



THE NSGI TIMES

Year of Opening a New Era of Buddhist Revival
2014
March

Living the GOSHO

Brim with the Dauntless Spirit to Share Buddhism with Others

Strengthen your faith now more than ever. Anyone who teaches the principles of Buddhism to others is bound to incur hatred from men and women, priests and nuns [who reject the correct teaching]. Let them say what they will. Entrust yourself to the golden teachings of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo, Dengyo, and Chang-an. This is what is signified by the expression, "practicing according to the Buddha's teachings."

From "The Embankments of Faith" (WND-1, 626).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Daisaku Ikeda

"Let them say what they will"—taking these words of encouragement of Nichiren Daishonin to heart, the pioneering members of our organization have proudly struggled for kosen-rufu, regarding the jeers and insults of others as badges of honor. The Buddhas and heavenly deities are most certainly applauding the noble dramas of each of these admirable members who, since the early days of our movement, have been steadfastly "practicing according to the Buddha's teachings."

I call on all of you, who follow in the footsteps of these dedicated pioneers, to open the door to a new age with this same dauntless spirit to share Buddhism with others.

CONTENT

SGI President Ikeda's Encouragement

2

Opening a New Era of Kosenrufu Together

The Wise Will Rejoice While the Foolish Will Retreat. Faith Gives Us the Power to Move Everything in a Positive Direction

Peace on Earth

An Interview with Daisaku Ikeda

3

The New Human Revolution Vigilant Safeguarding 23 - 33

5

BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

Attachments and Liberation

9

SGI WORLD

A Forum for Peace: Compilation of 30 years of SGI President Ikeda's Peace Proposals Launched at UN HQ, SGI Joins Second Conference on Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons

11

TREASURE OF THE HEART

An Old Man's Victory Through Faith

12

SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

Discussion Meetings—Revitalizing Our Lives and Inspiring Us to Win

A statue of the renowned poet Alisher Navoi (also Ali Shir Nava'i; 1441–1501) from Uzbekistan—one of the countries through which the ancient Silk Road passed—stands on the Soka University campus. Navoi called out: "Have faith! As long as you have true friends who will aid you in difficulties, you can overcome any misfortune," and "When you are surrounded by friends, rejoice from the heart."

Through our great humanistic network of the SGI, we have paved a "spiritual Silk Road," where people encourage one another, triumph over obstacles together, and work to bring humanity closer together. The Silk Road of ancient times led through perilous deserts, linking together oases where life-giving springs of fresh water flowed. In today's society, which is like a vast spiritual desert filled with loneliness and anxiety, we of the SGI are advancing joyfully while unceasingly creating the "oases of life" that are our discussion meetings.

*

Buddhism is a teaching characterized by dialogue. The "Introduction" (1st) chapter of the Lotus Sutra also begins with the words: "This is what I heard" (LSOC1, 35). The Buddhist sutras can be thought of as a colossal record of discussion meetings led by Shakyamuni Buddha.

In a letter to a female follower [the lay nun Sennichi, the wife of Abutsu-

bo] who supported and engaged in dialogue with many friends, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "We know that all people who hear the [Lotus] sutra will, without a single exception, attain Buddhahood" (WND-1, 1042). He then goes on to use the metaphor of birds attaining a golden hue as they approach Mount Sumeru to underscore that everyone who forms a connection with the realm of the Mystic Law will be able to make their innate Buddhahood shine forth (cf. WND-1, 1042).

In accord with this principle, SGI discussion meetings are "golden assemblies" filled with hope and trust, revitalizing the lives of participants and inspiring them to win and attain unsurpassed happiness and to help others do the same.

*

During World War II, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai, continued to hold discussion meetings, undeterred by the surveillance of the Special Higher Police, or so-called thought police. The thing that they both placed the greatest importance on at these meetings was having members recount their personal experiences in faith.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact" (WND-1, 599).

At SGI discussion meetings

everywhere, members are joyfully sharing their experiences of gaining benefit through practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism. This is indeed the best and most eloquent proof of the principles "Faith equals daily life" and "Buddhism is manifested in society."

My mentor, Mr. Toda, always took part in discussion meetings with the greatest commitment and seriousness. He said: "Discussion meetings are assemblies of Buddhas. At these noble gatherings, people gain the strength to overcome all forms of karma. Here, too, will appear capable individuals—Bodhisattvas of the Earth—who will shoulder the future of our movement."

Let us all once again express our heartfelt appreciation to the gracious members who make their homes or other facilities available for discussion meetings.

SGI discussion meetings are now being held in every corner of the globe. In countries that have long been plagued by conflict, members are holding harmonious discussion meetings embodying their profound commitment to peace.

Recently, SGI-Philippines General Director Hisako Alcantara reported on a discussion meeting held in the City of Osmoc in the province of Leyte, which was devastated by typhoon Haiyan last year (in November 2013). More than 10 guests attended the meeting, which took place at a house where power had not yet been restored. Witnessing the staunch confidence of members who were prepared to transform all poison into medicine as they worked to rebuild their



community, several of the guests present decided to begin practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism that day. "The Philippines will not be beaten!" Mrs. Alcantara declared.

We will never be defeated as long as we have discussion meetings. Let us do our best to make each discussion meeting thoroughly satisfying and fulfilling, so that everyone can set forth from them with fresh energy and vitality, and continue advancing in friendship and high spirits on the path of value creation.

Illuminate
your community
with inspiring discussion meetings
lit with the happy, smiling faces
of you, my indomitable friends!

(Translated from the March 2014 issue of the *Daibyakureng*, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal)

Opening a New Era of Kosen-rufu Together

"The Wise Will Rejoice While the Foolish Will Retreat"

In one of the Chinese classics, we find the words: "If you renew yourself for one day, you can renew yourself daily, and continue to do so."

No matter what our position, no matter what our age, we have to keep changing for the better every day. To continue developing, growing, and challenging ourselves day in and day out—this is the spirit of Nichiren Buddhism.



It's time for us to launch into action at the start of this important and significant year, as we continue onward toward our great objective of kosen-rufu.

I'm delighted that we have been able to get the New Year off to such a wonderful energetic and hope-filled start thanks to your united efforts.

*

Our hearts are what move other people's hearts. Let's chant for the happiness of our friends and those around us, sharing in a very natural way the inspiration, joy, and deep conviction our Buddhist practice gives us.

When we sincerely engage another person in dialogue, they will feel our genuine concern for their happiness and be touched. Such efforts give rise to trust and are certain to lead to wonderful, positive results in the future.

Sometimes people may fail to understand or appreciate our efforts or activities. Referring to those who encountered Nichiren Buddhism many times but were still not persuaded

to start practicing themselves, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda declared: "It means they're giving a lot of people a great deal of benefit by allowing them to repeatedly carry out the practice of 'sowing the seeds of Buddhahood by letting someone hear the teaching'!"

Our efforts to talk to others about our Buddhist beliefs and ideals, even if those individuals don't start practicing right

away, contribute to expanding the number of people who have a connection to Nichiren Buddhism, and also allow us to accumulate benefit.

*

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat" (WND-1, 637).

May all of you this year, burning with the noble vow for kosen-rufu, further cultivate a life-state overflowing with great wisdom—deeper, stronger, and more expansive than ever before—and advance joyfully to achieve victory in every area of your life.

Wisely take care of your health, and protect yourself against colds and flu. With an ever-youthful spirit, please strive

alongside me, and together let's create brilliant "memories of our present life in this human world" (cf. WND-1, 64).

(Translated from the January 11, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai

Faith Gives Us the Power to Move Everything in a Positive Direction

Nothing is more noble than the ties linking people who support and encourage one another.

Helping a precious friend become happy; striving to impart courage and hope to each person we encounter and to write an inspiring drama of human revolution together with them—such efforts will shine in our lives as a supreme badge of honor.

No amount of praise can possibly do justice to your arduous, dedicated efforts for the sake of kosen-rufu. You have all created admirable records of achievement. Please continue doing your best and adorn your lives with magnificent

victory. Please persevere in faith and shine as brilliant protagonists of Soka on the stage of your chosen mission. I hope you will keep polishing your lives with daimoku and proudly win each day.

*

In a letter addressed to the Ikegami brothers' wives, who could be called noble predecessors of today's women's division members, Nichiren Daishonin writes: "You will follow the path of the dragon king's daughter and become a model for women attaining Buddhahood in the evil latter age" (WND-1, 502).

I would like you, our women's

division members, to continue shining as models for women the world over into the eternal future, through your courageous faith and solid unity.

Encouraging sincere, dedicated members, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said: "Life in this world is not easy. But no matter what happens, it's important that you keep chanting wholeheartedly and working for kosen-rufu, just as the Daishonin teaches. If you do that, you'll be able to succeed. Your problems are fuel for attaining Buddhahood." Faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism gives us the

power to move everything in a positive direction.

Proudly upholding this great philosophy of supreme hope,

please start by engaging in your local community, helping as many people as possible form a connection with Nichiren Buddhism and spreading a glorious rainbow of victory into the new era of worldwide kosen-rufu.

I salute you, our women's division members, the shining suns of Soka!

(Translated from the January 19, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)





Alastair
Thompson

Peace on Earth

An Interview With Daisaku Ikeda



Daisaku Ikeda

The role of human dignity, passive violence, religious cooperation, the internet and the water hemisphere in the quest for global harmony
An interview by Scoop co-founder Alastair Thompson with Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda



1: Human Dignity

Question : In line with your comments in your 2013 peace proposal about the dignity of life, what aspects of human nature do you feel contribute to peace and what aspects undermine it?

Daisaku Ikeda : In my peace proposal last year, I discussed ways to build a sustainable global society, a vision currently being emphasised by the United Nations. I believe that the inviolable dignity of life should be the basis for the challenge of constructing such a society.

As a human being, we may decide to place priority on our family life or, conversely, we may wish to be perceived as a powerful individual. On the surface, the former gives the impression that we are peace-loving and the latter could seem somewhat belligerent. The effect of these commitments can be completely reversed, however, depending on the situation.

For example, when a conflict between two groups is intensifying, the desire to protect one's loved ones can actually be one factor driving people to violence. On the other hand, a strong sense of self can serve as a source of hope and courage and inspire others to overcome formidable blows of hatred and discrimination through the use of nonviolence. We see this in the examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is clear that human nature is multifaceted and is not in itself the essential cause of war and violence. As the Seville Statement on Violence adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1989 made clear, "It is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behaviour is genetically programmed into our human nature."

I believe that our most urgent challenge is to foster a social ethos that can keep people from being swept up in collective psychologies and violent agitation. The Spanish thinker José Ortega y Gasset warned, "This is the epoch of 'currents' and of 'letting things slide.' Hardly anyone offers any resistance to

the superficial whirlwinds that arise in art, in ideas, in politics, or in social usages."

I believe that a spirit of empathy based on our sense of the universal dignity of life should be the foundation for such an ethos.

To prevent the desire to protect one's beloved family from causing one to be swept toward war and violence, it is crucial that we are able to perceive the heartfelt and equivalent desire of others - the members of other groups - to ensure the survival of their own loved ones.

In the same way, it is crucial to remind ourselves not to pursue our own happiness at the expense of the happiness of others, to prevent our own desire to be empowered and effective from threatening the lives and dignity of others.

It was from this perspective of promoting the dignity of life that I suggested three guidelines for action in my proposal last year: the determination to share the joys and sufferings of others; faith in the limitless possibilities of life; and the vow to defend and celebrate diversity.

I used these words - determination, faith and vow - because it is crucial for each one of us to maintain a deeply willed commitment, rooted in an appreciation of the dignity of life, if we are to resist the negative currents of society and build enduring bastions of peace and harmonious coexistence.

We of the SGI have been working to promote and encourage such an approach to life, thereby helping to establish at the grassroots level a culture of peace and human rights as promoted by the United Nations.



2: Passive Violence

Question : In relation to SGI's activities aimed at empowering civil society, what is the role of individuals in eliminating passive violence? What impact does their doing this have on societal resilience?

Daisaku Ikeda: Violence is generally understood in terms of physical violence, the use of force to injure or take the lives of others, ranging from assault to murder and war.

We must not, however, overlook the prevalence of another form of violence: passive violence that threatens people's rights and harms their dignity through discriminatory or oppressive words and attitudes but without resort to direct physical assault.

Passive violence not only causes pain and suffering to others but also can serve, if left unabated, as the breeding ground for physical violence against minority groups at times of social upheaval. It can contribute to an environment that encourages or tolerates such behaviour.

We see an example of this in hate crime and hate speech, which have been visible in many societies in recent years. While they may not involve direct assault, they stem from the same root as direct violence in that they are intended to harm others and are based on hatred.

The "Pyramid of Hate" created by the Anti-Defamation League and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation categorises such hatred-based behaviours as follows: 1. Prejudiced attitudes, 2. Acts of prejudice, 3. Discrimination, 4. Violence and 5. Genocide. According to this view, social divides and conflicts do not happen suddenly. When the kind of behaviours that are charted on the

lower levels of the pyramid are treated as acceptable, things may continue to escalate until they reach the level where unspeakable atrocities take place.

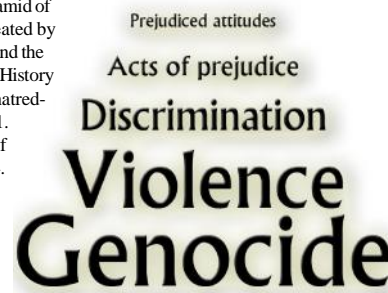
It is important therefore to reject as unacceptable the behaviours on the lower levels of the pyramid and encourage others to do so.

I am reminded of words spoken by Arun Gandhi, nonviolence activist and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, during our meeting in July 2000 in Tokyo. Mr. Gandhi explained that passive violence is indirect and that people might find themselves a party to such violence without even being consciously aware of it. This might involve pressure, coercion, or various forms of oppression and discrimination. Since it is not physical, it tends to be overlooked. He said that his grandfather had taught him that to overlook or pretend not to see evil was itself a form of violence.

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944) resisted Japan's militarist regime during World War II and died in prison, refusing to the end to recant his beliefs. He made a similar observation in the year before his imprisonment:

"The root malady of contemporary society lies in not distinguishing failure to do good with doing good, viewing the former as somehow different from doing evil and acceptable as long as one does not violate any law. This is why egotism and hypocrisy are running rampant."

As heirs to Makiguchi's conviction, we of the SGI have been striving to help move society toward peace and coex-



istence at the grassroots level, in order to prevent it from becoming engulfed in hatred and violence.

We have been striving to extend a multilayered network of friendship among individuals deep into society, based on one-on-one dialogue across ethnic and cultural differences. Such efforts can help to reinforce social resilience and robustness in the face of incitement to racism, and to prevent people from being swept away by the group psychology of xenophobia and discrimination.

We have consistently promoted educational and cultural exchange, even in times of rising political and economic tensions between nations. Through such efforts, the door of dialogue and mutual understanding between people can always be kept open.

Efforts for peace and friendship should not stop at a single generation. We must work to pass on the spirit of amity from one generation to the next and transmit lessons learned about the value of peaceful coexistence - and wisdom gained - on into the future.

We have focused particularly on expanding exchange and communication among the members of the younger generation. Efforts for peace and friendship should not stop at a single generation. We must work to pass on the spirit of amity from one generation to the next and transmit lessons learned about the value of peaceful coexistence - and wisdom gained - on into the future.

Our commitment to reaching out to those who are suffering and empowering them is of course shared by other non-governmental organisations and civil society groups. We will continue to work with like-minded individuals and groups to enhance social resilience through the solidarity of ordinary citizens.



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944)

Q3: Religious Cooperation

Question : Is cooperation between different religions possible in the effort to build peace? And how can we best foster this cooperation?

Daisaku Ikeda : I believe that such cooperation is possible. But we need to make earnest efforts to foster it.

As a Buddhist, I have engaged in dialogue with leaders and experts with different religious backgrounds from throughout the world for over four decades. My goal has been to foster heart-to-heart connections among people in order to build a peaceful world.

I can conclude from my experience that, despite our differences in faiths, doctrinal interpretations or religious ideologies, we all share a common humanity - the desire for peace, concern over global problems and earnest hope for the future of humankind.

In the discussions we shared, former Indonesian president and leader of the largest Islamic group in Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), expressed his hope that young people would not be driven purely by self-interest but be able to act for the benefit of society at large and for a world of peaceful coexistence. People of conscience, regardless of their religious tradition, embrace the same sentiments.

In terms of how best to foster cooperation between different religions, I think that a problem-solving approach is most effective. Different religions can engage in dialogue, discussing specific themes related to such global problems as conflict, environmental destruction, poverty and disaster response. They can clarify what actions need to be taken and what kind of wisdom and spirituality their tradition has to offer the world. They can exchange ideas and explore specific ways to work together.

Throughout history, there have been wars and violence caused by religious conflict. As humankind confronts common challenges - global threats of increasing urgency that afflict people regardless of religious differences - the role and potential contributions of religions are being reevaluated in a more positive light: it is now acknowledged that religion and spirituality can be powerful, benign socio-cultural forces for motivation, inclusiveness, participation and sustainability.

The contribution of religion is drawing more attention today within the interna-

tional community. As one example of this, a session entitled "Strengthening Humanitarian Protection Efforts: the Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Complex and Insecure Operating Environments" was held at the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs held in Geneva in June 2011, just a few months after the Great East Japan Earthquake, and SGI representatives were invited to take part.

We have entered an era where different religious traditions need to work together, with the United Nations serving as a platform for cooperation. They can strive to awaken the goodness in people that seeks construction and solidarity rather than destruction and division, and strive with one another to make their own unique contribution to the solution of global problems. The humanitarian spirit of the world's religions would be enriched through such efforts, further deepening the cooperation among them.

I am here reminded of these words by Former Czech president Václav Havel: "The only meaningful objective for Europe in the next century is to be its 'best self,' that is, to revitalise its best intellectual traditions and thereby contribute creatively to a new form of global community of living."

If "Europe" here is replaced with "each religious tradition," the role of religion in the world in the 21st century can be more clearly understood.

There are many admirable institutions and initiatives promoting interfaith cooperation and dialogue. The three research institutions I founded, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research and the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue, have also made efforts to promote dialogue

among faiths and civilizations.

The larger purpose for such efforts lies in encouraging each faith and civilization to explore, through dialogue, its own "best self," as well as ways to transcend differences and work together to solve global problems.

Currently, discussions are under way in forums associated with the United Nations on how to formulate a global development agenda beyond 2015 as the successor of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are aimed at alleviating the suffering caused by poverty and hunger.

Viewing this as an unprecedented endeavour for humanity, I urge that full-fledged dialogue and cooperation among religions be initiated through efforts to achieve the new globally-agreed set of common goals that will emerge from this process.



"The only meaningful objective for Europe [... or each religious tradition] in the next century is to be its 'best self,' that is, to revitalise its best intellectual traditions and thereby contribute creatively to a new form of global community of living."
Former Czech president Václav Havel

Q4: The Internet & Change

Question : How do you see the role of the internet and technology in an ever-changing world? You mention in your 2013 peace proposal the harm that can be caused by speed. In a world in which the speed of change is overwhelming nearly all of us, what can we do as individuals to protect ourselves and help ourselves manage?

Daisaku Ikeda : The rapid development of information and communication technology - as seen in the internet, which spread quickly after the end of the Cold War, following the standardization of the internet protocol suite in 1982 - is rightly known as the information revolution. Its enormous impact on

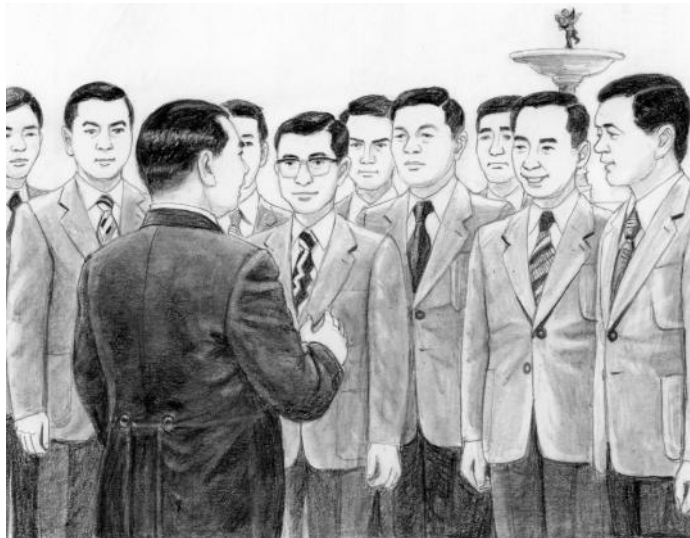
----- Continue on Page 10

The New Human Revolution

Volume 24, Chapter 2
Vigilant Safeguarding



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



Vigilant Safeguarding 23

When the New Year's Gongyo Meeting was over, Shin'ichi stepped out into the forecourt of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and stood in front of a stone marker commemorating "Song of

Human Revolution," which had been unveiled two days earlier on December 30.

The sky was clear, but the wind was chilly.

A series of commemorative photographs were taken, in which

Shin'ichi invited groups of meeting participants and on-duty event staff to join him. When the Soka Group members, clad in blue blazers, assembled, he spoke to them in an energetic voice: "Thank you! Your general meeting will be held on January 6. This reorganization from the Traffic Control Group to the Soka Group represents your genuine departure into the essential phase.

"What is the essential phase? It's when the Buddha's true identity is revealed. From our perspective, it's when we, as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and successors of Soka, take our places on the true stage of kosen-rufu and shoulder full responsibility for our movement.

"The essential phase is also the progression from theory to reality. Instead of remaining in the realm of abstract theory, we do our best to achieve something in reality. It's the switch from a phase of speaking about our determination and vow to the phase when we

demonstrate actual proof of victory.

"By the way, how old are you now?"

They called out various answers, ranging from 24 to 32.

"Let me see, . . . I was 24 when I took the lead in the February Campaign as an advisor to Kamata Chapter. That was when I made the initial breakthrough that paved the way to eventually achieving Mr. Toda's cherished lifetime goal of 750,000 member households.

"When I was 26, I was appointed youth division chief of staff. It was the year that, bearing full responsibility for all Gakkai planning and policy, through my own example I established the tradition of young people propelling our kosen-rufu movement.

"When I was 28, I was entrusted with the responsibility to lead the Osaka Campaign, in which we achieved an unprecedented expansion of membership and built the indestructible model of Ever-victorious Kansai.

"When I was 32, as you all know, I became the third president of the Soka Gakkai. I hope you will be just as decisive and committed. That's the key to tapping your inherent strength."



Vigilant Safeguarding 24

Shin'ichi continued speaking with the young men of the Soka Group after their

commemorative photograph was taken: "To grow as youth, it's vital to overcome the tendency to feel dependent toward others. If you think for even a moment that you might pass your responsibilities on to the men's division, or that it's okay to

neglect Gakkai activities by telling yourselves that you're too busy at work, you won't be able to train yourselves.

"Young people should be enterprising and wholehearted, voluntarily shouldering full responsibility and ready to take on any task. No matter how busy you are at work, it's vital that you challenge yourselves to participate in Gakkai activities. If you ignore this or give up trying, saying you just can't find the time, you are passing up an opportunity to do your human revolution and fully develop your lives.

"In your youth, you're often called upon to do the grunt work at your job and you frequently bear the brunt of the burden. You probably have very little free time for yourselves. But it's important to exercise your ingenuity and create time, make a genuine effort, and apply yourselves fully in your Buddhist faith and practice.

"Over time, those experiences will train you and foster the strength that is the underlying toughness you need to face all of life's challenges. This will eventually become your good fortune. That's why struggles are actually life's greatest treasure.

"If you become accustomed to trying to avoid effort and difficulty, you'll end up unhappy."

Then Shin'ichi pointed to the "Song of Human Revolution" monument.

"It says here, 'pressing on through blizzards, we boldly advance.' I hope you will make this your spirit throughout your lives. I'm counting on you to take care of the Soka Gakkai. I'm counting on you to achieve kosen-rufu. I'm entrusting the 21st century to you."

As the Brazilian author José de Alencar (1829–77) wrote: "People can overcome any adversity if they possess a vibrant spirit and persevere to achieve their goals."



Vigilant Safeguarding 25

Shin'ichi Yamamoto also posed for several photographs with members of the Byakuren Group. The Byakuren Group's origins can be traced to May 1957, when a group of Young Women Division members was

established to take charge of behind-the-scenes movements and operations at Young Women Division leaders meetings and other events. This step was suggested by Shin'ichi, the youth division chief of staff at the time, as a means to provide practical hands-on training that would foster capable young women.

In March 1958, upon the completion of Josei Toda's cherished wish for the construction of the Daikodo (Grand Lecture Hall) at the head temple, commemorative pilgrimages by Soka Gakkai members began and some members of this newly formed Young Women Division group asked if there was anything they could do to assist.

Taking the initiative in activities for *kosen-rufu* is the spirit of Bodhisattvas of the Earth and it fills one's life with great joy.

Shin'ichi was grateful and delighted that the Young Women Division members wanted to volunteer for the sake of Buddhism and the members. He conferred with those involved in the planning and arranged for them to

take responsibility for cleaning the head temple facilities and supporting activities there.

From the time Shin'ichi was inaugurated as president, this group of Young Women Division members came to be known as the "head temple staff".

Witnessing the admirable sight of these group members cheerfully working hard at cleaning and other activities, Shin'ichi couldn't help but be moved by their pure spirit. On one occasion, he said to them: "You are all beautiful flowers of Soka, so please conduct yourselves as uncrowned queens, with dignity, self-confidence and strength."

In 1966, Shin'ichi bestowed the name "Byakuren Group" on the Young Women Division head temple staff. July 8, the day that he announced the new name, came to be known as Byakuren Group Day.

"Byakuren" means "white lotus flower". The Lotus Sutra likens the lotus flower to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, with the phrase, "Unsoiled by worldly things/ like the lotus flower in the water" (LSOC15, 263). Just as the beautiful white lotus blossoms from a muddy pond, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, though they live in the corrupt and polluted world of the Latter Day of the Law, remain pure and unsoiled by their surroundings.



Vigilant Safeguarding 26

As they clean,
their actions shine
with Buddhahood.

On observing the members of the Byakuren Group happily engaged in keeping the head temple clean, Shin'ichi sent that poem to them. Supporting fellow members dedicated to *kosen-rufu* is conduct worthy of a Buddha.

As the years passed, the Byakuren Group grew and developed as an organisation and assumed broader responsibilities, coordinating behind-the-scenes support of various meetings and gradually evolving into a significant group for fostering capable individuals within the Young Women Division.

In August 1976, a new lavender Byakuren Group uniform was introduced. Shin'ichi had suggested the colour, because he thought it conveyed a feeling of grace and elegance that aptly symbolised the Byakuren Group.

Following the New Year's *Gongyo* Meeting of January 1977, Shin'ichi said while taking a commemorative photograph with Byakuren Group members: "Your lavender uniforms suit you. It's chilly

today, so please don't catch cold." He looked carefully at each member, intent on memorising all of their faces.

"Who is the Byakuren Group leader here today?" "It's me, Kayo Aoyagi," announced one of the members, stepping forward.

Shin'ichi replied, "I know you! You're the young women Junior High School Division leader and a vice Young Women Division leader. When you were in the High School Division, you participated in my Goshu lectures as a member of the Hosu (Young Phoenix) Group, didn't you?"

"Yes" Seeing that President Yamamoto had remembered her from back in her high school days, Aoyagi was overcome with emotion.

Looking in Aoyagi's eyes, Shin'ichi said: "I've established various groups to train people and striven so energetically to support them out of my hope to foster Soka Gakkai youth into leaders who will protect and serve the members. Please never forget that as long as you live."



Vigilant Safeguarding 27

Shin'ichi continued: "The members of the Byakuren Group are the 'faces' of the Gakkai and the 'flowers' of Soka.

"Young women dedicating themselves to *kosen-rufu* and their fellow members are incredibly admirable and

noble. All of your efforts and hard work will adorn your lives in the form of great benefits and good fortune. This accords with the workings of the rigorous Buddhist law of cause and effect.

"Therefore, as a Buddhist, you need to be committed to advancing along your chosen path.

"The only pathway to true happiness is to act based on your own convictions, deriving from the teachings of Buddhism and not worry about how others may judge you."

Shin'ichi wanted to assure each of them that although their sincere efforts may seem to go unnoticed by others, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe observe all.

Buddhism teaches about the workings of karma. Bad causes produce negative effects and good causes produce positive effects. Moreover, this law applies throughout past, present and future. One's thoughts, words and deeds in the past are causes that produce effects in one's present and one's conducts in the present will result in effects in the future.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes: "One who slights another will in turn be despised." (WND-1, 305) Everything is up to the individual. Both positive and negative effects in one's life are the results of one's own actions. The way to transform the negative karma formed and create the most effects possible is through practising the true teachings of Buddhism dedicating oneself to *kosen-rufu*. This is the great pathway to certain unshakeable happiness. Buddhist practitioners should strive to live out their lives with an understanding that Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe are aware of their actions, based on the causality of life.

The shining examples offered by members of the Gajokai, the Soka Group and the Byakuren Group brim with that spirit.

The Buddha is watching over all our efforts. The courageous actions engraved in our lives will become the power to open a brilliant future. The difficult road of adversity will become a golden path leading to the summit of victory.



Vigilant Safeguarding 28

Many think that happiness is taking it easy, never working hard and **enjoying** wealth and social status, recognition and success without any special effort. Some flatter and cosy up to the rich and powerful in hopes of achieving these things. Others adopt a policy of expedience and

will do anything to get ahead. Still others envy resent those who have established themselves in the world and scheme to bring about the downfall of those whom they perceive to be more successful than they are. All of these patterns of behaviour are based on the delusion that happiness resides in the external world, outside of us.

Nichiren Daishonin states: 'If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, then your performing even ten thousand practices and ten thousand good deeds will be in vain. It is like the case of a poor man who spends night and day counting his neighbour's wealth but gains not even half a coin.' (WND-1, 3)

The path to happiness and attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime lies, fundamentally, in polishing one's character and manifesting the life-condition of the Buddha and bodhisattva from within. It's vital to build a strong, stalwart, unshakeable self, like a towering mountain.

The Daishonin also writes: "Arouse deep faith, and diligently polish your mirror day and night. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo"

(WND-1, 4). Chanting *daimoku* is the path to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. It is attained by practising for oneself and others based on daimoku. This means not only chanting for ourselves, but also dedicating ourselves to *kosen-rufu*. Whether we can establish a truly indestructible life-state of happiness depends upon how earnestly we chant *daimoku* and exert ourselves for the sake of *kosen-rufu*.

It may be possible to deceive other people, but it's impossible to deceive the Buddhist law. We can build a magnificent state of life to the degree we pray for *kosen-rufu*, devote ourselves and strive tirelessly. From the perspective of the Buddhist law of cause and effect, there is no path to victory other than being earnest, hardworking and sincere.

From the perspective of the Buddhist law of cause and effect, there is no path to victory other than being earnest, hardworking and sincere.



Vigilant Safeguarding 29

The Soka Gakkai's Year of Study got into full swing with the 1st Soka Group General Meeting, held on Thursday evening, January 6, 1977.

The young men braved the chill outside to make their way to the gathering at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo. Their cheeks were flushed and their eyes shone with determination. The main Gohonzon room on the fifth floor of the Soka Culture Center, adjacent to the headquarters building, filled up with Soka Group members wearing their distinctive blue uniforms. The start of the meeting was announced at 6:30 p.m.

That afternoon, Shin'ichi Yamamoto had a meeting in Tokyo's Minato Ward. He brought the meeting to an early close and rushed to the Soka Group General Meeting.

He had asked the Soka Gakkai's general director and several of its vice presidents to attend the Soka Group meeting. He thought this would be a good way for the Soka Gakkai to celebrate the group's fresh start.

Shin'ichi firmly believed that the highest praise and support should be extended to those working behind the scenes, such as the members of the Soka Group, the Gajokai, the Byakuren Group, and the uncrowned heroes who deliver the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper. Soka

Group members leave their jobs early and rush to Soka Gakkai facilities to stand out in the cold and direct parking. Gajokai members safeguard those facilities by patrolling them through the late hours. With warm smiles, Byakuren Group members greet those who attend activities at Gakkai culture and community centers. All of these young people are carrying out their noble missions while coping with their own daily challenges and difficulties. Regarding these young people, Shin'ichi saw in them the conduct of bodhisattvas and felt the compassionate heart of Buddhas. That was why he wanted many top Gakkai leaders to attend the Soka Group general meeting, so they would be able to express their wholehearted gratitude to the group members, and praise and encourage them.

When Shin'ichi arrived at 7:50 p.m., he was welcomed with thunderous applause. "I rushed to be together with all of you today as you make this fresh start here at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. I am very happy to see you holding such a festive first general meeting. Congratulations!"

Shin'ichi began his speech by praising these champions of *kosen-rufu*.



Vigilant Safeguarding 30

On the occasion of this fresh start by the Soka Group, Shin'ichi wanted to explicitly reconfirm the basics of the faith and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. By doing that, the path ahead would naturally become clear.

"Kosen-rufu is the wish of Nichiren Daishonin. If we lose sight of that, Nichiren Buddhism loses its

meaning. Therefore, I hope you'll remain faithful to his teaching of *kosen-rufu* and transmit the essence of Buddhism among the people, within your communities, and in society as a whole.

"The full mission of the Soka Group is to be the driving force for the advance of *kosen-rufu*, and to make the entire Soka Gakkai strong so that it will endure into the far-distant future."

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Those who become Nichiren's disciples and lay believers should realize the profound karmic relationship they share with him and spread the Lotus Sutra as he does" (WND-1, 994). *Kosen-rufu* is the great wish of the Daishonin, and carrying it out is a fundamental

requirement of discipleship. As such, the practice of Nichiren Buddhism is practice for oneself and others, of which sharing this teaching is an indispensable part. As the Daishonin's successor Nikko Shonin declares: "Until *kosen-rufu* is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (GZ, 1618). Those who dedicate their lives to *kosen-rufu* are genuine disciples of the Daishonin and successors to his teachings.

No matter how loudly one claims to be a follower of the Daishonin and brandishes that as a badge of authority, without taking action for *kosen-rufu*, such a person lacks the Daishonin's spirit. That is nothing but a fossilized, dead religion.

The vast spirit of the Daishonin and the life-state of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth pulse within the actions of those who recognize their mission to achieve *kosen-rufu* by helping others achieve happiness and propagating the Daishonin's teachings.

Shin'ichi went on to speak of the significance in Buddhism of the time. He expressed his hope that the members of the Soka Group would cultivate a firm grasp of the nature of the time, and exert leadership in a way best suited to it. He also pointed out that herein lies the significance of the fresh start for the Soka Group.

"The full mission of the Soka Group is to be the driving force for the advance of *kosen-rufu*, and to make the entire Soka Gakkai strong so that it will endure into the far-distant future."



Vigilant Safeguarding 31

Shin'ichi referred to current events, noting the corruption and degeneracy prevalent in society, characteristics associated with the Latter Day of the Law.

In February 1976, news broke of the Lockheed

bribery scandal, in which officials from Lockheed, a U.S. corporation, bribed top Japanese political and business leaders to purchase aircraft manufactured by them. It became clear that numerous Japanese politicians had taken huge bribes, leading to the arrest of former prime minister Kakuei Tanaka (1918–93) in July 1976. This incident sent shock waves throughout the Japanese political and business worlds, and public distrust of the government intensified.

Shin'ichi asserted: "Today, people's vision of the differences between right and wrong has become blurred and they have lost sight of the proper path to take. The future appears dark. Society has lost hope and there seems to be nothing positive lying ahead of us. Against that backdrop, the Soka

Gakkai stands as a golden beacon showing the people of the world the way forward, and its role will continue to grow in importance.

"The Soka Group is the Soka Gakkai's light of hope and value creation. I want you to remember

that you are the light source of the beacon of the Soka Gakkai.

"In a confused and turbulent age, the Soka Gakkai has held aloft the banner of truth and justice and striven selflessly for the happiness of the people. I hope you will all courageously follow the path of mission that you have chosen, convinced that protecting the Soka Gakkai is the greatest good!"

Shin'ichi closed by saying: "Please establish an outstanding record as the first class of the Soka Group, working together with your fellow members in firm solidarity, each in your own individual way. Follow the noble path of the Soka Group, without being swayed by either favorable or unfavorable occurrences in society. By the time you reach your forties and fifties, become successes in every aspect of your lives and keep advancing toward victory."

The room was filled with enthusiastic applause expressing the members' determination to do just that.



Vigilant Safeguarding 32

The Soka Group rose up with firm determination. The gears of the Soka Gakkai's advance began to shift through the vigor of youth.

Based on the guidance that Shin'ichi had given them at their first general meeting, the top leaders of the Soka Group began an earnest discussion. What should they do to embody the spirit imparted to them by President Yamamoto and make the Soka Group into an ideal group for fostering capable individuals brimming with the Gakkai spirit?

"While President Yamamoto's guidance to us Soka Group members is to protect the Soka Gakkai, he's always been teaching us about the spirit to vigilantly safeguard the organization since our days as the Traffic Control Group (TCG). And he has invested tremendous energy in educating and training us so that we can embody that spirit. We must pass this on to the next generation."

"I agree. 'Training' sounds old-fashioned, but the only way to really master things is to actually do them, to practice them physically. Such training will be indispensable from now on, too."

"That's right. And each of us should take the

lessons we learned through education and training in the Soka Group and put them into practice in our daily lives, demonstrating our full potential in society. In other words, through the Soka Group's activities, we need to establish a foundation of educating, training and motivating ourselves."

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "Put into flames, a rock simply turns to ashes, but gold becomes pure gold" (WND-1, 497). Without training, capable individuals cannot become great leaders. Training is a requirement for great growth.

From the time they were the TCG, the members had trained rigorously together to be on time, earnestly safeguard the Soka Gakkai members, and ensure the safety of all those traveling on pilgrimages. If the TCG members had been late when they were supposed to be on duty, it could've led to a major accident. In addition, in order to take time off of work to fulfill TCG duties on pilgrimages, they had to earn the trust of their employers, so each day at work was also a struggle.



Vigilant Safeguarding 33

In order to carry out their duties as members of the Traffic Control Group, members had to make sure they were in good physical condition. It was decided that they should have neat haircuts and wear clean, white shirts while on duty. Because they were the face of the Soka Gakkai, it was important that their appearance be neat and tidy.

Another of their essential duties was to convey such information as transfer and arrival times to the members making the pilgrimage to the head temple, so their voices had to be loud and clear enough to carry throughout the train car. Therefore, some TCG members practised making these announcements aloud to train their voices. They were expected to communicate quickly and error-free, so everyone diligently practised how to pass on necessary information accurately. If their grasp of the number of members making pilgrimages was off by even one person, it would affect not only travel plans but also bedding and meals arrangements at places of lodging.

Accuracy is the foundation for everything. Inaccurate information can cause all sorts of problems. As the Italian thinker Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72) observed: "The common victory depends on the exactness with which the different operations are carried out."

TCG members had to memorise the names and locations of all the buildings at the head temple, mastering the entire map of the grounds. They even memorised the number of steps leading up to the various buildings. If there were a fire or other emergency and it was necessary

to evacuate while it was dark, knowing the number of steps could be helpful in preventing accidents.

Also, for each lodging temple they had to learn the layout, size, and capacity of the rooms, the locations of fire extinguishing and cleaning equipment, the emergency exits and corridors, and how many pairs of shoes would fit in the shoe storage shelves.

To truly take full responsibility for the safety of members making pilgrimages to the head temple, they had to consider every possible occurrence and be prepared for every situation. The young men of the Traffic Control Group did a fine job of that.

In light of the growing number of overseas members who made pilgrimages to the head temple during Soka Gakkai summer training courses, some TCG members even took the initiative to study foreign languages so as to be of greater assistance.

(To be continued)

Attachments and Liberation

"It is impossible to live in the world without attachments, or indeed to eradicate them. Our affections for others, the desire to succeed in our endeavors, our interests and passions, our love of life itself--all of these are attachments and potential sources of disappointment or suffering, but they are the substance of our humanity and the elements of engaged and fulfilled lives."

Buddhism is a teaching of liberation, aimed at freeing people from the inevitable sufferings of life. To this end, early Buddhist teachings focused on the impermanence of all things. The Buddha realized that nothing in this world stays the same; everything is in a constant state of change. Pleasurable conditions, favorable circumstances, our relationships with those we hold dear, our health and well-being—any sense of comfort and security we derive from these things is continually threatened by life's flux and uncertainty, and ultimately by death, the most profound change of all.

The Buddha saw that people's ignorance of the nature of change was the cause of suffering. We desire to hold on to what we value, and we suffer when life's inevitable process of change separates us from those things. Liberation from suffering comes, he taught, when we are able to sever our attachments to the transient things of this world.

Buddhist practice, in this perspective, is oriented away from the world: life is suffering, the world is a place of uncertainty; liberation lies in freeing oneself from attachment to worldly things and concerns, attaining a transcendent enlightenment.

The Lotus Sutra, upon which Nichiren Buddhism is based, is revolutionary in that it reverses this orientation, overturning the basic premises of the Buddha's earlier teachings and focusing people's attention instead on the infinite possibilities of life and the joy of living in the world.

Where other teachings had regarded enlightenment, or the final liberation of Buddhahood, as a goal to be attained at some future point in time, in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra each person is inherently and originally a Buddha. Through Buddhist practice we develop our enlightened qualities and exercise them in the world here and now for the sake of others and for the purpose of positively transforming so-



Photo credit: © DIGITAL VISION GETTY IMAGES

ciety. The true nature of our lives at this moment is one of expansive freedom and possibility.

This dramatic reorientation effected by the Lotus Sutra is distilled in the key and seemingly paradoxical concepts of Nichiren Buddhism that "earthly desires are enlightenment" and "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana." The image of the pure lotus flower blossoming in the muddy swamp is a metaphor that encaps-

ulates this perspective—freedom, liberation, enlightenment are forged and expressed in the very midst of the murky swamp of life with its problems, pains and contradictions.

It is impossible to live in the world without attachments, or indeed to eradicate them. Our affections for others, the desire to succeed in our endeavors, our interests and passions, our love of life itself—all of these are attachments and po-

tential sources of disappointment or suffering, but they are the substance of our humanity and the elements of engaged and fulfilled lives.

The challenge is not to rid oneself of attachments but, in the words of Nichiren, to become enlightened concerning them. The teachings of Nichiren thus stress the transformation, rather than the elimination, of desire. Desires and attachments fuel the quest for enlightenment. As he wrote: "Now Nichiren and others who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo . . . burn the firewood of earthly desires and behold the fire of enlightened wisdom..."

In their proper perspective—when we can see them clearly and master them rather than being mastered by them—desires and attachments enable us to lead interesting and significant lives. As SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says, "Our Buddhist practice enables us to discern their true nature and utilize them as the driving force to become happy."

It is our small ego, our "lesser self," that makes us slaves to our desires and causes us to suffer. Buddhist practice enables us to break out of the shell of our lesser self and awaken to the "greater self" of our inherent Buddha nature.

This expanded sense of self is based on a clear awareness of the interconnected fabric of life which we are part of and which sustains us. When awakened to the reality of our relatedness to all life, we can overcome the fear of change and experience the deeper continuities beyond and beneath the ceaseless flow of change.

The basic character of our greater self is compassion. Ultimate freedom is experienced when we develop the ability to channel the full energy of our attachments into compassionate concern and action on behalf of others.

[Courtesy July 2011 SGI Quarterly]

"In their proper perspective, desires and attachments become a source of happiness."

the world is indeed equivalent to that of the 18th century Industrial Revolution.

Global diffusion of information now enables us to learn instantly about what is taking place in another part of the world. Moreover, free and flexible forums of communication can be created online, something that would have been beyond our wildest imagination during the Cold War. Communication technology is rapidly bringing down geographical and physical barriers that have hindered exchange among people who live far away from each other.

Above all, the significance of the information revolution is that it prevents knowledge and information from being monopolised by a handful of people or groups, enabling many people to share it in a more democratic fashion.

Access to information has long been one-sided, provided unilaterally by the press and mass media. It is extremely significant that independent internet news websites such as Scoop now provide a forum for taking up issues from different perspectives. Such online sources can enlighten people about issues and diverse points of view that they were previously unaware of, supporting the development of more sound, democratic foundations for society.

To share some of our own efforts related to grassroots peacebuilding, a few years ago, the SGI launched an online media project, Toward a Nuclear Free World, (<http://www.nuclearabolition.info/>) aimed at promoting awareness about efforts for nuclear abolition from the perspective of civil society. This site is a collaboration with Inter Press Service (IPS), a news agency that has long been committed to amplifying the voices of the developing world.

In June 2012, we co-organised an interdisciplinary roundtable on the role of education and learning toward a sustainable future as a side event at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). On that occasion, Regional Director of Inter Press Service for Latin America Joaquin Costanzo stressed that raising awareness of social issues and encouraging people to participate in decision-making processes is a key mission of the mass media. In this respect, I think that internet news websites will play an increasingly important role.

Unfortunately, it is also clear that innovations in information technology have created more negative possibilities: cyberspace can be used to instigate conflict, hatred and discrimination. Public opinion can be manipulated through the presentation of distorted information and the spread of stereotyped images.

The internet is undoubtedly useful, in

that we can instantly access information online. But some of what is available online is of a dubious nature, and certain information is obviously intended to mislead the audience.

In this sense, whether technology will be used for good or evil purposes entirely depends on individuals.

I applaud the development of media literacy education such as that now offered in New Zealand and Australia, and feel that this should be made available on a global basis in order to help people navigate this ocean of information.



Educator Josei Toda (1900-58), second president of the Soka Gakkai.
(© Seikyo Newspaper)

My mentor, educator Josei Toda (1900-58), second president of the Soka Gakkai, observed: "The confusion of knowledge with wisdom is one of the great misfortunes of our times... Knowledge and wisdom are not the same thing. While knowledge may be a door that opens the path to wisdom, it is not, in itself, wisdom."

The availability of enormous amounts of information is of no worth if we allow it to undermine our ability to think for ourselves or become affected by intentional misinformation. We need to foster wisdom in order to truly benefit from knowledge, as we are living in an age where access to knowledge is easier and open to more people than ever.

Ultimately, I believe that such wisdom can be found in having a clear sense of purpose upon which one bases one's life. Alongside efforts to enhance media literacy, the kind of humanistic education that is focused on cultivating a solid sense of purpose in life can be a key element here.



Alastair Thompson is the co-founder of Scoop. He is of Scottish and Irish extraction and from Wellington, New Zealand. Alastair has 24 years experience in the media, at the Dominion, National Business Review, North & South magazine, Straight Furrow newspaper and online since 1997. He is the winner of several journalism awards for business and investigative work.

5: The Water Hemisphere

Question : What is the role of the water hemisphere and spirituality in the global quest for peace?

Daisaku Ikeda : Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was an educator who prioritised the happiness of children in prewar Japan, at a time the foremost objective of education was to foster obedient servants of the state.

He was also a geographer. In his 1903 book *The Geography of Human Life*, he presented an idea quite different from the conventional way of seeing the Earth - two-dimensional maps divided into national territories. Instead, he said we could divide the globe into a "land hemisphere" and a "water hemisphere." He illustrated this using two circular-shaped maps, with London serving as the pole of the land hemisphere and New Zealand as the pole of the water hemisphere.

Seeing the oceans as thoroughfares connecting countries instead of as something that divides them, Makiguchi emphasised the importance of fostering an ethos that could open up paths of peace, friendship and harmonious coexistence.

I think it is extremely significant even from a contemporary standpoint that New Zealand is at the centre of this water hemisphere composed of oceans filled with infinite possibilities.

During the two world wars of the twentieth century, the Atlantic Ocean became a battlefield. The Pacific Ocean, which both our countries face, also saw many fierce battles during World War II. Based on the lessons of history, the world now needs a culture that celebrates diversity such as that fostered in New Zealand over many decades. The adamant will to never repeat the atrocities of war is also indispensable, as seen in New Zealand's unambiguous stance against nuclear weapons and efforts to develop the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga).

The first nation in the world to grant women suffrage, New Zealand has also

consistently been known for its emphasis on the guarantee of human rights and a strong social welfare system. Upholding human rights and humanitarianism as national priorities, New Zealand has provided an example that should be emulated by nations around the world.

In *The Geography of Human Life*, Makiguchi called for a transformation in the modes of competition among nations: from military, political and economic competition that pursue one's own interests at the expense of others to a "humanitarian competition" that seeks to bring out the best of each nation's qualities through efforts to contribute to the well-being of other countries and the world.

I believe that New Zealand's strong traditions of fairness and concern for the vulnerable can help lead the world in the direction of humanitarian competition in the 21st century. Nothing can justify the continuation of the current state of the world where so many people suffer in a cruel zero-sum game in which the strong prey upon the weak.

Through humanitarian competition aimed at pursuing peace and happiness for both oneself and others, we can build a win-win world that allows the dignity of all people to shine. It is my earnest hope that Japan and many other countries will follow in the footsteps of New Zealand in order to create such a truly humanistic global society.



"I believe that New Zealand's strong traditions of fairness and concern for the vulnerable can help lead the world in the direction of humanitarian competition in the 21st century. Nothing can justify the continuation of the current state of the world where so many people suffer in a cruel zero-sum game in which the strong prey upon the weak."

- Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda
(© Seikyo Newspaper)

***** Interview Ends *****



A Forum for Peace: Compilation of 30 years of SGI President Ikeda's Peace Proposals Launched at UN HQ

On February 20, A Forum for Peace: Daisaku Ikeda's Proposals to the UN, a collection of key excerpts from 30 years of peace proposals by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, was launched in a high profile event held at the UN Headquarters in New York.

A Forum for Peace brings together for the first time excerpts from Mr. Ikeda's annual peace proposals, issued every year since 1983 on January 26 to commemorate the founding of the SGI. Recommendations for global change in areas such as human security, women's empowerment, nuclear disarmament and the centrality of dialogue, are informed by his firm belief in the positive potential of the UN, his experience of the cruelty of war and Buddhist philosophy.

Experts from the fields of education, disarmament and diplomacy joined the book launch and ensuing panel discussion on "Global Citizenship and the Future of the UN" chaired by former United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, who contributed the Foreword to the book.

At the launch, Ambassador Chowdhury stated, "No human being in world history has written so consistently, so substantively about the work of the United Nations and the way to reform it as SGI President Ikeda." Many of Mr. Ikeda's proposals over the years have subsequently been reflected in the work of the United Nations, he added.

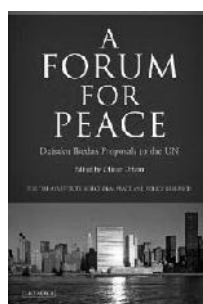
conference in Brazil

Sponsor of the event was the Alliance of Civilizations, a United Nations initiative to build bridges across religious, cultural and other divides, and organizers were SGI, Inter Press Service and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research.

In his opening address, Alliance of Civilizations High Representative H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser spoke of the values of global citizenship emphasized in the book as being vital to the mission of the UN.

John Ashe, President of the UN General Assembly, sent a message through his Chef de Cabinet, Ambassador Paulette Bethel, saying that building a peaceful world is a monumental task that cannot rest in the hands of the UN alone, underscoring the key role of civil society.

Tariq Hassan, Chair of the Board of SGI-USA, read excerpts from SGI President Ikeda's message to the event. Mr. Ikeda noted that in his annual peace proposals



he stresses the importance of fostering an awareness of our role and responsibility as global citizens, to counter the impulse toward conflict and division.

"Building solidarity of global citizens is the source of hope for the future of the United Nations," he said.

Dr. Olivier Urbain, editor of A Forum for Peace and Director of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, introduced the book and its four main chapters: A UN Living up to its Mission; A UN to Eliminate Misery from the Earth; A UN for a World Without War; and Empowerment for Future Change.

As editor, he said he was surprised to find after working on the book that he gained "a tremendous sense of hope" that "as long as we have a space for personal creativity and solidarity there is nothing that human beings cannot overcome."

In her keynote address, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Betty Williams praised Mr. Ikeda's consistent emphasis on the power of women. The United Nations, she also said, while not perfect, is "all that we have in our world to try and make it better."

Other speakers included William Gaudelli, Associate Professor of Social Studies and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Monte Joffe, Founding Principal of the Renaissance Charter School in New York's Jackson Heights.

A Forum for Peace: Daisaku Ikeda's Proposals to the UN is published by I.B. Tauris. For the complete texts of the last 15 years of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's proposals, see <http://www.sgi.org/sgi-president/proposals/>.

[Adapted from a report from the SGI Office of Public Information; Photos courtesy of UNAOC/Aaron Fineman and SGI-OPI]

SGI Joins Second Conference on Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons

From February 13-14, SGI delegates participated in the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, hosted by the Mexican Government and held in Nuevo Vallarta in the state of Nayarit. Chaired by Juan Manuel Gómez Robledo, Mexico's Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, the conference was attended by delegations representing 146 governments, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and over 120 representatives of civil society. Executive Director for Peace Affairs Hirotsugu Terasaki and Program Director for Peace Affairs Kimiaki Kawai attended on SGI's behalf.

The Nayarit conference was a follow-up to the first international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons that took place in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013, where participants concluded that no type of preparation and capacity in the world could protect the population of any city from the humanitarian catastrophe of a nuclear explosion.

Building upon the conclusions reached at Oslo, the Nayarit Conference saw presentations from UN agencies, academics, former military officials and civil society organizations demonstrating the harmful and lethal effects of any nuclear weapon detonation, deliberate



The EYT exhibition

or accidental, in areas such as public health, climate change, food security, development, economic growth and the displacement of people. Hibakusha, survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb attacks, also shared testimonies of the long term physical, psychological and social impacts of the explosion of a nuclear weapon. The evidence presented substantiated the fact that the continued existence, possession and deployment of nuclear weapons pose an



Vice Minister Robledo giving the chair's summary

existential threat to humanity and the planet.

In his summary of the meeting, Vice Minister Robledo stated that now is the time to start a diplomatic process with a specific timeframe for governments and civil society to develop new international standards and norms for nuclear weapons through a legally binding instrument. "It is time to take action. The 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks [in 2015] is the appropriate milestone to achieve our goal," he concluded. "Nayarit is a point of no return."

It was also announced that the Third Conference will be held in Vienna, Austria, within this year to reaffirm conclusions made at Oslo and Nayarit, deepen momentum within the international community and take concrete steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In conjunction with the official conference, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) hosted a two-day campaigners meeting before the conference, and a debriefing afterwards, for civil society activists to explore steps they can take in support of a treaty banning nuclear weapons in the build-up towards Vienna. Over 120 participants, including the SGI representatives, attended these meetings. The anti-nuclear weapons exhibition "Everything You Treasure: For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons," jointly created by ICAN and SGI, was also on display during the conference.

[Adapted from a report from SGI Office of Public Information (SGI-OPI) and an article from the February 18, 2014, issue of Seikyo Shimbun, Soka Gakkai, Japan; photos courtesy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, and SGI-OPI]

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.

An Old Man's Victory through Faith

A song has a mystical quality that enables human hearts to communicate with each other.

Since my adolescence, I have taken every possible opportunity to become more acquainted with all kinds of music. These days I am given to expressing the way I have been feeling through poetry — and putting it to music, as I'm often asked to do.

Of course I know I am just a layman as far as music is concerned. But when, together with my friends, I sing a song which moves me or when I play the piano to convey my emotions through music, I feel the musical instruments in our hearts resounding of themselves. More than anything else, I treasure those times when I can enjoy the humanistic resonance and communion between human hearts.

A few years ago, if I remember correctly, one of my acquaintances asked me what my favourite song is, and I answered, 'Kusaki wa Moyuru' (Trees and Plants That Flourish). I founded the Soka Gakuen School, and this tune is its dormitory song. One of the first students in the school composed the words and a music teacher set them to music:

*In the field of Musashino
Where trees and plants flourish,
Young phoenixes play and mature
As they breathe the scent of flowers.
For what purpose
Do you cultivate your intelligence?
In order to shoulder the years to come,
Take flight towards the future courageously.*

This is the first verse of the song; there are five verses in all. A rather tranquil melody in a minor key, this song describes majestically the soaring of young phoenixes towards the future. The melody itself is moving, but the fifth line in each verse, which reconfirms the purpose of each endeavour, is quite meaningful indeed. The questions posed in each verse are, respectively: "for what purpose do you develop your passion?" "for what purpose do you love and cherish other people?" "For what purpose do you pursue glory?" and "For what purpose do you go in pursuit of peace?"

Whenever I attend the entrance and commencement ceremonies of the Soka Gakuen School and watch the boys sing this song with sparkling eyes, I pray from the bottom of my heart that they will never lose the spirit to pursue these questions throughout their lives. At the same time, I do not think that they should ever forget the nameless masses even while they are in a favourable



educational environment. But every time I listen to this song, I vividly envision these respectable young people who, after graduating from this school, will staunchly survive the realities of life as children of the common people.

There was once a stupid old man called Tokuhan among the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha. Shakyamuni, knowing Tokuhan was sincere by nature even though he had little intelligence, ordered 500 arhats to educate him every day in the hope that he would become a respectable monk. In three years, however, Tokuhan could not learn by heart even a single phrase of a sutra.

The people throughout the country scorned Tokuhan for his stupidity, but Shakyamuni, out of pity for him, taught him a verse himself: "Those who exercise control of their words, thoughts and actions will never fail to attain enlightenment."

Shakyamuni taught him this single verse over and over again. Moved by the Buddha's compassion, Tokuhan desperately tried to commit it to memory and managed to learn it by heart. Then Shakyamuni Buddha said to him: As old as you are, you were barely able to learn this one verse by heart. I will tell you the meaning of this rather ordinary verse: Man has three evil acts of the body: killing, stealing and lewd conduct. He has four evil acts of the mouth: lying, being two-faced, name-calling and pretentiousness. Man also has three evil acts of the mind: greed, anger and stupidity. Altogether these vices are called the ten karmas (evil deeds). When one is swayed by any of them, one is plunged into the deluded world where human beings alternate only between the sufferings of life and death. When you overcome them, you can extricate yourself from all kinds of desires and attain enlightenment. That is why you will never fail to attain enlightenment if you continue to exercise self-control verbally, mentally and in your actions.

Thus, feeble and old as Tokuhan was, he continued his practice, strictly following Shakyamuni's compassionate teaching and finally attaining enlightenment. Shakyamuni, greatly pleased with the old man's achievement, praised Tokuhan's sincere practice, saying: "Learning does not necessarily require quantity; being able to put it into practice deserves the highest praise."

This story is related in the *Hokku Hyu Sutra*, but I believe that it contains a relevant message for those of us who live in this modern world.

William James, a noted American philosopher and psychologist (1842-1910), ascribes one of the most impressive philosophical remarks he ever heard during his lifetime to an uneducated carpenter among his acquaintances who came to his house to do some repair work. He said: "There is very little difference between one man and another; but what little there is, is very important." This is a remark which truly means a great deal. Indeed, a seemingly offhand remark of a person who has weathered the storms of difficulty in actual life sometimes carries far greater weight than that of a philosopher. I know many "philosophers" among the common people and it is my greatest joy to spend each day talking with them and sharing the joys and sorrows of life with them.

10 karmas (EVIL DEEDS)

3 Evil acts of the body:

1. Killing
2. Stealing and
3. Lewd conduct

4 Evil acts of the mouth:

1. Lying
2. Being two-faced
3. Name-calling and
4. Pretentiousness

3 Evil acts of the mind:

1. Greed
2. Anger and
3. Stupidity.

All rights reserved. No parts of this newsletter may be reproduced or transmitted by any electronic or mechanical means, or otherwise, or by any information storage and retrieval system without prior written permission from the publisher. Tel: 4038582. Website: www.nepalsgi.org . Email: info@nepalsgi.org . Printer: Graphics, Baphal, Kathmandu .