Affairs Section, which had been established within Soka Gakkai Headquarters in July 1960, recalls: “As the number of women’s division members who married U.S. soldiers and other civilian employees in the U.S. military increased, President Ikeda made a concerted effort to speak with each one of them, listen to their situations and problems, and warmly encourage them.

“He offered them all some common themes of advice. He advised them to understand that customs overseas were different from those in Japan; to cooperate and get along with their husbands—most of whom did not share their Buddhist faith; to not force their religion on their husbands and children; to make friends with people they could talk with and share their feelings; and to be patient, saying that by taking time to build friendships with others, they would eventually have the opportunity to talk with them about Buddhism. He also said that they should remember that faith equals daily life.”

President Ikeda did his best to ensure that these women didn’t feel lonely or isolated in their new lives overseas. As he has said: “It is extremely difficult to maintain faith completely alone,” and “Alone, we may tend to succumb to weakness, laziness, and timidity.”

It is important to forge human relationships based on warm care and friendship. Our ties with others are the lifeline of worldwide kosen-rufu.

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On October 2, 1960, President Ikeda set forth on his first overseas trip, visiting countries in North and South America.

On October 11, he departed from Chicago and arrived at the airport in Toronto, Canada. At the time, there were no known members in Canada.

While President Ikeda and his party were awaiting the arrival of their rental car, a young woman approached them.

“Are you Soka Gakkai members?” she asked.

One of the group responded in the affirmative, and inquired whether she was a member.

“No, I’m not,” she replied.

The group waited curiously for what she might say next.

“My mother, who lives in Japan, is a Soka Gakkai member, and she asked me to come and welcome you at the airport.”

President Ikeda smiled and said: “Thank you so much for coming to greet us. I am the president, Daisaku Ikeda. What’s your name?”

Elizabeth Izumi (SGI-Canada executive advisor): It was a fine autumn day, with the beautiful fall foliage vivid against the clear blue sky. But to tell the truth, I didn’t want to go to the airport that day. I wasn’t a member then, and I was seven months pregnant and had not been feeling well since daybreak. My mother’s airmail letter asking me to go to the airport had only arrived that morning, so it was all quite sudden as well. I had an unfavorable impression of the Soka Gakkai from my mother’s talk of such Buddhist concepts as “punishment and reward,” and I was a little anxious that if I greeted the visitors at the airport they would try to force me to become a member. At the same time, I didn’t want to disappoint my mother by ignoring her request, so I took a taxi to the airport. I’m sure my mother was earnestly chanting in Japan.

I was very happy to hear President Ikeda say right off that he was certain my mother must be a very kind and admirable person to ask her daughter to greet a party of strangers at the airport, and he thanked her sincerely. We only spoke briefly, but

I sensed his warmth and kindness, and I felt I understood why my mother was practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism with the Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda encouraged me to try chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo if I was ever facing any trouble or problem. I replied that I would.

President Ikeda and his traveling companions offered to take me back home in the car that they had rented. He also said that when he returned to Japan he would tell my mother that he had seen me and that I looked well. Later, I heard that he had expressed his deep gratitude to my mother at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. I was touched by his sincerity. This first encounter with President Ikeda became a treasured memory.

About 18 months after our meeting, I started practicing. I had been suffering from severe allergies, perhaps because the Canadian climate didn't agree with me. And I also underwent a few operations. Encouraged by my memory of President Ikeda's warm character and his advice to chant daimoku if facing a problem, I joined the Soka Gakkai on my mother's birthday. She was overjoyed to the point of tears.

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In November 1964, Elizabeth Izumi returned to Japan briefly with her husband, who was on a business trip, and attended a local discussion meeting. A reporter from the Soka Gakkai newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun* happened to be present. Knowing the story of the woman who had greeted President Ikeda and his party at the airport in Toronto, the reporter immediately asked if he could interview her. Several days later, a small article about Mrs. Izumi appeared in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

Elizabeth Izumi: To my surprise, President Ikeda, who had read the article, invited me and my mother to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. As we were waiting in the lobby, he appeared. Just seeing him approaching, I was overwhelmed with emotion. He bowed deeply to us and thanked us sincerely. Addressing my daughter, whom I had brought with us, he said, "Your mother was pregnant with you when I met her, wasn't she? You're so big now! You're very cute." He then gave me encouragement about my husband, who was not yet a member, and said warmly: "There is no need to force your faith on your husband. Be a good wife and mother. You can teach him about your Buddhist faith through your daily example." I felt gratitude rising up within my heart, and in the depths of my being I made a determination to work for kosen-rufu alongside President Ikeda for the rest of my life.

Looking back, that day was the moment when I first resolved to dedicate myself to kosen-rufu in Canada.

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President Ikeda often tells members things like: "I will never forget you." "I will always remember you." "I will remember you forever." He does his utmost to never forget his encounters with people. He strives to remember their struggles, their sincerity, their difficulties, and the courageous way they have stood up in faith, and to express his gratitude toward each and every one. This has been his unchanging attitude since his youth.

In his diary as a young man, he wrote: "[My fellow members] have truly fought along with me. I am forever indebted to them. Those faces, those people and their accomplishments will forever be illuminated by the light of the Mystic Law. I will never forget them."

"I will never forget them"—that in itself is wonderful encouragement.

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On October 23, 1960, a historic discussion meeting was held in the Sun Building in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. It was attended by President Ikeda and saw the establishment of Los Angeles Chapter, the first Soka Gakkai chapter formed in the United States. Leadership appointments for the chapter and its six districts were also announced.

During the meeting, President Ikeda looked at Grace Takakuwa, who had been appointed chapter women's division leader, and Kazue Elliot, who had been made a district leader, and said to them: "Please work together harmoniously."

He then added: "Please shake hands. It will reassure everyone."

The two women stood up, and Mrs. Takakuwa extended her hand. Mrs. Elliot, however, would not shake it.

Kazue Elliot (SGI-USA Many Treasures women's division leader, women's senior advisor): Whenever I remember that day I feel embarrassed and ashamed.

Before Los Angeles Chapter was established, I was striving my hardest to bring together members living in Los Angeles, even though I didn't have a phone, a car, or the ability to speak English. I would go to places where Japanese people gathered, even to the airport, and ask if they were Soka Gakkai members. Sometimes I would even go to homes where I knew Japanese people lived and ask. I eventually found about 10 members, and brought them together for discussion meetings.

I had put so much hard work and effort into building the organization in Los Angeles. And then someone completely unknown was appointed chapter women's division leader. "What has she ever done up

to now?" I thought. "I'm the one who has done all the work!"

As I listened to the leadership appointments, I tried to control myself, but when President Ikeda called me forward and my eyes met Mrs. Takakuwa's, I felt my heart say "No!" and I was unable to shake her hand.

President Ikeda smiled and said to a women's division leader from Japan accompanying him, "Please talk to her later," before carrying on with the discussion meeting.

I was so sad and jealous that I didn't sleep a wink that night. Recalling the events of the discussion meeting, I chanted daimoku. Gradually, I saw what was going on inside me. Why did I have such a negative reaction? I realized it was because I wanted to look important. At the same time, I remembered that at the meeting President Ikeda had introduced me as the individual who had done so much as a key figure among the women. He knew about my efforts! He knew how hard I had worked! I couldn't hold back my tears. I was so ashamed. I chanted daimoku, filled with the need to apologize to him.

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On October 24, the day after the establishment of Los Angeles Chapter, President Ikeda was to return to Japan. When he and those traveling with him arrived at the Los Angeles airport shortly after 11:00 a.m., several members were there waiting to see them off. The group conversed in a friendly manner while President Ikeda, sitting on a sofa in the airport lobby, inscribed messages of encouragement in books and notebooks handed to him by the members.

Kazue Elliot stood at the back of the group. Waiting for a brief pause in President Ikeda's encouragement of members, she called out: "President Ikeda!"

President Ikeda looked in her direction and said, "Mrs. Elliot, please come here."

"I'm so sorry!" she blurted out.

"So, you figured it out?"

"Yes," she said, tears streaming down her cheeks.

President Ikeda called chapter women's division leader Grace Takakuwa over and said to the two of them: "Please work together harmoniously. You are without a doubt sisters from the remote past."

The women looked at one another and nodded.

Then, President Ikeda added: "Please build the most harmonious chapter in the world."

Kazue Elliot: At the airport where I saw President Ikeda off, he wrote the words "brave and vigorous exertion" for me. From that day on, I etched

those words in my heart and did everything in my power to build a harmonious organization.

In October 1980, when President Ikeda visited the SGI-USA World Culture Center in Santa Monica for the first time, I was one of the event staff greeting people at the entrance. A car stopped, the door opened, and he stepped out. He walked right up to me and said, "Congratulations! Congratulations!" "You won! You have won!" I felt from the bottom of my heart that he knew that I had done my best based on the encouragement he had given me at the airport 20 years earlier. He kept repeating, "You really worked hard!" I couldn't hold back my tears of joy.

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Knowing that someone understands and accepts you can be extremely encouraging.

Everyone has faults. Everyone has shortcomings that, no matter how much others may point them out, are not easy to overcome. With that awareness, President Ikeda continues to watch warmly over others. He sees the best in people and believes wholeheartedly in their goodness. His words expressing such trust never fail to move people's hearts. They become a source of hope and courage that inspire others to action and provide them with the strength to remain steadfast in faith. His words enable people to tap into the full and rich diversity of their lives embodied in the principle of "cherry, plum, peach, and damson blossoms."

In *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, President Ikeda says: "It seems that the awareness that someone loves and cares about us unconditionally gives us the will to live."

In addition, in the novel *The New Human Revolution*, he writes: "Having someone who knows how hard you are trying gives you courage. There is no greater encouragement than being recognized for that effort."

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On January 13, 1963, President Ikeda arrived in New York from Los Angeles. Some 50 members were waiting at the airport to greet him. Scheduled that evening was the America East General Meeting, which would also be the inaugural meeting for New York Chapter. Among the welcoming party at the airport was Tomiya Akiyama (now deceased), who was going to be appointed the new chapter men's division leader. His meeting with President Ikeda turned into a kind of interview for the position.

Eiko Akiyama (SGI general women's leader): I didn't think my husband Tomiya was the right choice for chapter men's division leader. He worked for a trading company and

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The New Human Revolution

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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).



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Shin'ichi Yamamoto's lecture reached the passage: "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth. And if you are a Bodhisattva of the Earth, there is not the slightest doubt that you have been a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remote past" (WND-1, 385).

Shin'ichi explained: "'The same mind as Nichiren' means the same heart and spirit as the Daishonin.

"He further writes: 'From the time that I was born until today, I have never known a moment's ease; I have thought only of propagating the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]' (WND-1, 965).

"Those who, in the same spirit, dedicate their life to the mission of kosen-rufu, exert themselves in their Buddhist practice with all their being, and strive with a sense of responsibility for our movement, are true disciples of the Daishonin and Bodhisattvas of the Earth. It would be an affront to the Daishonin to merely give lip service to this spirit or take action out of formality alone.

"Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was dedicated to propagating the Law, even at the cost of his life. Second president Josei Toda, too, strove tirelessly for kosen-rufu with 'the same mind as Nichiren,' devoting himself without begrudging his life. The tradition of Buddhist practice in

the Soka Gakkai is illuminated by the beneficial power of the Buddha and the Law embodied in the Gohonzon and activated through the good fortune and blessings deriving from the power of faith and practice of these two great predecessors.

"The Daishonin is also declaring in this passage that since we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we are also without question 'disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha from the remotest past' (cf. WND-1, 385)."

In terms of the surface meaning of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, this means disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha who is the lord of teachings, but in terms of the teaching hidden in the depths of the sutra, it means disciples of the Buddha of time without beginning, or the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, Nichiren Daishonin.

Shin'ichi continued: "Because we are Bodhisattvas of the Earth, because we

are the eternal disciples, the original followers, of the Daishonin, we have joyfully taken our place on the grand stage of kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law. We have a profound mission and are directly connected with the Daishonin. When we truly take on problems and challenges, chant daimoku, and make efforts based on a great sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu, the life-state of Buddhahood of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo embodied by Nichiren Daishonin cannot fail to manifest itself in our lives.

"Even during times in my own life when there was no one to turn to for help and I had to advance courageously on my own, I held fast to this belief."

Shin'ichi had the firm conviction, as unassailable as Mount Fuji, that the Soka Gakkai had always followed the path of faith directly connected to the Daishonin.



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Shin'ichi delved deeper into the true nature of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth: "The essential characteristic of a bodhisattva is their vow. The vow of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to propagate the Lotus Sutra. That's why

wholeheartedly chanting to realize our vow of bringing happiness to all around us is important. Strictly speaking, daimoku chanted without that vow is not the daimoku of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth."

The bodhisattva vow brims with the Buddha's life force, enabling one to triumph over devilish functions.

Shin'ichi wanted every single member to experience great benefits. He wanted them to overcome all forms of suffering such as illness and poverty, and become happy. The vow to achieve kosen-rufu is the key to fulfilling such prayers.

We all have various problems and sufferings. Our dedication to kosen-rufu is crucial in surmounting them. For example, if someone suffering from illness

vows to overcome that illness in order to gain the strength and life force to freely take action for kosen-rufu and demonstrate the power of their Buddhist practice to others, that vow will bring forth immense strength to overcome that illness.

Chanting daimoku of course results in benefit. But when the prayer "I want to overcome my illness" is infused with a deep sense of mission, we experience a fundamental transformation within our lives, within our state of being, and that vow triggering a powerful momentum to change our karma. When we chant in earnest based on a vow to achieve kosen-rufu, the life-state of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth manifests itself within us, the life-state of Nichiren Daishonin begins to pulse within us, and

we are able to manifest our innate Buddhahood. This is a revolution of our state of life, and it makes possible a dramatic transformation of our karma.

In addition, when we chant and strive to promote Buddhism and succeed in our struggles for the sake of kosen-rufu, we are already manifesting the life-state of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Through practicing this way, each individual is able to overcome and solve their respective personal problems.

When the bright sun of the life-state of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth rises within, the darkness of sufferings is dispelled and one is able to walk boldly and bravely along the sure path to happiness.



Vigilant Safeguarding 47

When he covered the passage, "At first only Nichiren chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three, and a

hundred followed, chanting and teaching others" (WND-1, 385), Shin'ichi emphasized courageous, stand-alone faith.

"At all times, the fundamental and unchanging principle for kosen-rufu is the stand-alone spirit. The Daishonin, Mr. Makiguchi, and Mr. Toda all bravely stood up alone. This is the spirit of Buddhism and the heart of a champion of Soka.

"Concretely speaking, the stand-alone spirit in this regard means for each of us to take full responsibility for the spread of the Mystic Law in our family, in our community, and in every part of our environment.

"We all have relationships with family members, relatives, and friends that are particular to each of us. From the perspective of the Mystic Law, those relationships are the realm of our mission, and they are profound bonds that connect our lives with others. Each of us is alone responsible and qualified to propagate the Mystic Law exactly where we are. That's what makes the principle of standing up alone so important. We should keep in mind that we are here now as emissaries of Nichiren Daishonin. As Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we need to stand up, each in our own place, and take action. Never forget that this is the only way kosen-rufu is realized."

In our daily lives, introducing others to Buddhism is a very ordinary, and at the same time, extremely challenging, activity. Because those around us know us so well, pretense and bluff won't work. The only thing is to strive diligently with honesty, sincerity, perseverance, and great passion while showing actual proof. These efforts are where the true essence of our Buddhist practice lies.

"This Goshō passage also describes how the realization of kosen-rufu will arise from the people. It will never be achieved by authority. The driving force for kosen-rufu is found in people inspiring each other through Buddhist dialogue."



“Nichiren Daishonin was an exile, living in circumstances of great hardship and adversity. His life was threatened, and he never knew when he might be attacked or killed. Normally, a person in such circumstances would feel miserable and hopeless. Most people would look at his situation as real misfortune. But that is a view based on the perspective of mere relative happiness.

“The Daishonin’s rich inner state of being was beyond compare, brimming with great joy and an expansive, unshakable happiness. Such is the life-state of absolute happiness.

“Generally, the requirements for happiness are regarded as being financially secure, healthy, and loved and valued by others. Many people seem to enjoy these conditions in their lives. But even so, they are not necessarily completely happy. Often they still feel anxious and worried. This is relative happiness, and such happiness is fleeting.”

Vigilant Safeguarding 48

Referring to a passage from “The True Aspect of All Phenomena” that reads “I feel immeasurable delight even though I am now an exile” (WND-1, 386), Shin’ichi spoke of the life-state of absolute happiness.



faith, we who uphold this Buddhism that enables us to fulfill all our wishes can also achieve those desires, and doing so is proof of the power of faith. However, true and indestructible happiness is not found in relative happiness, but in absolute happiness.

With powerful conviction, Shin’ichi Yamamoto affirmed: “Absolute happiness is not simply an extension or a higher degree of relative happiness. One can seem to be quite unfortunate in terms of relative happiness, but can actually have a firmly established absolute happiness. An example of this is the life-state of Nichiren Daishonin when he said: ‘I feel immeasurable delight’ (WND-1, 386).

“Absolute happiness is not controlled by our ever-changing external circumstances, but is a feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction at the deepest level of one’s being, born from taking action to fulfill the mission and purpose that one has freely chosen in life.

“The critical thing here is that the missions and purposes we choose for ourselves need to be in accord with the eternal and unchanging Law that permeates the entire universe. Ultimately, the way to build true and

Vigilant Safeguarding 49

We have observed many people grow and improve themselves through the process of wanting, seeking, and striving for relative happiness in such forms as wealth, social status, health, and fame. Through strong

No matter how wealthy a person may be, he or she can be reduced to absolute poverty overnight by some drastic social change. The most seemingly healthy person can have a terrible accident or suddenly fall ill. And as people grow older, they all experience illnesses of one kind or another.

Relative happiness is based on the condition of our circumstances. When circumstances change, that happiness can also easily crumble.

In addition, though we may possess all we desire, as long as we can’t control our desires, our happiness at attaining new things will only be momentary. Extreme attachment to wealth and such can actually make one poor of spirit.

As the Swiss philosopher Carl Hilty (1833–1909) observed: “It can also really be a misfortune when it [wealth] gives rise to arrogance, inertia, idleness, avarice, and stinginess.”

absolute happiness is to awaken to one’s mission for kosen-rufu and dedicate one’s life to that great vow.”

When we dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu, the vast life-states of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth and the Buddha well up within us. So that even though we may be living in exile or in prison, or we may be battling illness, none of those circumstances will bother us and we’ll be able to enjoy a life-state of immense joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction. That’s absolute happiness.

Many members striving earnestly in their Buddhist faith and practice have experienced a taste of absolute happiness. When they bravely share this Buddhism with others, burning with the mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they experience a life-state of vitality, joy, and fulfillment, even though they may be poor or ill. When they encounter people who have no desire to learn anything about Buddhism and may even disdain the Soka Gakkai and disrespect its members, they are able to perceive the misery of that person’s inner reality, even if for example they live in a gorgeous mansion, and genuinely feel a strong desire to show them the way to true happiness. That’s the great path to a state of absolute happiness.



kind of benefit that can be obtained through faith. Now, if the benefit I’ve received were, say, equivalent to this entire auditorium, then yours would only be equal to my pinky!”

Toda wasn’t in especially good health, or possessed remarkable technical skills or great wealth. What he was trying to tell the members was that real benefits are not relative happiness, but the establishment of a state of absolute happiness in one’s life.

In his lecture on “The True Aspect of All Phenomena,” Shin’ichi urged with prayerful intensity: “Our daily activities—chanting and propagating the Law for kosen-rufu—are the pathway to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime and to establishing absolute happiness that will

endure throughout the three existences. I hope that you’ll be firmly confident that this is the noblest way to live your lives and take great pride in it.”

Shin’ichi’s lecture was received with great enthusiasm by *Seikyo Shimbun* readers, and many of them wrote in with appreciative remarks such as: “While reading the issues of the *Seikyo Shimbun* carrying your lecture I felt that my eyes had been opened and I was

able to deepen my understanding of the essence of Buddhism.” And, “I felt a deep joy at being able to strive in this faith as a Soka Gakkai member.”

The lecture on “The True Aspect of All Phenomena” was not Shin’ichi’s only lecture in the Year of Study (1977). His lecture on the “Hyaku Rokka Sho” (The One Hundred and Six Comparisons) also began to be published in installments from the January issue of the *Daibyakurengue*, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal.

That year his lecture, in six installments, on “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” as well as his lectures on “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” “On the Proper Way to Preach the Doctrine,” “The Selection of the Time,” and “The Opening of the Eyes” were also published in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

Day after day, never wasting a moment, Shin’ichi read the Goshos and thought deeply about the Daishonin’s writings. At various meetings he attended, he also encouraged members through referring to the Goshos.

Nothing positive happens if one just issues orders without taking action, without personal initiative. Through his own practice, Shin’ichi strove to stir up a powerful groundswell of a Buddhist study movement.



Vigilant Safeguarding 51

On January 15, about 4,500 representative professors of the Soka Gakkai Study Department from around the country assembled for a department meeting at the Soka Gakkai Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Toyonaka,

Osaka.

From the evening of January 12, a harsh cold front swept across Japan, bringing heavy snows, causing problems with the railroads, electrical blackouts, and wreaking havoc with mass transit schedules.

But the morning of January 15 was bright and sunny in Osaka. The participants, knowing that this large meeting of the Study Department was a pivotal event in the Year of Study, didn't let mass transit problems prevent them from gathering joyously.

Shin'ichi had resolved that the meeting would mark the raising of the curtain on a new period of study in the Soka Gakkai, and thus fully dedicated himself to preparing for the lecture he would deliver.

This "new period of study" was aimed at making the teachings of Buddhism available to contemporary society and people around the world, establishing a new philosophy that would create the future. To accomplish this, Shin'ichi believed that he had to start by reinterpreting each element of the teachings of Buddhism from its foundations and clarifying its meaning, based on the perspective of religion for the sake of the people.



Vigilant Safeguarding 52

Although Buddhism began as a way of reviving the people, it eventually slipped into a formalistic focus on the rules of discipline, and became monopolized by a clerical elite.

About 100 years after Shakyamuni's death, a

movement to reform the Buddhist clerical organization arose, causing a split among Buddhist followers into the Theravada school, or School of the Elders, which focused on the clergy, and the Mahasanghika school, which focused on the lay followers.

This was followed by a fundamental religious revolution, seeking the original spirit of Shakyamuni's teachings—the spread of Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast to the Buddhism of the clergy—which highlighted personal salvation, had become highly formalized, and divorced itself from the actual sufferings of ordinary people living in the world—Mahayana Buddhism was a Buddhism that aimed to make enlightenment available to all.

This great Buddhist revival spread from India to China and from China to Japan.

Shin'ichi said: "One of the main reasons why Buddhism, which originated as a vibrant and dynamic new religious force from among the ordinary people, stagnated and fossilized over time was that it became a clerical religion and lost its ability to lead the people.

The Study Department meeting progressed.

Though it was mid-January, the middle of winter, the auditorium was filled with the ardent enthusiasm of the participants, determined to start a new philosophical movement. Shin'ichi was the last to speak. They were all waiting with great anticipation to hear what he had to say. After thanking the participants, Shin'ichi immediately started into the main body of his speech: "From its origins, Buddhism has been a revolutionary religion. Shakyamuni founded Buddhism in response to the authoritarianism of Brahmanism, which had lost sight of relieving the sufferings of ordinary people. It is a well-established fact that he was trying to restore religion to the people.

"Making this significant transformation from exploiting people for the sake of religion to restoring religion to its proper role of existing for the sake of the people was the starting point of Buddhism. It is no exaggeration to say that Buddhism came into being as a transformation to revitalizing the common people."

Shin'ichi spoke clearly, in a manner that everyone felt was direct and convincing. When religion is cloaked in a veil of formalism and authority, its spirit atrophies and dies.

Buddhism started as a religion of the people, and its teachers were leaders of the people."

By clarifying the reasons why Shakyamuni's Buddhism changed and declined, Shin'ichi wanted to sound a warning that it was very important for Nichiren Buddhism not to make the same mistake.

The existence of the "teacher of the Law," to lead the people, is the key to the rise or fall of Buddhism. Quoting Nichikan Shonin's Commentary on "The Selection of the Time," Shin'ichi spoke of the meaning of the teachers of the Law: "Great teachers of the Law are those who lead the movement for kosen-rufu, preach the Law, and stir great waves of practice for the benefit of self and others broadly among the people, while considering the currents of the times. To do that, they need to keenly grasp the nature of the era, fight alongside the people for the sake of the Law, and at certain times step to the fore to shield the people."



Vigilant Safeguarding 53

Shin'ichi Yamamoto stated that Nichiren Daishonin was himself a noble model of a teacher of the Law. He then described a priest, a teacher of the Law, by quoting passages from the Daishonin's writings: "Though a person may have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being and may have even entered the priesthood, if he fails to study the Buddha's teaching and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in idleness and

chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes" (WND-1, 760).

And, "The votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, who are so faithful in upholding the sutra that they are hated by others, are the true priests of Mahayana. They are the teachers of the Law who will propagate the Lotus Sutra and bring people benefit" (WND-1, 886).

The priests practicing the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law are hated by people and undergo major persecutions, which they must fight courageously against to the end. Their mission is to devote themselves to propagating Buddhism and work to open the way to enlightenment for all living beings throughout their lives.

When speaking of lay believers, the Daishonin writes: "As a lay believer, the important thing for you is to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo single-mindedly and to provide support for the priests. And if we go by the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should also teach the sutra to the best of your ability" (WND-1, 760).

Historically, the role of priests is to concentrate on sharing Buddhism with others, fighting against the three powerful enemies, and engaging in kosen-rufu. The role of lay believers, in contrast, is to focus on chanting daimoku, making offerings, and speaking to others about Buddhism to the best of their ability. The laity are entrusted

with the role of supporting the priests.

After introducing these passages, Shin'ichi explained: "In the light of these definitions of the roles of the clergy and the laity, today the Soka Gakkai is carrying out the functions of both. I'm sure that there is no other Buddhist organization carrying out the Buddha's intent so faithfully and harmoniously anywhere else in the world."

Who has advanced kosen-rufu in the present? Who has been the target of persecution? It is none other than the Soka Gakkai. Therefore, we could say that the spirit and practice of the Soka Gakkai is fulfilling both the roles of the priesthood and the teacher of the Law.

Daishonin's writings: "Though a person may have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being and may have even entered the priesthood, if he fails to study the Buddha's teaching and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in idleness and chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes" (WND-1, 760).



Vigilant Safeguarding 54

Shin'ichi then spoke about the significance of the clergy in Buddhism.

The original word for monk, priest, or clergy in Buddhism is *shramana*, or *shukke* in Japanese. It literally

means “one who has renounced secular life,” referring to leaving behind concerns for fame and profit and distancing oneself from obstructions and defilements standing in the way of the pursuit of enlightenment. Monks and nuns traditionally shaved their heads when they joined the Buddhist order as an expression of the determination not to return home until one had achieved the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice.

According to the Mahayana Manjushri-vikridita Sutra, a bodhisattva is a being who practices for the salvation of all living beings. He does not simply become a monk by shaving his head. What is it that makes him a monk? He is a monk when he renounces the secular world to wholeheartedly dedicate himself to relieving the sufferings of all living beings. This

is what it means for a bodhisattva to renounce the world. It goes on to say that merely donning clerical robes does not make one a monk, either. One becomes a monk by giving their all to eradicating the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness that defile the minds of living beings.



Vigilant Safeguarding 55

Shin'ichi next talked about monasteries and temples and explained the significance of their origins and the role of monks.

Shakyamuni's method of propagating was to travel across India on foot and preach Buddhism to people throughout the land.

India, however, has a rainy season, and for about

three months each year, travel becomes very difficult. During that period, Shakyamuni's followers would gather in one spot and engage in practice. There are many well-known examples of these gathering places such as the Jetavana Monastery in Shravasti and the Bamboo Grove Monastery in Rajagriha. The English word “monastery” in these cases is actually a translation of the Sanskrit word *vihara* (Japanese, *shoja*), or “place for practice,” which is what they were—places for the monks to work at perfecting themselves through various Buddhist practices during the rainy season. This is the origin of Buddhist monasteries and, later, temples.

After the rainy season ended, the monks, having deepened their practice, left these monasteries and went out among the people again. In other words, the *vihara* were not like many of today's temples, where the clergy lived full time and conducted religious rituals. They were centers for religious practice.

The Nalanda monastery in India later developed into a hub for Buddhist studies, operating somewhat like a university. It became a destination for practitioners from many regions, who resided there and studied Buddhist

In other words, the true path of a monk lies in Buddhist practice. It is not a matter of ceremonies or formalities, but rather is found in diving into the midst of the people and taking on their sufferings as one's own. The qualification of a true Buddhist practitioner depends on what they have done and will do to help others.

After explaining this, Shin'ichi said to his listeners: “Though we Soka Gakkai members are lay practitioners, in spirit we shoulder the mission to transcend the secular world and proudly and selflessly dedicate ourselves to propagating Buddhism.”

The room reverberated with approving applause.

One returns to the starting point of Buddhism by stripping away all formality and authority to clearly reveal the essential underlying principles. The participants listened to Shin'ichi's words as if basking in the light of the warm sun.



Vigilant Safeguarding 56

In closing, Shin'ichi discussed the phrase “he advances through the world” from the verse in the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (21st) chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

As the light of the sun and moon
can banish all obscurity and gloom,

so this person as he advances through the world can wipe out the darkness of living beings (LSOC21, 318)

“‘The world’ here refers to society, meaning that unless we carry out our struggles in the predicaments of the real world, it's impossible to dispel the darkness of suffering that plagues living beings.

Shin'ichi remarked: “Nichiren Daishonin carried out his propagation activities in Kamakura, the center of government at the time, to embody in his own life this passage ‘he advances through the world.’ Unless Buddhism is carried out within society, in the midst of reality, there is a risk that our practice of Buddhism may deviate from the original spirit of the Daishonin's practice and sense of purpose.

“I am reminded of what my mentor Josei Toda said to the members at the beginning of 1953: ‘I am firmly convinced that benefits will rain down on you as you grasp the sword of propagation and bring forth the courage of a lion king.’ Illuminated by the shining light of benefits from time without beginning, the sword of compassion firmly in hand, like lion kings let us once again this year open the glorious way of Soka.”

doctrines and methods of propagation, returning to their native areas after studying for a certain period of time. This is strongly reminiscent of our Soka Gakkai study seminars and training courses.

The Japanese word *garan*, also meaning a temple or monastery, derives from the Sanskrit word *sangha-arama*, a place where people gathered for Buddhist practice. Temples are also called *dojo*—literally, “places of the way”—because they were places where people gathered to practice the way to attain enlightenment.

Having explained the origin of temples and monasteries in Buddhism, Shin'ichi said with conviction: “The Soka Gakkai's Headquarters, community and culture centers, as well as its training centers, are places where Buddhist practitioners dedicated to advancing kosen-rufu go to practice, propagate, and study the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. They are also places of practice where our members come to be rejuvenated and then go back out to their local communities to revitalize society and others around them. In other words, based on an understanding of the original meaning of Buddhist monasteries and temples, Soka Gakkai facilities are serving a role as contemporary temples and monasteries.”

The members applauded to express their agreement and renewed commitment.

Shin'ichi wanted to make sure they knew that Buddhism does not exist apart from society.

The practice of Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law and the true bodhisattva path are seeking one's way and struggling arduously amidst the daunting challenges of the real world, in the face of storms of criticism and abuse, persevering in dialogue, demonstrating actual proof of this Buddhist practice, and propagating the Law.

A religion that loses sight of its origins and the spirit of practice in its early period becomes formalized, fossilized, ceremonial, bureaucratic, and authoritarian. It begins to look down on the people and to perpetuate itself for its own sake rather than to help people. This is the corruption of religion and the death of the human spirit.

We can never allow this to happen to Nichiren Buddhism. “Let's return to the original spirit of the Daishonin!”—Raising the great banner of study to vigilantly safeguard Buddhism, Shin'ichi was opening the way to a new era.

(This concludes “Vigilant Safeguarding,” chapter 2 of volume 24 of The New Human Revolution.)

The Eternity of Life

"A clear awareness and correct understanding of the nature of death can enable us to live without fear and with strength, clarity of purpose and joy. Buddhism views the universe as a vast living entity, in which cycles of individual life and death are repeated without cease. Death is therefore a necessary part of the life process, making possible renewal and new growth."



Photo: Yurika Shakya

As a philosophy, Buddhism has always stressed the importance of squarely confronting the reality of death. Death, along with illness and aging, is defined in Buddhism as one of the fundamental sufferings that all people must face.

Because of this emphasis, Buddhism has sometimes been associated with a pessimistic outlook on life. Quite the opposite is, in fact, the case. Because death is inevitable, any attempt to ignore or avoid this most basic "fact of life" condemns us to a superficial mode of living. A clear awareness and correct understanding of the nature of death can enable us to live without fear and with strength, clarity of purpose and joy.

Buddhism views the universe as a vast living entity, in which cycles of individual life and death are repeated without cease. We

experience these cycles every day, as millions of the some 60 trillion cells that comprise our bodies die and are renewed through metabolic replacement. Death is therefore a necessary part of the life process, making possible renewal and new growth. Upon death our lives return to the vast ocean of life, just as an individual wave crests and subsides back into the wholeness of the sea. Through death, the physical elements of our bodies, as well as the fundamental life-force that supports our existence, are "recycled" through the universe. Ideally, death can be experienced as a period of rest, like a rejuvenating sleep that follows the strivings and exertions of the day.

Buddhism asserts that there is a continuity that persists over cycles of life and death, that our lives are, in this sense, eternal. As Nichiren wrote: "When we examine the nature of life with perfect enlightenment, we find that there is no beginning

marking birth and, therefore, no end signifying death."

In the fifth century C.E., the great Indian philosopher Vasubandhu developed the "Nine-Consciousness Teaching" that provides a detailed understanding of the eternal functioning of life. In this system, the first five layers of consciousness correspond to the senses of perception and the sixth to waking consciousness. The sixth layer of consciousness includes the capacity for rational judgment and the ability to interpret the information supplied by the senses.

The seventh layer of consciousness is referred to as the *mano*-consciousness. This layer corresponds to the subconscious described in modern psychology and is where our profound sense of self resides.

Beneath this is the eighth, or *alaya*-consciousness. It is this layer of consciousness that contains the potential energy,

both positive and negative, created by our thoughts, words and deeds. This potential energy, or profound life-tendency, is referred to as *karma*.

Again, contrary to certain assumptions, Buddhism does not consider *karma* to be fixed and unchangeable. Our *karmic* energy, which Buddhist texts describe as the "raging current" of the *alaya*-consciousness, interacts with the other layers of consciousness. It is at this deepest level that human beings exert influence upon one another, on their surroundings and on all life.

It is also at this level that the continuity of life over cycles of birth and death is maintained. When we die, the potential energy which represents the "karmic balance sheet" of all our actions—creative and destructive, selfish and altruistic—continues to flow forward in the *alaya*-consciousness. It is this *karma* that shapes the circumstances in which the potential energy of our lives becomes manifest again, through birth, as a new individual life.

Finally, there is the ninth level of consciousness. This is the very source of cosmic life, which embraces and supports even the functioning of the *alaya*-consciousness. The purpose of Buddhist practice is to stimulate and awaken this fundamentally pure *amala*-consciousness, or wisdom, which has the power to transform even the most deeply established flow of negative energy in the more shallow layers of consciousness.

The questions of life and death are fundamental, underlying and shaping our views of just about everything. Thus, a new understanding of the nature of death—and of life's eternity—can open new horizons for all humankind, unleashing previously untapped stores of wisdom and compassion.

[Courtesy October 1998 SGI Quarterly]

was extremely busy. I also felt he had very little experience with Soka Gakkai activities. I was therefore very anxious about what he would say when President Ikeda spoke with him.

At first, Tomiya tried to refuse the request, but in response to President Ikeda's enthusiasm, he asked, "Well, what would I have to do?"

At the time, I was pregnant with our oldest daughter. President Ikeda said: "I understand you and your wife are expecting your first baby soon. You will be very busy for a while, so for starters, I would like to ask you to support your wife by driving her to activities on weekends."

"So I'm a chauffeur chapter leader?" my husband asked.

Laughing, President Ikeda said, "Yes, that's enough. All you have to do is drive."

My husband said that if that was all that was required, he could do it.

President Ikeda immediately responded: "All right, then, it's decided!"

After the establishment of New York Chapter, my husband drove me to meetings in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Long Island, just as President Ikeda had asked. At first, he really was just a chauffeur, but eventually at the request of members he started to speak, until finally he began offering guidance and encouragement to everyone.

*

President Ikeda has faith in people. He has sternly warned against being judgmental. Based on his strong conviction gained through Buddhist practice, he believes firmly in people's potential. By offering words of hope and inspiration, he strives to enable everyone to bring forth their own potential.

People's hearts respond to the profound trust that is placed in them. The human heart is moved to action in response to the complete trust expressed by others.

In *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda writes: "People are able to tap great inner strength through recognizing that someone believes in and holds high hopes for them."

He also says: "We believe in the infinite potential of all human beings, strive to enable each individual to awaken to and reveal that potential, and work to expand the circle of those who share this commitment. This has been the history of the Soka people's movement to this day."

*

On October 6, 2013, the 68th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting was held at the Hiroshima Ikeda Peace Auditorium in Hiroshima. After an opening choral performance by the Hiroshima future division members, 16 members of the SGI-Brazil Nova Era (New Era) Fife and Drum Corps took the stage. The music of "Saudason a Sensei" (Welcome,

Sensei), a lively samba rhythm accompanied by the singing of the future division members, filled the auditorium.

The SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps was founded on August 14, 1963, with only a handful of members. Now, a half-century later, membership in the group has grown to more than 4,000. Today, the fife and drum corps is invited to perform in cities across Brazil in celebration of Brazil's Independence Day and other events. It has expanded into a strong group of capable individuals who are making a positive contribution to Brazilian society.

A women's division member at the Headquarters leaders meeting in Hiroshima listened to the invigorating performance with tears in her eyes. She raised her arms high, both hands making the V for victory sign.

Itsuko Morihara (Soka Gakkai women's division vice headquarters leader): In March 1960, I was the last member of my family to join the Soka Gakkai. In August of that year, our nine-member family emigrated to Brazil to start a new life.

The first place we lived, however, was like living in the jungle. There was no electricity or running water, and at night big lizards used to come out. We couldn't speak Portuguese. My usually cheerful brother became despondent, and there were many times when I felt like I couldn't go on living.

After a while, our family moved to São Paulo. Seeing pictures of the Soka Gakkai's fife and drum corps in copies of the *Seikyo Graphic* and the *Seikyo Shimbun* that a neighboring SGI member shared with us, I was captivated. The members looked so cheerful and enthusiastic! I decided I wanted to form a local fife and drum corps to bring light to my new country. I resolved that we would do parades in the streets and make everyone smile. On August 14, 1963, we started the SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps, with me as its first leader. At that time, we didn't have good instruments, and I didn't even know how to use a drum major baton. We all taught ourselves to play.

Two years after the corps' founding, President Ikeda sent us instruments along with red and white uniforms.

*

People's hearts respond to the profound trust that is placed in them. The human heart is moved to action in response to the complete trust expressed by others.

If you encourage just one person a day, in 30 years you will have encouraged 10,000 people. With this spirit and resolve, I have striven to personally foster and raise one person after another while struggling with an endless succession of obstacles on the road to kosen-rufu.

The SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps continued to grow and eventually reached the point where it could perform in parades. Its bright, enthusiastic performances were even covered in local newspapers with photos.

In August 1969, a summer training course was held in Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan. After incredible efforts, Mrs. Morihara, then still a young women's division member, was able to travel to Japan to attend it. She was also able to participate in an informal discussion with President Ikeda.

Itsuko Morihara: President Ikeda warmly invited us to ask him anything, and I blurted out that next time I would bring the members of the SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps with me, so that we could perform for him. He replied: "I will watch all your performances then, so please do your best!"

I felt as if I was walking on air, but after our conversation, I returned to earth and realized just what a financial burden it would be for members to travel from Brazil to Japan. But I had promised President Ikeda. I decided to give it my best effort and to chant with all my heart.

Later, President Ikeda named us the SGI-Brazil Nova Era Fife and Drum Corps. On many occasions, he sent us encouragement. He watched over us closely from the other side of the globe.

Even after I left the fife and drum corps and returned to Japan to live in Hiroshima, I kept chanting earnestly to make my promise come true.

Then, in October 2013, 44 years after my vow to President Ikeda, a Soka Gakkai Headquarters leaders meeting was held in Hiroshima, and I was unexpectedly given the opportunity to attend.

It seemed like a miracle. Soon after the meeting began, the SGI-Brazil Nova Era Fife and Drum Corps began to play! And among them was even a grandchild of a

member who had been in the corps at the time of its establishment in 1963. Spontaneously, I raised both hands in a double V for victory salute. One meaning of my salute was as a warm welcome to the members of the SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps. Another was an expression of gratitude to President Ikeda. Tears flowed from my eyes. The SGI-Brazil fife and drum corps had grown to this extent, thanks to all the encouragement we had received from President Ikeda.

After the meeting, I was able to cross off from my list of prayers the wish that the SGI-Brazil Nova Era Fife and Drum Corps would come to Japan and perform for President Ikeda. My prayer of 44 years had finally been realized.

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Reflecting on worldwide kosen-rufu, President Ikeda has said: "From nothing—no funding, no support, no human resources, no time—we have forged a path where none before had existed." Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The popular proverb says that 'one is the mother of ten thousand'" (WND-1, 130-31). Everything started from a single individual. The mighty river of worldwide kosen-rufu began from one individual standing up, encouraging one other person and forging ties with them. A great current has been created through trust, hope, and compassion for others.

As President Ikeda said: "We need to make efforts to inspire a single individual and help that person become happy. The kosen-rufu movement starts from there."

President Ikeda has also said:

If you encourage just one person a day, in 30 years you will have encouraged 10,000 people. With this spirit and resolve, I have striven to personally foster and raise one person after another while struggling with an endless succession of obstacles on the road to kosen-rufu.

All of the Soka Gakkai's future victories will also depend on capable people. I therefore hope that you, my most trusted friends, will work with me to continue opening this path to victory. I am always sending daimoku to you, who have such an important mission.

A magnificent new era of worldwide kosen-rufu begins with each disciple responding to the trust and hopes of their mentor.

[To be continued]

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

8th NSGI District General Meeting Commemorating Soka Gakkai Day

Kathmandu

Sanjana Agrawal



May 3rd meeting was celebrated in Nepal with great enthusiasm and excitement. Members from various districts in Kathmandu traveled to districts in Hetauda and Pokhara and members from Illam travelled to Hetauda to participate in the 8th District General meeting.

The meeting in Kathmandu was attended by around 75 members of Manaslu, Dhaulagiri and other districts. The meeting kicked off with morning Gongyo and half an hour diamoku. After that, Sanjana Agarwal, the MC for the meeting welcomed everyone and shared the daily guidance.

Mr. Sushil Viswokarma played a melodious tune on the flute to welcome all the members. Then, Mr. Rajan B.

Thapa came on the stage to share Ikeda Sensei's message. The members were very encouraged and inspired hearing Sensei's warm words. Mr. Navin Manandhar then, shared how the theme for the year 2014, "opening a new era of worldwide Kosen rufu" should be applied for the growth of a district. He urged the members to be ever youthful, to make a vow to Sensei, to pray for each member's prosperity and happiness and to practice "oneness of mentor and disciple".

Then, it was the turn of the most motivating part of the meeting-experiences. Ms Menka Thapa shared her moving experience of winning the battle against heart disease and fighting her financial karma. The second experience was shared by Grishma Chitrakar. She

told the meeting about her 6 ½ year journey in the Gakkai and shared her experience of manifesting her Kosenrufu partner. She introduced her fiancée (now married) who has now become very strong in faith.

Ms. Manisha Mahajan was appointed as the YWD district chief for Dhaulagiri District. She also shared her experience. She appeared for the CA exams and though she could not pass her exam she did not feel defeated despite this and keeps a positive attitude. She is determined she would be victorious and would share her experience of success in future.

Ms. Rajani Mahajan then received her Gohonzon and vowed to treasure and cherish the Gohonzon forever.

Then, was the turn of district determinations by the district coordinators. Mr. Purna Ganesh Ranjit from Manaslu district first shared his districts' determinations. He said they are aiming for an attendance of 20-25 members in each district meeting, to increase home visits, increase participation of each member in meetings and make tremendous efforts in Shakabuku. Mr. Naresh Jung Thapa then shared the determinations of Dhaulagiri district. He

said they would promote unity amongst the members of their district, make sure each and every member is treasured and changes his/her karma, support the WD's in their efforts, increase the number of home visits and help each member grow in faith on the basis of prayer.

We then moved to the cultural part of the meeting. It started with an interesting song by Pichu and Naswa Ranjit. It was a cup song, a medley of English and Nepali songs with the help of glasses and claps. It was an encouraging performance by them and filled all the members with hope. Next, was a Nepali folk dance by the members of Dhaulagiri district. They used plates as props. The dance was thoroughly enjoyed by all the members present. The dance was followed by a caricature and finally a dohori song which was based on relations between parents and children.

Finally Vice GD Devendra Man Singh gave guidance to the members. He urged the members to refresh their determination with an indestructible victory. The meeting ended with a commemorative photograph. Overall, it was a high spirited meeting in which each and every member took something back with them and determined to strengthen their faith day by day.

Hetauda

Report by Sarita Shakya

The journey to Hetauda started from Balkhu at around 2.30pm. The weather seemed to favour us as it was raining and it smoothed the road by saving us from the dusty roads and burning sun. Singing and sharing we couldn't tell the time that passed by and as we reached midway, a sad story knocked us as we heard about the demise of one of the WD member-Bhadra's mother and sadly she had to return back to Kathmandu.

We reached our destination Bastipur at around 7.30 in the evening. We were welcomed heartily with flowers and smiles. Illam members had arrived at 2 am. Some of us woke to welcome the tired guests.

Our energetic MCs were Anina and Ujjwol Aryal started the meeting with the joyful NSGI song and followed by sensei's message which was read by Nawaraj Aryal.

The experience of Sanjay Rana Magar highlighted the cause and effect theory in Buddhism. Significance of May month

was nicely explained by Prem Tara Shakya which was followed by an experience of Prof. Dr. Riddhi Ratna Sthapit. His journey to SGI truly inspired me. He mentioned that Buddhism is a mixture of all the faculties like turning poison into medicine, realization and wisdom which made a change in his ways of teaching attitude. A poem was recited by Anil Shakya on the titled what Shakyamuni taught to us written by MD member Lekh Ratna Shakya. Then we had the Gohonzon ceremony to Rajeshwori Chitrakar from Jugal district and Dinesh Yelmo from Makalu district. The

programme continued with experience of Dinesh Yolma and Anmol Pradhan. The reportings and determinations of the districts were also shared.

Ms. Geeta Moktan was appointed as the advisor whereas Mr. Ram Mani Aryal as district coordinator, Mr. Sanjay Rana as district YMD Chief and Ms. Samjhana Diyal as district YWD Chief were appointed for Lhotse district.

Mr. Dinesh Yelmo was appointed as the district YMD Chief for Makalu district.

The program came to a close after the cultural program of energetic dances and songs.

Pokhara

Report by : Rabina Parajuli

8th District General Meeting in commemoration of Soka Gakkai Day was organized in Pokhara, at Western Regional Health Training Centre, Ranipauwa. There were total of 55 members (13 from Kathmandu and 42 from Pokhara) present for the day. Two foreign members from UK were also present.

The two M/Cs, Ms. Rabina Parajuli and Mr. Dipendra Gurung started off the meeting with daily guidance and then followed by a song "Swagatam" prepared by WD Chief Ms. Kamala Dawadee. YWD, Ms. Silja Rana gave a welcome speech. Machhapuchhre District's Coordinator, Mr. Khub Bahadur Baral read

Sensei's message and also talked about positive thinking and right attitude required for a successful living.

YMD, Mr. Sanjay Poudel from Kathmandu, explained about the historical significance of the May 3 Soka Gakkai day.

YWDs, Ms. Dipti Thapa from Pokhara, and Usha Thapa from Kathmandu shared their experiences in a beautiful way. Dipti told us how she and her elder sister Dristi overcame their obstacles and their family problems they had and how their life changed for the better. As such, Usha talked about her weaknesses, shortcomings, her health problem, family and how she has now become a bold lady.

Youth members from Pokhara and Kathmandu fired the stage with their group

dance and solo dance. Everyone enjoyed to the fullest. In between, there was declaration of determination and reporting of all the four districts viz. Machhapuchhre by Mr. Prem Chhetri, Annapurna by Ms. Jyoti Lama, Nilgiri by Ms. Durga Rajbahak, and Kanchanjunga by Mr. Arjun Rakhhal Magar. These members shared with us their district's achievements and also told us their weak points and the reason for not being able to fulfil their previous determinations. With strong faith, study and practice, everyone determined to move forward for kosen-rufu fostering capable leaders.

Mr. Dipendra Gurung then received his Gohonzon and also took oath to treasure it through out his life. At the same time, new capable leaders were appointed by VGD Ms. Anjali Basnet.

Mr. Gautam Bajracharya was appointed as the advisor whereas Mr. Subarna Bajracharya as district coordinator and Mr. Narayan Gaire as district MD Chief were appointed for Kanchanjunga district.

Mr. Dipendra Gurung was appointed as the district YMD Chief for Machhapuchhre district.

Machhapuchhre MD Chief, Mr. Tej Prasad Shrestha spoke a few words and also congratulated our youth members for the beautiful performance and entertaining everyone. Machhapuchhre WD Chief, Ms. Kamala Dawadee thanked each and every member for being there and participating in different activities.

After doing sansho, we all gathered for the commemorative photographs in the garden and ended the day's program with some refreshments and lunch.

Treasures of the Heart

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

The Fire of Enlightened Wisdom



My adolescence was sacrificed to war. I therefore devoted myself to Buddhism as a way to establish pacifism.

Nothing is more barbarous than war. Nothing is more cruel.

This is how I began the novel *The Human Revolution* 16 years ago [in 1965]. I had a strong determination never to allow the future generations to suffer the same experience that I had, and this spontaneous feeling that came from my heart became the opening sentence in my novel.

The word “war” sounds abominable but war is looming over us again. People in the US embassy in Iran were taken hostage last year (1979), and Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan (in December 1979). These incidents, as well as others, are rapidly adding to the mounting tension within the international arena. Some people are saying that we are now already plunging into a second “cold war”.

Taking advantage of this, some business magnets are even daring to mention the necessity of restoring the “conscriptio system”. The same controversial issues that we heard two years ago over the so-called “emergency legislation”, such as the possibility of encampment on private lands in case of emergency, are again being brought up by mass media. This is the present situation, and I would like all women, as eternal pacifists, to watch the current of the times with strict and critical eyes.

When it comes to anti-war poems composed by women, we are reminded of the famous anti-war cry ‘Oh My Brother, You Must Not Die’ (1904)

composed by Akiko Yosano (1878-1942), dedicated to her younger brother. When I read a book recently, however, I came across an excerpt of a poem which brought back fond memories: ‘The Hundred Times Worship’ composed by Kusuoko Otsuka (1875-1910), in which she expressed her emotional turmoil to her husband who had been sent to the front lines:

*I think of my husband
as I offer my first prayer,
And though I think of our nation
as I offer the second prayer,
I again think of my husband
as I offer my third prayer.
Can you fault the heart of such a woman?*

*There is only one country in the entire world
Which basks in the rising morning sun.
And there is only one person in the entire world
Who calls me “wife” through the bond of marriage.*

*When I asked therefore,
Which weighs heavier on my mind,
our country or my husband,
I remain silent and only shed tears.*

If I remember correctly, it was shortly after the Second World War when I first read that poem. I was fed up with the futile wartime slogan ‘The Divine Country is Imperishable’, having no interest whatsoever in those kinds of spiritual campaigns. But my heart was overwhelmed by the emotion and dilemma contained in the poem. I suspect every single “wife of the home front” and “mother of the home front” experienced the same feelings, even though they did not verbally express them.

Mahayana Buddhism reveals the fundamental principle of life: “earthly desires are enlightenment”. Earthly desires

generally mean greed, anger, stupidity, arrogance, suspicion, and other such emotions which torment and trouble human beings mentally and physically. Hinayana Buddhism asserts that human beings must eradicate all attachments and earthly desires, defining them as the cause of human suffering. However, Mahayana Buddhism states otherwise: we can develop and sublimate earthly desires as a means to enlightenment since human beings are human beings, and they have earthly desires, naturally. This, I believe, is a Copernican viewpoint.

Nichiren Daishonin explains this principle in one of his writings in a beautiful metaphor: “[Again, when Nichiren and his followers recite Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], they are burning the firewood of earthly desires, summoning up the wisdom fire of bodhi or enlightenment.” Even if the existence of the firewood troubles you, if you deny it, you will lose the value it can create. You have to understand that without the firewood you cannot gain the fire of enlightened wisdom which brings forth the vitality of the people and brightens this darkened world.

The agony of the “wife of the home front” described by Kusuoko Otsuka in her poem can, in a sense, be called an earthly desire. This earthly desire, however, seems to be, as it were, a desperate attempt to break through the dilemma; she feels the conflict between the love for her husband and the all-pervasive power of the state. I believe we are able to find, in that earnest quest for a solution, the essential nature of a woman who is a pacifist, and it can be developed into what Mahayana Buddhism calls the

“compassionate spirit”. It is too shortsighted to try to live up to the spirit of a military song which says, “My husband, die a courageous death in the battlefield.”

I still remember asking a question in a meeting led by my late teacher Josei Toda nearly three decades ago: “Whenever I read a story of the war between the Genji and Heiki, the two ruling clans in ancient Japan, I wonder if they felt scared as they continually wielded swords and shot arrows, killing each other. How would you have felt?” I never forget the answer he gave me as he deeply nodded behind his thick glasses: “It is quite natural to feel scared if one truly understands what life is.” In other words, he said it is human nature to be scared and that it is not human nature not to be scared. War means to kill or be killed and it is quite natural for one to be against it; so it is true human courage and strength to take a stand to do away with war. His succinct answer struck me as an accurate expression of the spirit of someone with a farsighted view of life.

It is my undying belief that women are essentially pacifists. Nothing is more awesome, precious and beautiful than a woman who is dedicated to raising and protecting valuable human lives. It is my sincere hope that women will be the champions of peace, being well-informed not only about their own domestic affairs and their community but about the world situation as well.

June 2014			NSGI Monthly Meeting Schedule			July 2014		
Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	
Jun-04	17:00	Ikeda Kayokai Meeting (YWD only)	NPC	July 4	17:30	All leaders meeting	NPC	
Jun-06	17:00	Friday Peace Prayer	NPC	July 5	08:00	Jugal Kosenruru Meeting	NPC	
Jun-07	08:00	Lhotse Kosenruru Meeting	NPC	July 5-7		Study and discussion “Buddha is life itself”	NPC	
Jun-11	17:30	Study lecture on Morality & Ethics by Nigiri / Karachunjung	NPC	July 7	17:00	Memorial gongyo	NPC	
Jun-14	08:00	New Era District Zadankai Meeting	District	July 12	08:00	New Era Zadankai Meeting	District	
Jun-18	17:30	Study lecture on Parenting by Himchuli District	NPC	July 19	11:00	All Leaders training on Home visit campaign	NPC	
Jun-21	08:00	Women’s 18 th GM	NPC & outstation	July 20-25		All District Divisional Meeting	Member’s Home	
	10:00	Gosho lecture (Lion group only)	NPC	July 26	08:00	District Study meeting	District	
Jun 22 -27		All District Divisional Meeting	Member’s Home	July 28		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District	
Jun-25	17:30	Study lecture on Buddhism & Universe- Anasabaru/Mansaku	NPC					
Jun-27	17:30	Introductory Meeting	NPC					
Jun-28	08:00	Gosho (General Stone Tiger) study meeting	District					
Jun-30		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District					

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