



Living the GOSHO

Dispatching one's weakest forces to lead the attack on a powerful opponent . . . only makes the enemy more confident than ever.

From "On the Protection of the Nation" (WND-2, 93).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT - Ikeda Sensei

The Daishonin taught an unchanging rule for victory—namely, leaders themselves taking action in the vanguard.

President Toda always entrusted me, young though I was, with taking leadership in the most challenging areas in order to create breakthroughs for the development of our movement. This spirit of youth leading the way is the proud tradition of our youthful SGI.

It is especially important for newly appointed leaders to be firmly committed to working for the members' happiness, to overcoming all obstacles, and to achieving positive results through their own initiative and frontline efforts.

(Translated from the November 13, 2013, issue of the *Seikyo Shinbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

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The Inspiring Stories Created by SGI Women

Elise Boulding (1920–2010), the pioneering peace researcher with whom I published a dialogue, believed it was important for young women to feel self-confident when they go out into the world. She said with a smile: "My mother's teaching that each human being is important helped me to be as self-confident as I am."

Is there anything more powerful than a mother's sincere encouragement?

In *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, the Daishonin states: "The Treasure Purity World [of the Mystic Law] is the womb of our mothers" (OTT, 91). He teaches that the life of each

cherishing a great philosophy, which teaches that all people possess the Buddha nature, the women of the SGI have continued to encourage one individual after another, assuring them that they will be all right, that they can transform any karmic suffering and become happy without fail.

Today, the beautiful network of our women's division and young women's division members is shining even more brilliantly in Japan and throughout the world. Our young women's division members, in particular, are vibrantly inheriting the noble spirit of the women's division. They are striving together in friendship and joy, and engaging in hope-

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, also warmly encouraged women: "Life doesn't always go smoothly. But everything has meaning. The greater the hardships, the greater the benefits. Firmly uphold the Mystic Law and strive your hardest, daring obstacles to stand in your way! Faith is the power to transform yourself and everything in your life."

There is no more wonderful stage on which to create noble, hope-filled stories that will move and inspire countless people.

An unforgettable woman was among the members who rushed to the aid of those in Shimane Prefecture during



proclaiming that she is their role model.

The stories of joy, hope, and inspiration of SGI women—transforming human history which for too long has been built on the tears of women—are more vibrant and exciting than ever.

Is there anything more powerful than a mother's sincere encouragement?

one of us is itself the treasure tower, and that our being born from our mothers corresponds to coming forth and appearing from the Treasure Purity World. Those who deeply awaken to this inherent truth are filled with boundless self-confidence and gratitude.

Founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi said that women would be the builders of an ideal future society. He prayed and fought tirelessly for the happiness of all women and mothers. This November marks 70 years since Mr. Makiguchi died in prison (in 1944), heroically upholding his beliefs to the very end.

filled dialogues with those around them. How delighted Mr. Makiguchi would surely be to see this!

Women's lives are stories of opening the gateway to happiness. Especially women who embrace the Mystic Law, which enables all women to attain enlightenment, will not only become happy themselves, but be able to lead their families, loved ones, and friends—as well as their communities, societies, the world, and even the future—in the direction of happiness. Every challenge along the way exists so that they can attain a boundless and eternal state of life shining with the light of happiness and help others do the same.

the heavy, destructive rains of July 1972. For many years, amid slander and abuse, she devoted herself to propagating Nichiren Buddhism. She overcame near bankruptcy to win wide trust in her community. "There is no greater benefit," she says, "than being able to care and chant for those in trouble. I keep striving alongside them until they triumph over adversity and we both attain complete victory together. A story of joy starts from a single individual."

Her daughters, who are graduates of the young women's Byakuren Group and the Fife and Drum Corps, as well as other family members and local SGI members energetically follow her lead,

The gateway to dynamic development in the new era of worldwide kosen-rufu has been opened!

How inspiring the stories of our precious women's division and young women's division members!
May a paean to life resound in the Century of Women.

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

Opening a New Era of Kosen-rufu Together

(16) Friendship Is a Precious Treasure of the Heart

To members of the future division:

Gatherings of the SGI family are the most lively and exuberant in the world!

My young friends of the future division, who have just embarked on a new school year, please forge ahead filled with hope on the new stage of endeavor that lies before you!

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The “cherry blossom front” is now moving northward. The cherry trees in Tohoku, where reconstruction is in progress, are now in bloom, radiating the light of happiness, while those in Hokkaido will soon follow suit. Spring is a season vibrant with life.

The cherry trees on the Soka University campus in Hachioji, Tokyo—including the famous Zhou Cherry Tree—also triumphantly weathered the cold of winter to bloom beautifully once again this spring. Each year, many friends from all over the world come to view the Zhou Cherry Tree, which was planted as a symbol of our friendship with the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai (1898–1976).

Good friendship is a precious treasure of the heart. It is a power source for youthful victory. It is a beacon of hope for world peace. May all of you, too, shine like the sun and exert yourselves wisely and joyfully to bring magnificent flowers of friendship to bloom.

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World-renowned jazz musician Wayne Shorter, who is one of our precious fellow members, urges: “Do not avoid confrontation with the unexpected and unknown.”

You will also be sure to encounter many things you find difficult or challenging from now. When that happens, it’s important to have the lionhearted spirit to confront them with the resolve, “I’ll try my best!” Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will give you the courage to do so. Please actively challenge yourselves in studying, reading, playing sports, and being nice to your parents, and advance cheerfully on the path to victory in a way that is true to yourself.

I am always praying earnestly for your growth and development. For you, the members of the future division, are the young successors to whom I will entrust everything.

(Translated from the April 27, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

(17) Advancing with a Shared Vow Together with Members around the World



We of the SGI have made another fresh, hope-filled departure from our glorious anniversary of May 3, Soka Gakkai Day.

On May 3 this year, I did gongyo at the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu [in Shinanomachi, Tokyo]. Solemnly placing before the Gohonzon a record of all SGI members’ names or signatures in commemoration of the Hall’s completion, I chanted daimoku for your health, happiness, and victory, as well as the eternal happiness of all our fellow members who have passed away. I also prayed strongly and deeply that the great path of kosen-rufu will open ever wider, and that capable new successors will continue to joyfully emerge all over the world.

Since the Hall’s opening last year, members from throughout Japan and more than 70 countries and territories around the globe have gathered there to offer prayers infused with their vow for kosen-rufu. This is truly wonderful.

The Soka Gakkai Joju Gohonzon, enshrined in the Hall, bears the inscription “For the Fulfillment of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu through the Compassionate Propagation of the Great Law.” Based on the spirit of compassion, we of the SGI are proudly proclaiming the correct teaching of Buddhism and spreading the great Law of peace and happiness. Herein lies the path to transforming the destiny of all humankind. Uniting in the spirit of “many in body, one in mind” and surmounting all obstacles, let’s make fresh strides forward—our advance overflowing with the benefits of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity.

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Kosen-rufu is now moving ahead with unstoppable momentum. Our hardworking men’s and women’s division members, as well as the youth, are all making tremendous efforts.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, said: “We need to be patient in our Buddhist practice. Through faith, everything will definitely move in the direction of happiness. ‘No prayer will go unanswered’ (cf. WND-1, 345), and we can overcome all problems and sufferings.” He urged us to have this firm conviction and share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with others who were suffering or seeking the correct way to live their lives.

Everything begins to change when one person practices with joy, personal initiative, and courage. As you strive with optimism and wisdom to support and encourage as many people as possible, please expand our network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth in this new era of worldwide kosen-rufu, creating beautiful oases where Buddhist connections flourish and good fortune blooms in rich profusion.

(Translated from the May 5, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

THE WISDOM FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND PEACE

SELECTED EXCERPTS OF SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

Part 1: Happiness

Chapter 3: The Practice for Transforming Our State of Life

3.6 Change Starts from Prayer

Introduction:

In this excerpt, President Ikeda lectures on Nichiren Daishonin's writing "On Prayer," in which the Daishonin declares that the prayers of a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra never go unanswered. While explaining that prayer in Nichiren Buddhism is the driving force for carrying out a correct practice, President Ikeda stresses that prayer must also be accompanied by action if we truly seek to transform our lives.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

Adapted from a lecture on Nichiren Daishonin's writing "On Prayer," published in Seikyo Shimbun, October 22, 1977.

Nichiren Daishonin writes:

The prayers offered by a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra will be answered just as an echo answers a sound, as a shadow follows a form, as the reflection of the moon appears in clear water, as a mirror collects dewdrops, as a magnet attracts iron, as amber attracts particles of dust, or as a clear mirror reflects the color of an object. (WND-1, 340)

In this passage, the Daishonin states that the prayers of the votary of the Lotus Sutra are always answered. His use of natural principles and phenomena as analogies demonstrates his strong confidence in what he is saying.

Wherever practitioners of the Lotus Sutra chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, just as an echo answers a sound and a shadow follows a form, their prayers will unfailingly produce positive results there. The Daishonin teaches that our lives are transformed—both spiritually and physically—by prayer, which in turn exerts a positive influence on our environment.

Prayer is not something abstract. Many today may regard the intangible, unseen realm of life as nothing more than a product of the imagination. But if we were to view



things only from a material perspective, then our relationships with people and things would largely appear to arise solely from the chaos of randomness. The penetrating insight of Buddhism, however, discerns the Law of life in the depths of chaos and apprehends it as the force that supports and activates all phenomena from within.

The Daishonin writes: "As life does not go beyond the moment, the Buddha expounded the blessings that come from a single moment of rejoicing [on hearing the Lotus Sutra]" (WND-1, 62). Because "life does not go beyond the moment," as he says, our focus should be on the power that emerges from within us at each moment to

support us and give fundamental direction to our lives. Prayer—namely, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—is the only way for us to confront on this fundamental level the delusions inherent in life.

It thus follows that prayer is the driving force for maintaining a correct practice and tenacious action. Nothing is as insubstantial as action without prayer. For those who neglect prayer, things may appear to go quite smoothly for a while. They may even seem very upbeat. But once faced with adversity, they tend to fall into despair, their lives as fragile as a withered tree. Lacking self-mastery, they are tossed about like leaves on the turbulent waters of society.

The path up the hill of life doesn't follow a straight line. There are successes and mistakes. Sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. With each step on our way, with every curve and corner we navigate, we grow a little bit more. In this process, prayer functions as a powerful force preventing us from becoming arrogant in victory or devastated by defeat.

That's why none are stronger than those who base themselves on prayer. Our strong, focused prayer manifests as the power of faith and practice, which in turn activates the power of the Buddha and the Law. The main player in this drama is always the human being—it is we ourselves.

Prayer produces a change within our hearts, within the depths of our lives. This profound, intangible inner change does not end with us alone [but inspires a similar change in others]. Likewise, when one community changes, it will not be limited to that community alone. Just as a single wave gives rise to countless others, change in one community will create a ripple effect of change in other communities as well.

I wish to assert that the first step toward such social change is a change in the heart of a single individual.

This is also, I believe, where the deep significance of the Daishonin's statement that "Buddhism is reason" (WND-1, 839) lies.

To return to the passage from "On Prayer" that we are studying, "sound," "form," and "clear water" correspond to our attitude in prayer, while "echo," "shadow," and "reflection of the moon" correspond to the natural way in which prayers are answered. Just as these three analogies refer to phenomena that arise in accord with natural principles, the prayers of a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra will also be definitely answered in accord with the inexorable Law of life and in accord with reason.

Prayer in Nichiren Buddhism is free of all arrogance and conceit. The very act of sitting before the Gohonzon and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo pulses with the humble spirit to transcend attachment to one's own shallow wisdom and limited experience to become one with the Law of life and the fundamental rhythm of nature and the universe, which were revealed through the Buddha's enlightened wisdom. Without being self-abasing, we concentrate all our actions into a single life moment—into our determined prayer—while recharging our lives to prepare for boundless, vibrant growth. That is the healthiest and most fulfilling state of life.

Let us chant to the Gohonzon about all of our problems in life and challenge them.

Prayer is essential. Let's never forget that everything starts from prayer. If we lose sight of prayer and fail to transform our lives in actuality, then even the most eloquent speeches and high-minded arguments will all be just empty theory, pipe dreams, and illusions. Faith and the Soka Gakkai spirit, too, arise from praying strongly and deeply about our actual situations and realities.

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, prayer by itself isn't enough. Just as an arrow flying toward its target contains the full power and strength of the archer who shot it, our prayer contains all of our efforts and actions. Prayer without action is just wishful thinking, and action without prayer will be unproductive.

It therefore would like to point out that lofty prayer arises from a lofty sense of responsibility. Serious prayer will not arise from an irresponsible or careless attitude toward work, daily living, and life itself. Those who take responsibility for every part of their lives and give their all in every endeavor will make a habit of prayer.

Living in society can be difficult, so I hope you will deal with every aspect of your lives based on strong prayer.

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3.7 Daimoku: Quality or Quantity?

Introduction:

Here, President Ikeda responds to a question from an Italian member about whether quantity or quality is more important in chanting daimoku. Pointing out that Buddhist practice is not about rules and formality, President Ikeda says that we should chant and act in a way that creates value and gives us a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From remarks at a question-and-answer session during the North Italy Representative Leaders Meeting commemorating July 3, Mentor-Disciple Day, Milan Community Center, Milan, Italy, July 3, 1992.

A 100,000-lira note is worth more than a 10,000-lira note. It goes without saying that it is preferable to have the note with the greater value. In the case of daimoku, the important thing is to chant earnestly and with strong conviction. Of course, it would be even better to have lots of 100,000-lira notes! [Laughter.] The bottom line is that both quality and quantity matter in chanting.

The principle of "responsive communion" is very important in Nichiren Buddhism. To use an analogy, when talking on the phone, if the connection is good, we'll be heard even if we speak softly, but if it's bad, then sometimes the other person won't be able to hear us even if we shout. In order for our prayers to be effective, we need to express them honestly and directly to the Gohonzon.

The Daishonin states: "What is called faith is nothing unusual" (WND-1, 1036). In other words, we can just be ourselves. He continues:

Faith means putting one's trust in the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, and the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, and chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as a woman cherishes her husband, as a man lays down his life for his wife, as parents refuse to abandon their children, or as a child refuses to leave its mother. (WND-1, 1036)

We should be honest and unpretentious when we chant to the Gohonzon. If we are suffering or feeling sad, then we should take that suffering to the Gohonzon without hiding it, expressing in our prayers what is in our hearts.

It is the Daishonin's wish that we all become happy. By coming in contact with and connecting with the life of the Daishonin [by chanting to the Gohonzon], therefore, we are certain to attain happiness. It is inconceivable that the Daishonin would fail to protect those who are striving as his emissaries to realize kosen-rufu.

Essentially, we practice the Daishonin's Buddhism for our own happiness and well-being. In chanting daimoku, too, the main thing is that we ourselves feel happy and satisfied. It's not a matter of formality; there are no rules specifying how long we have to chant and so on. While it is often helpful to set ourselves a target for the amount of daimoku we want to chant, when we're too tired or sleepy, or we find ourselves dozing off in front of the Gohonzon and just chanting out of force of habit, then it is far more valuable to get some rest and chant properly another time, when we're refreshed in body and mind.

The most important thing is that we are filled with a satisfying sense of revitalization after chanting. When we continue chanting in this way each day, we will naturally come to experience a life in which all our desires are fulfilled.



3.8 Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Enables Us to Lead the Most Meaningful Lives

Introduction:

In this excerpt, President Ikeda responds to the question of a member who asked: "When we were chanting daimoku together with you earlier, the desire and courage to realize my dreams came welling forth from my life. How can I chant daimoku with this kind of feeling and live with courage all the time?" President Ikeda also emphasizes that as long as we persevere in faith, we will be able to lead the most meaningful lives.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From remarks at a question-and-answer session during the North Italy Representative Leaders Meeting commemorating July 3, Mentor-Disciple Day, Milan Community Center, Milan, Italy, July 3, 1992.

Even one daimoku can pervade the entire universe. Truly heartfelt and determined daimoku, therefore, has the power to move everything.

To illustrate, the words "I love you" can have a completely different impact depending on whether they are said from the heart or merely as an empty gesture.

Daimoku chanted with the deep conviction that one's life is the entity of the Mystic Law, or with the resolve to dedicate one's life to spreading the Mystic Law as an emissary of the Buddha, cannot fail to resonate with the Gohonzon or reach the universe. A person who chants in this way will definitely attain a state of complete freedom.

Of course, no one becomes an expert in anything right away. It is by overcoming obstacles again and again, and continuing to press forward, that we gain a degree of expertise or mastery in a given field.

The same holds true for faith. There may be times when we give in to self-defeat and our determination wanes, or when things don't go as we'd hoped and we begin to feel anxious or fearful. But the important thing is to continue chanting daimoku, no matter what. Whether our prayers are answered right away or not, we must keep chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, without harboring any doubts. Those who maintain such faith will eventually attain the supreme path and highest pinnacle of value, and savor the conviction that everything unfolded in the very best and most meaningful way. They will build immensely fulfilling lives and come to regard everything as a source of joy and a part of their mission. Such are the workings of the Mystic Law and the power of faith.

Why is the Gohonzon important? Because, through having faith in it, we can bring forth the Gohonzon, or the state of Buddhahood, that is inherent in our own lives. The Daishonin states that the Gohonzon is found only in the faith of each one of us (cf. WND-1, 832).

We ourselves and all human beings are worthy of respect because every single individual is an entity of the Mystic Law. The Gohonzon is important above all because it enables us to manifest the Mystic Law that exists within us.

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YMD Members from Illam : We'll fight, We'll win & Shine.

The New Human Revolution

Volume 24, Chapter 3
HUMANISTIC EDUCATION



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



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Takami Kitagawa decided to stop ignoring Kazuko's school rule violations. At the

same time, she resolved not to label her a delinquent. Kitagawa became very strict with Kazuko, as an expression of genuine compassion and desire for her growth.

“Kazuko, button up your blouse.” “Wearing red gym shoes are not allowed.” Would Kazuko take these reprimands as an expression of her care? Or would they only make her resentful, and have the opposite effect? This was the risk she was taking.

At first, Kazuko just ignored her. “Get off my back!” she said, and ran out of the classroom. But Kitagawa didn't let up. Finally, Kitagawa began to see some signs of change. Kazuko stopped ignoring Kitagawa when she was reprimanded and started meeting her gaze. Kitagawa took this as a hopeful sign.

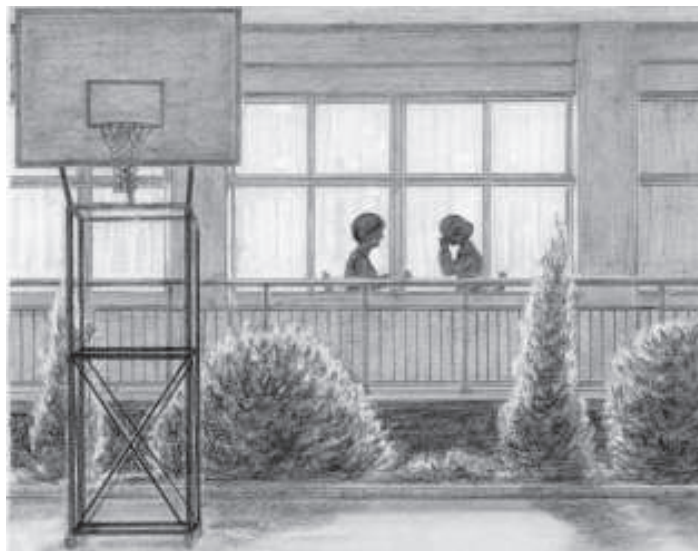
Then during one class, another teacher's thoughtless comment

about people with physical disabilities deeply hurt Kazuko. Though the teacher apologized, she couldn't let it go. The following day, she began coming late to

school. The first signs of trust that Kitagawa had nurtured were nipped in the bud.

Kitagawa was worried that all her efforts had been in vain. But if she gave up on Kazuko, what would happen to her? Kitagawa reproached herself for considering giving up and decided to stick with it. If she sincerely tried to get through to Kazuko, she couldn't fail. Trying to reach another person is really a struggle with one's own resignation.

In the middle of January, someone posing as Kazuko's guardian telephoned the school to say she had a stomachache and was staying home sick. When Kitagawa contacted Kazuko's boarding house, the guardian said that she assumed Kazuko had gone to school. Kitagawa was very worried, but the next day she came to school as if nothing had happened. When Kitagawa said she wanted to talk to her, Kazuko refused, saying: “What's the point? All your fingers are normal. You could never understand how I feel.”



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Kitagawa approached Kazuko numerous times, trying to talk to her, but Kazuko always had an excuse—“I have to eat my lunch,” “I have cleaning chores to do”—

and managed to avoid her teacher's overtures. Finally, however, Kitagawa was able to sit down and talk with her.

Kitagawa felt that merely sympathizing with Kazuko would be ineffective. She decided to directly bring

If you keep blaming your suffering on your parents, rebelling, and taking it out on others, you'll only end up making yourself more miserable!”

At first, Kazuko had refused to look at her teacher, but when Kitagawa

up the one subject that everyone else avoided—the birth defect of her hand. She was aware of the possibility that her approach might result in permanently ruining their relationship, but she had been wholeheartedly chanting so that her true intent would be communicated to Kazuko when they talked.

Their conversation began. Kitagawa looked Kazuko straight in the eye and spoke with firm conviction. “You use your hand as an excuse for everything that doesn't go your way. How long are you going to keep doing that? There are plenty of people in the world with terrible illnesses or much more challenging disabilities. Still, they all go on with their lives, making the best of things.

said these words her expression changed. Her lips began to tremble, she clenched her hands resting in her lap, and she seemed to be struggling to hold back her anger.

Kitagawa steeled herself, thinking, “I have to say everything that needs to be said, to shake her to the bottom of her soul! A half-hearted attempt is no attempt at all!”

She continued: “Your hand may not be perfect, but it is part of who you are now. Your fingers may be shorter than others, but you can still write and use chopsticks well. Don't let your disability define who you are.

“From today, I want to help you challenge yourself to become brave enough to let everyone see your hand. You must become happier than your hand has ever made you sad, happier than anyone else. I want everyone in my class to become happy, but most of all, I want you to become truly happy.”

Kazuko's eyes welled up with tears, which streamed down her cheeks and dropped onto her skirt.

Outside, it had already grown dark.



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The following day, Kitagawa said to herself, “Now the real work begins!” When she got to school, Kazuko came to the teachers room to see her.

She shyly said to Kitagawa, “Teacher, thank you for yesterday,” and meekly handed her a letter. Kitagawa immediately read it. In the letter, Kazuko had written: “I know I let you down. I know that I disobeyed you more times than I can count. Yet, you continued to believe in me and have genuinely worried and cared about me. I was overjoyed when you said you wanted me to become much happier than anyone else.

“Please don’t give up on me, hopeless as I am, and keep being strict with me. I realize now that you are the first person other than my parents who cares about me. I’m very happy. I’m truly glad you’re in my life.”

From that time on, Kazuko began to change. Kitagawa began to see her smiling brightly. The thick barrier that had stood between her and her classmates gradually came down.

Finally graduation day arrived. Kitagawa wished Kazuko all the best and encouraged her to become truly happy.



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After talking with a group of representative students from the Soka schools, Shin’ichi made his way to the first gongyo meeting of the Tokyo education

department, which was held from 7:30 p.m. in the Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall of the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, on February 6, 1977.

Shin’ichi felt that education would have a crucial role to play in making the 21st century a century of peace, a century of life, and a century of humanity. As such, there were many things he wanted to say, but in his speech that day he decided to concentrate on the basics of faith.

When Shin’ichi arrived at the hall, the scheduled event was almost over. His appearance was met with rousing applause.

“Good evening! Welcome and thank you for attending today despite this cold weather.” After saying that, he chanted daimoku three times with those gathered.

Then he asked that the table and chair that had been placed in the hall for him be moved forward, nearer to the members. “I’d like to speak to you informally today. Please move in closer.”

The members all sat around Shin’ichi.

The day after graduation, Kazuko came back to school to give Kitagawa a long letter. It was filled with her deep appreciation and determination.

The exchanges between Kitagawa and Kazuko continued even after graduation. Kazuko decided to become a nurse, and was able to get a job at a hospital, which allowed her to work while she attended school. Eventually, she realized her dream to become a nurse, and has led a happy life undeterred by the birth defect of her hand.

No child lacks a mission. The foundation of true humanistic education is the unshakable conviction that each person has a noble mission in life.

The experiences of Kitagawa and other young educators were eventually collected and published in a second volume of *Stories of Dedicated Teachers*. When Shin’ichi Yamamoto saw it, he felt that Soka education was vibrantly alive in the struggles of these young educators. He offered a sincere prayer: “I applaud these young educators and their students, including Kazuko. May they all be strong, happy, and victors in life!”

“One of the major events of the 20th century was the first space flight. Eight years ago (in 1969), the Apollo 11 spacecraft landed on the moon, and Neil Armstrong became the first human being in history to set foot on the moon’s surface. I’m sure you’re all familiar with what he said at that time: ‘That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.’

“Although this example is from a different context, the same thing can be said about our daily activities. Even though each of our individual victories for kosen-rufu may seem small, each is an unprecedented step to building lasting peace and happiness for all humanity. They are the beginning of a new era in human history.

“The Apollo 11 spacecraft was carried to the moon by a Saturn V rocket. And pioneering rocket scientist Dr. Wernher von Braun (1912–77) played a critical role in the development of the Saturn rocket.”

“While in school, he received failing marks in both mathematics and physics, but once he discovered that without mastering these two subjects he would never have the skills to be able to invent a space rocket, he began to seriously study.”



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Shin’ichi Yamamoto continued talking about the rocket scientist.

Wernher von Braun was born in 1912 in the eastern German city of Wirsitz (present-day Wyrzysk, Poland). As a boy, he was fascinated by the idea of traveling into outer space.

“The remarkable thing about von Braun is that from a young age he was determined to invent a rocket that would make space travel possible, and he remained dedicated to realizing that dream throughout his life.

“At the age of 12, he got into trouble for conducting an experiment in which he attached fireworks to a toy wagon. He was given a stern scolding from his father for this misadventure. But still he didn’t give up. He continued experimenting with rockets even though he got into terrible trouble each time.

“While in school, he received failing marks in both mathematics and physics, but once he discovered that without mastering these two subjects he would

never have the skills to be able to invent a space rocket, he began to seriously study. He eventually went on to graduate from university and began work on developing rockets.

“Von Braun’s tenacity, his refusal to give up under any circumstances, was what enabled him to eventually realize his dream of space travel. Persevering, always pressing forward in spite of every obstacle—that is the source of success and the driving force for victory.”

Von Braun’s life was deeply impacted by the dark days of the Nazi regime that followed. In order to continue his research as a rocket scientist, his only option was to work for the German military. Regardless, he held fast to his dream of space travel.

“Von Braun’s tenacity, his refusal to give up under any circumstances, was what enabled him to eventually realize his dream of space travel. Persevering, always pressing forward in spite of every obstacle—that is the source of success and the driving force for victory.”



Humanistic Education 50

Though Nazi Germany had developed a new weapon, their impending defeat had become inevitable. Because he and his colleagues were involved in the secret production and development of the rocket technology

used to create this new weapon, von Braun knew that their lives were in danger, and he began planning their surrender to the Americans. When von Braun turned himself over he was moved to the United States, where he continued to make significant contributions to the advancement of rocket science there. Yet, he remained unsatisfied until he was able to fully realize his dream of space travel.

After Apollo 11 had landed safely on the moon (in 1969) and was on its way back to Earth, von Braun stated at a press conference: "Today my long years of hard work, hopes, and dreams have all come to fruition. But the astronauts are not back on

Earth yet. I cannot forget that. It's still too early to celebrate."

Through this story of von Braun's tenacious efforts to develop a rocket for space travel, Shin'ichi wanted to convey the following point: "The goal of our faith is for each individual to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime. For that, we must maintain our focus. We need to keep urging

ourselves on toward the goal, striving harder today than yesterday, harder tomorrow than today, while continuing to polish and deepen our faith, and remaining steadfastly dedicated to our Buddhist practice.

"In the final chapter of our lives each of us should be able to say to ourselves with confidence, 'I gave it my all. I have no regrets. I'm truly glad that I'm a Soka Gakkai member. I have thoroughly enjoyed my life.'

"Von Braun dedicated his life to the adventure of space travel. Our faith is also an adventure of opening the door to the inner microcosm of life, a journey to challenge and seek within. Brimming with a spirit of adventure and fearlessness, let's vibrantly advance with courage along our chosen path!"

*Brimming with a spirit of
adventure and fearlessness, let's
vibrantly advance with courage
along our chosen path!"*



Humanistic Education 51

Shin'ichi then changed the subject to a consideration of why Christianity developed into a universal religion.

"One reason is that Christianity, influenced by Greek philosophy, had the ability to transcend narrow ethnic and cultural boundaries in both its way of

propagation and its precepts, enabling it to become a universal teaching."

When a religion is restricted to one people or nation, or when the cultural trappings, customs, or habits of a country take precedence over or dominate the universality of the teachings, it will be prevented from developing into a world religion.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province" (WND-1, 1117) because he wished to stress the importance of the people of each region taking their particular circumstances and cultural factors into account when they propagate his teachings.

Nichiren Buddhism is a religion for all humankind that teaches the value and dignity of life. It must never become a narrow "Japanese religion." As such, there's no reason to remain restricted by Japanese culture, customs, or habits.

The core of the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism is having faith in the fundamental law of the universe, and putting our practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo first and making the Gohonzon our foundation. It is to be

awakened to our identity as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and dedicate our lives to the shared mission of mentor and disciple to realize kosen-rufu.

Shin'ichi continued: "Another reason that Christianity spread around the world is that it reached out to the sick, the poor, the sinners, and all those suffering in society's depths, carrying out its struggle among the people."

Extending a hand of assistance to people who are suffering the most is the way to open the path of happiness for all. The joy of a single individual whose life has been revitalized creates ripples of sympathy that spread far and wide. People are the foundation of society. Talking with others and gaining their trust and support is the way to establish a firm and unshakable foundation for enabling a teaching to flourish.

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Humanistic Education 52

Shin'ichi explained that it was inevitable that Christians would face persecution by the authorities because of the religion's appeal to the suffering masses. This became the starting point of its propagation efforts.

"However, what is interesting to note is that with each persecution, there was a dramatic increase in its base of support among the people. Looking back, we can see that the Soka Gakkai's advancement of kosen-

rufu has also been marked by a series of persecutions. Founding President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi died in prison as a martyr for his beliefs, and second president Josei Toda spent two years of his life in prison as well. The Gakkai was, for all practical purposes, devastated and in a state of virtual collapse. Nevertheless, genuine disciples once more gathered around President Toda and together were able to reconstruct the Gakkai. Within their conviction in faith we can see this invincible spirit to triumph.

"The spirit of the Soka Gakkai is to always boldly face adversity and steadily advance. As long as this spirit remains, there will be growth and victory.

"To put it another way, the existence of adversity is the springboard for victory that enables us to bring forth our true potential."

Shin'ichi went on to explain that although Christianity developed into a universal religion, as the temporal power of the Church waxed in the Middle Ages, its focus shifted toward preserving its prerogatives as an institution, to the extent that there were times it dominated and even subjugated people.

"The role of the Church is to be on the side of the people and should not become an obstacle between

them and God. This was the conviction that motivated Martin Luther's (1483-1546) call for reform.

"Further, the relation of the Church and the people should be that after practitioners gather they should then go out among the people and strive to make contributions to the welfare of others and society, preserving a dynamic relationship between practitioners and society. I want you all to remember that this formula of coming together and then dispersing is the fundamental principle for inspiring faith, elevating the spirit, and promoting a religion's growth."

The key to victory is the persevering struggle to continue to work with and among the everyday lives of the people.



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Shin'ichi Yamamoto emphasized that in order for the Soka Gakkai to continue developing, it is vital to keep the fundamentals of Buddhism and the original spirit of Nichiren Daishonin sharply in focus, while remaining true to the commitment to work for humanity and staying firmly on the side of the people at all times.

He also called on education department

members to ensure that the Soka Gakkai maintain the spirit for genuine religious reform and its identity as a movement dedicated to human revolution, with each individual playing a valuable role and significantly contributing to society.

In closing, he stated: "Our founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, second president Josei Toda, and most of the pioneer members in the early days of the Soka Gakkai were educators. As such, it is my hope that in the second phase of kosen-rufu the members of the education department will be vanguards in the movement to realize peace and a humanistic culture throughout the world. I sincerely pray that each of you, who are upholding this spirit, will become a proud and shining pillar of our movement who can accomplish the work of a thousand people."

Thunderous applause reverberated throughout the hall, expressing the members' agreement.

As the great author and humanitarian Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) wrote: "Religious teaching, that is, the explanation of the purpose and meaning of life, should

be the basis of any education." This does not mean bringing religion into the classroom.

It is vital that the foundation of education be based on a holistic view of humanity and a sound philosophy of life that aims to realize the true happiness of each individual. Buddhism teaches this. It is also essential to believe in the potential of children and possess a firm will and determination to dedicate oneself to their happiness and serve their needs. A sense of mission based on a religious teaching is the source of a powerful resolve to work for the happiness of every child. That's why Shin'ichi poured his life into encouraging the members of the education department so that they could strengthen their faith.

Shin'ichi attended the Tokyo No. 3 Headquarters (encompassing Tokyo's Ota and Shinagawa wards) Women's Division and Young Women's Division Education Department Training Course held on March 30 at a center in Makiguchi Park in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Recognizing that time waits for no one, he knew that now was the time to strive to achieve all that he had set out to do for the sake of the future. If he did not give it his all, he'd regret it for the rest of his life. Shin'ichi wholeheartedly threw himself into each challenge.



Humanistic Education 54

At the training course, Shin'ichi spoke about the significance of the actual place where the practice of education is carried out: "The Daishonin writes: 'Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect; since the person is worthy of respect, the land is sacred'

(WND-1, 1097). Upholding the supreme Law makes the person who upholds it worthy of respect. Since the person who upholds it is worthy, so is the place where they're at.

"The Daishonin's Buddhism teaches respect for life and the ultimate form of human revolution. It's a great philosophy of humanistic education. As practitioners of this philosophy, you are the foremost teachers of humanistic education. Wherever you may be—whether at school, at home, or in your communities—is the ideal place for carrying out humanistic education."

Shin'ichi believed that it was the noble mission not only of education department members but of all Soka Gakkai members to be sources of inspiration, hope, and courage in life for everyone in their environment, drawing out the untapped potential of each individual and walking along the path of happiness with them.

In other words, wherever Soka Gakkai members are should be a "classroom" for humanistic education. And, Shin'ichi wished to emphasize, the education department members were the forerunners in that effort.

At the end of the training course, he said: "No effort will succeed unless you really 'dedicate yourself,' as in the title of your collected experiences, *Stories of Dedicated Teachers*. Dedicating yourself to something means to courageously take action. It means to be in earnest, utterly determined to succeed. At such times you break through the shell of the ego and transform your life. Let's all work together to create an epic drama of human revolution!"

Based on Shin'ichi's encouragement, the education department members boldly set forth to create a new era. This initiated a groundswell of humanistic education giving rise to a century of peace and life, which spread to every corner of Japan.

Today, many education department members are regarded as pillars of trust within their local communities. They have continued to make contributions, even after retiring as teachers.

The sun-like light of education dispels the darkness looming over humanity and illuminates a vibrant future.

(This concludes "Humanistic Education," chapter 3 of volume 24 of *The New Human Revolution*.)

BUDDHIST CONCEPTS

Shakubuku : Enabling People to Reveal Their True Potential

"The Lotus Sutra itself provides a model for shakubuku in the person of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who would bow deeply before each person he encountered, telling them he deeply revered them because they possessed the Buddha nature."

The purpose and goal of Buddhism is people's happiness. The inner life of each of us is rich with untapped possibilities, deep spiritual reserves of wisdom, courage, energy and creativity. The unique beauty and wonder of each human being is that we give form and expression to

these potentialities in endlessly varied ways, according to the particularities of our character, culture, personality and passion. The aim of Buddhism is to enable people to become aware of and bring forth the boundless potential of their lives. Buddhism refutes the sense of powerless-

ness we may feel in the face of suffering and new challenges, enabling us to tap our inner resources to transform any source of suffering and find fulfillment and purpose.

Within the broad tradition of Buddhism, it

is the Lotus Sutra that most clearly defines this profound potential and clarifies that it exists equally within the lives of all people. It emphasizes that the purpose of Buddhist teachings is to enable all people to connect with that in the here and now. The Lotus Sutra is also notable for its "one

vehicle teaching," which embraces all and expresses the ultimate truth of Buddhism--that all people can attain Buddhahood and have the right to be happy.

Buddhist texts describe two basic methods of expounding this truth. The first, termed shōju in Japanese, is to share this view of life without directly challenging the other person's existing beliefs. The second, shakubuku, is a more assertive expression of the truth and a challenge to views which diminish human life.

Shakubuku is a practice for others, a concrete exercise of compassion and belief in their Buddha nature. It is an act of the highest respect for others and one that requires courage--to speak in-depth about the teachings of Buddhism. Practicing solely for oneself might seem an easier option, but this is not the real road to enlightenment.

By the 13th century, some 1,500 years after the death of Shakyamuni, Buddhism had become well-established in Japan but had split into numerous contending schools, each claiming to represent the true teaching of Shakyamuni. Some had also become co-opted into the existing oppressive and corrupt power structures.

It was in this context that Nichiren (1222-82), the founder of the Buddhism practiced by members of the SGI, lived. After long study of the various Buddhist teachings, he began to vigorously refute those doctrines that he saw deviated from the life-affirming teachings of the Lotus Sutra. He continued to do this in the face of severe persecution from the established powers, out of his conviction that misguided philosophies which encouraged passivity and a sense of human powerlessness were the primary cause of suf-

fering and social discord.

The portrayals of Nichiren's famously impassioned efforts have sometimes obscured the fact that shakubuku is first and foremost about open dialogue. Nichiren always remained committed to dialogue, declaring, "So long as persons of wisdom do not prove my teachings to be false, I will never yield." His opponents, refusing

to risk debate, instead plotted his persecution. It is a natural tendency to put limits on what we believe we are capable of and what we can expect out of life. In a sense, these walls are the means by which we define ourselves. We can easily become caged in by narrow views of our self and the world, and it can be uncomfortable and even threatening when this limited sense of our self is challenged. Buddhism



Shakubuku is a practice for others, a concrete exercise of compassion and belief in their Buddha nature. It is an act of the highest respect for others and one that requires courage--to speak in-depth about the teachings of Buddhism.

fering and social discord. continuously challenges our understanding of who we think we are.

to risk debate, instead plotted his persecution.

The Lotus Sutra itself provides a model for shakubuku in the person of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, who would bow deeply before each person he encountered, telling them he deeply revered them because they possessed the Buddha nature. His actions, however, were initially met with ridicule and aggression. Directly addressing the Buddha nature of others, what Bodhisattva Never Disparaging ultimately refuted in the people he encountered was their limited view of themselves.

The spirit of shakubuku, however, is never the shallow, argumentative concern with proving oneself or one's views superior to another's. It is the spirit of sustained compassion to enable another person to believe in the great, unrealized potential of their life.

[Courtesy April 2011 SGI Quarterly]

It is a natural tendency to put limits on what we believe we are capable of and what we can expect out of life. In a sense, these walls are the means by which we define ourselves. We can easily become caged in by narrow views of our self and the world, and it can be uncomfortable and even threatening when this limited sense of our self is challenged. Buddhism continuously challenges our understanding of who we think we

.. Continued from Page 4 (Happiness)

3.9 Develop a Strong Inner Core

Introduction:

Here, President Ikeda responds to the concern of a future division member who was failing to make any headway in solving a difficult problem even after having decided to challenge it by earnestly doing gongyo every day. He explains that in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, no prayer goes unanswered, but that the benefits we accrue from faith in the Gohonzon are sometimes conspicuous and sometimes inconspicuous. So, even if we do not see concrete results immediately from our practice, it's important that we continue to persevere in chanting and making efforts. If we do so, he says, we will be able to move in the direction that is the very best for us.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

Adapted from the dialogue Discussion on Youth, published in Japanese in March 1999.

In Nichiren Buddhism, it is said that no prayer goes unanswered. But this is very different from having every wish instantly gratified as if by magic. If you chant to win the lottery tomorrow, or score 100 percent on a test tomorrow without having studied, the odds are small that it will happen. Nonetheless, viewed from a deeper, longer-term perspective, all your prayers serve to propel you in the direction of happiness.

Sometimes our immediate prayers are realized, and sometimes they aren't. When we look back later, however, we can say with absolute conviction that everything turned out for the best.

Buddhism accords with reason. Our faith is manifested in our daily lives, in our actual circumstances. Our prayers cannot be answered if we fail to make efforts to realize them.

Furthermore, it takes a great deal of time and effort to overcome sufferings of a karmic nature, whose roots lie deep in causes we made in the past. There is a big difference, for example, in the time it takes for a scratch to heal and that required to recover from a serious internal disease. Some illnesses can be treated with medication, while others require surgery. The same applies to changing our karma through faith and practice.

In addition, each person's level of faith and individual karma differ. By chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, however, we can bring forth a powerful sense of hope and move our lives in a positive, beneficial direction without fail.

It's unrealistic to think we can achieve anything of substance overnight. If we were to have every prayer answered instantly, it would lead to our ruin. We'd grow lazy and complacent.

You may have a passing interest in painting, for example. But if you think you can simply dash off some paintings, suddenly hold an exhibition and have your work snapped up by art collectors, you are hardly being realistic.

Suppose you spend all your money playing rather than working, and are now destitute. Do you think someone giving you a large sum of money would contribute to your happiness in the long term?

It would be like making superficial repairs to a crumbling building without addressing the root problem. To create something fine and solid, it would be better to build anew from the foundation up. The purpose of our Buddhist practice is to transform our lives on a fundamental level, not superficially. It enables us to develop a strong inner core and solidly accumulate indestructible good fortune.0

There are two kinds of benefit that derive from faith in the Gohonzon: conspicuous and inconspicuous. Conspicuous benefit is the obvious, visible benefit of being protected or being quickly able to surmount a problem when it arises—be it an illness or a conflict in personal relationships.

Inconspicuous benefit, on the other hand, is less tangible. It is good fortune accumulated slowly but steadily, like the growth of a tree or the rising of the tide, which results in the forging of a rich and expansive state of life. We might not discern any change from day to day, but as the years pass, it will be clear that we've become happy, that we've grown as individuals. This is inconspicuous benefit.

When you chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, you will definitely gain the best result, regardless of whether that benefit is conspicuous or inconspicuous.

No matter what happens, the important thing is to continue chanting. If you do so, you'll become happy without fail. Even if things don't work out the way you hoped or imagined, when you look back later, you'll understand on a much more profound level that it was the best possible result. This is tremendous inconspicuous benefit.

Conspicuous benefit, for instance, might allow you to eat your fill today but leave you worrying about your next meal. As an example of inconspicuous benefit, on the other hand, you may have only a meager meal today, but you are moving steadily toward a life in which you will never have to worry about having enough to eat. The latter is a far more attractive prospect, I think, and is the essence of practicing Nichiren Buddhism.

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3.10 Gongyo and Daimoku: Our Daily "Spiritual Workout"

Introduction:

In this excerpt, President Ikeda responds to the concern of future division members who feel guilty when they don't do gongyo. Explaining that the purpose of Buddhism is to free us, not to constrain us, he says that the spirit to keep challenging oneself, even if only a little, is truly admirable.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

Adapted from the dialogue Discussions on Youth, published in Japanese in March 1999.

As long as we have faith in the Gohonzon, we are not going to suffer punishment or negative consequences from missing gongyo, so please put your mind at ease. Nichiren Daishonin says that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo even once is a source of limitless benefit. So imagine the immense benefit you will accumulate when you continue earnestly to do gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo morning and evening. It is something we do for our own sake; it is a right, not an obligation.

The Gohonzon will never demand that you chant to it. Having appreciation for being able to chant to the Gohonzon is the heart of faith. The more you exert yourselves in faith—in doing gongyo and chanting daimoku—the more you stand to gain.

Also, Nichiren Daishonin writes nothing about the specific amount of daimoku we should chant. It is entirely up to each individual's awareness. Faith is a lifelong pursuit, so there's no need to be unnecessarily nervous or anxious about how much you chant.

You don't have to put unnecessary pressure on yourselves. Buddhism exists to free people, not to restrain them. Chanting every day, even a little bit, is important. For instance, the food you eat each day turns into energy that fuels your bodies. Your studies, too, become a valuable asset when you make steady efforts on a daily basis.

Our lives are created from what we do and how we live every day. For that reason, we should strive to live each day so as to continually improve ourselves. The driving force for this is our morning and evening gongyo.

Exerting ourselves in the practice of gongyo each day amounts to what we might call a "spiritual workout." It purifies our lives, gets our "motors" running, and sets us on the right track. It gets our bodies and our minds moving and sets a good rhythm for the day.

It is important to have the spirit to sit down in front of the Gohonzon. The spirit to keep challenging yourself to pray before the Gohonzon every day, to chant daimoku, even if only little, is truly admirable.

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3.11 Daimoku Reaches the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions

Introduction:

Here, President Ikeda responds to a question from a member about the effectiveness of reciting passages from the Lotus Sutra and chanting daimoku in a language one doesn't understand. He stresses that whether we understand the words or not, they are the language of the realm of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They are understood by the Gohonzon and communicated to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the universe, and enable us to attain great happiness, fulfillment, and joy.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From a speech delivered at an SGI-USA Youth Training Session, Malibu Training Center, California, February 20, 1990.

I would like to address the question of whether there is any value in reciting sutra passages and chanting daimoku without understanding their meaning.

Of course, it is better if you understand their meaning. That will strengthen your faith in the Mystic Law. But if you understand and yet fail to practice, it won't get you anywhere. Moreover, you cannot understand all of the profound significance of the Law through reason alone.

Birds and dogs, for example, have their own language, their own speech. People do not understand it, but other birds and dogs do. There are many comparable examples among humans as well—codes, abbreviations, or foreign languages that are comprehended by experts or native speakers but unintelligible to others. Married couples also sometimes have their own language that only they understand! [Laughter]

In the same way, the language of gongyo and daimoku reaches the Gohonzon and the realms of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three existences. We might call it the language of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. That is why our voices reciting the sutra and chanting daimoku before the Gohonzon reach all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly deities, whether we understand what we are saying or not. They hear it and say in response, "Excellent, excellent!" rejoicing and praising us. The entire universe envelops us in the light of happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches that through reciting the sutra and chanting daimoku, we can reach an elevated state of life in which, while engaged in our daily activities, we freely traverse the cosmos. In "Reply to Sairen-bo," the Daishonin writes: "Those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. What a truly inexpressible joy it is!" (WND-1, 313).

When we chant before the Gohonzon, the door to our inner microcosm instantly opens to the macrocosm of the entire universe, and we savor a serene and boundless happiness, as if gazing out over the entire cosmos. We feel a deep fulfillment and joy along with a feeling of supreme confidence and self-mastery, as if we hold everything in the palm of our hands. The microcosm enfolded by the macrocosm reaches out to enfold the macrocosm in its own embrace.

The Daishonin writes in "Letter to Niike": "When nurtured by the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo . . . , [we] are free to soar into the sky of the true aspect of all phenomena" (WND-1, 1030).

In "On Offerings for Deceased Ancestors," he also says: "Though he himself is like the wisteria vine, because he clings to the pine that is the Lotus Sutra, he is able to ascend the mountain of perfect enlightenment. Because he has the wings of the single vehicle [Mystic Law] to rely upon, he can soar into the sky of Tranquil Light [Buddhahood]" (WND-1, 821).

Just as we might climb the highest mountain peak to gaze down on the bright, clear scene of the world below, we can climb the mountain of perfect enlightenment, or supreme wisdom, the Daishonin says. We can attain a state of eternal bliss, experiencing moment after moment the infinite expanse and depth of life, as if soaring through the universe and savoring the sight of myriad beautiful stars, blazing comets, and glittering galaxies.

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

Nepal SGI Holds Annual Meeting; Sponsors Symposiums on Environment and Peace



On October 17, SGI-Nepal held its 20th Annual Meeting in Kathmandu. The meeting was attended by some 1,000 members as well as their friends and family members.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda sent a message in which he stated that by basing their lives on the Buddhist practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, SGI-Nepal members can overcome any obstacle and, in doing so, become a source of hope for others who are also struggling.

At the meeting, plays, traditional dances and songs were performed by around 100 Nepal SGI members including some who had traveled from Ilam District, one of Nepal's eastern-most districts, some from Pokhara, its second largest city, Hetauda the south of the country and and some 10 others from the Buddha's Birthplace, Lumbini.

The Sagarmatha Award was presented to Ms. Durga Rajbahak and the members received Ornamant of Great Vow on

the occasion are Mr. Arjun Rakhhal, Ms. Matina Shakya, Ms. Manisha Maharjan, Mr. Rajan Bikram Thapa, Dr. Krishna Sharma, Ms. Kamla Dawadee, Ms. Basanti Lama, Mr. Musang Magar, Mr. Ram Mami Aryal and Mr. Dinesh Yolmo.

Makalu was announced as the best district of the year 2014 and Nilgiri won the District football tournament trophy.

SGI Director Mr. Ong Bon Chai said that our noble mission as true Bodhisattvas of the Earth is none other than to spread Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and to realize Kosen rufu. With the completion of the Hall of Great Vow for Kosen rufu, it is now the time for us to propagate Nichiren



Buddhism to all people throughout the world. He added. Then Mr Chai conferred SGI peace and friendship award to the leaders of Nepal SGI for their continuous support and efforts to widening kosenrufu. The award was received by Mr. Prabal Kiran Manandhar, Ms. Naina Ranjit, Ms. Sabina Shrestha, Ms. Yurika Shakya and Mr. Navin Manandhar.

On October 16, the day before the Annual Meeting, Nepal SGI sponsored a poetry symposium focused on environmental themes "uniting poetic hearts to save Bagmati". The symposium, which featured 15 presenters, was held outdoors on the banks of the Bagmati River that runs through Kathmandu. Both the surrounding area and the river itself have been affected by severe water pollution.

On October 18, at the SGI-Nepal Peace Center in Kathmandu, a peace symposium was held, focusing on themes from SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's 2014 peace proposal titled "Value Creation for Global Change: Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies." The symposium was sponsored by SGI-Nepal and attended by some 180 people. In his speech, Chief Secretary Paudyal commended Mr. Ikeda's clarity in depicting the reality of various issues including environmental protection, the abolition of nuclear weapons and the need to promote the rights of women.

In his remarks, Prof. Dr. Kedar Bhakta Mathema, formerly vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University and ambassador of



The peace symposium at Nepal SGI Peace Centre

SGI-Nepal has been actively involved in the Bagmati Cleaning Program and, in December 2013, opened the Lotusbari garden which was created by cleaning up an area of the river bank.

Nepal to Japan, emphasized the role of value-creating education in the fostering of capable youth who can empathize with others and respect cultural differences.

Guests included National Poet of Nepal Madhav Prasad Ghimire and Chief Secretary of the Government of Nepal Leela Mani Paudyal.



The poetry symposium at Lotusbari

Treasures of the Heart

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

A Relationship like a Bow and Arrow

When the month of April welcomes spring, I feel a sense of warmth and tranquility in my heart. I feel especially this way when I see a primary school child going to an entrance ceremony, being led by the hand by the mother, is clad in a kimono for the occasion, as the cherry blossoms fall on their shoulders. The scene is picturesque and even lyrically poetic. My heart is rent with pain, though, when I think of those children who do not have parents.

As busy as I have been of late, I have tried to take time out of my schedule, as much as possible, to visit the primary, junior and senior high schools as well as the university which I founded. I say especially to the junior and senior high school students that study means not to ignore their weak subjects and that violence is the last thing that should take place in an educational institution.

Recently there was a shocking incident in which a 20-year-old prep-school student bludgeoned his parents to death with a metal baseball bat. It is not too much to say that this incident chilled the hearts of all parents throughout the country. The people's concern about this tragedy was so great that for the first trial held in March, the observers, whose number was ten times the capacity of the courtroom, stood in long lines for admission in front of the courthouse. Due to the crisis in the field of education which has worsened in recent years, many parents and teachers must have felt tremendous pressure, because this could have happened to anyone.

One should not talk about this kind of incident lightly, because any problem which results from trouble in the home is underlain by complex reasons and situations within the domestic life of the

persons involved, which other people can never really understand. But when I observe the circumstances of this particular incident, at least one thing seems obviously clear to me. This is, the fact that the rift between the parents had created a deep scar in the mind of the young man. Because of this tragedy, I am one of those persons who reconfirmed the thought that these days, when the people's minds are so barren, the healthy bond between wife and husband is the last and the greatest breakwater which protects and nurtures the minds of children.

One woman once asked me how to interpret the following passage in Nichiren Daishonin's writings: "A woman is like water, which takes on the shape of its container. A woman is like an arrow, which is fitted to the bow. A woman is like a ship, which is dependent on its rudder. Therefore, if her husband is a thief, a woman will become a thief..." Her question was: "Even though the wife and husband are a couple, each has his or her own independent personality. How can a husband be such a decisive influence on his wife?"

I answered her question this way: "Well, I think what Nichiren Daishonin is referring to is love, or rather, a deep sense of trust between wife and husband. He states in another writing: 'It is the power of the bow that determines the flight of the arrow, the might of the dragon that controls the movement of the clouds, and the strength of the wife that guides the actions of her husband.' Here, Nichiren Daishonin teaches us about the vital role the wife plays. I think, therefore, that when each individual of a couple, whether the role played is that of an arrow or a bow, fulfils

his or her role, the couple is able to enjoy an ideal relationship and become closer together in the bond of marriage."

In our country, the deep relationship between wife and husband is often likened to that between a pair of lovebirds, an imaginary pair of male and female birds, each with one eye and one wing, who always fly together side by side, or to a branch of a tree connected to a branch of another tree, both sharing the same grain. Whenever I think of the wife-and-husband relationship, I am reminded of one of the characters depicted in Tolstoy's masterpiece *War and Peace*, Natasha.

A vivacious and attractive daughter of the nobility, Natasha severed her ties with people of brilliant social standing after her marriage and became a wife and a mother imbued with the fragrance of Russian soil. What Natasha became after her marriage was completely different to what she had been before, but she spent each day with confidence and pride. Her existence was supported by the profound bond of trust she had with her husband, Pierre.

In opposition to the suppressive rule of the Czar, Pierre was an active member of a secret association working against the regime. One day, when Pierre was engaged in a heated discussion with his friends in his study, Natasha came into the room. Tolstoy describes the scene:

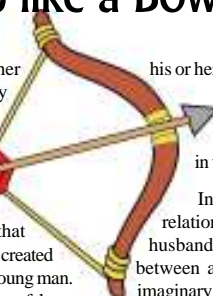
Natasha, who had come in during the conversation, looked joyfully at her husband. It was not what he was saying that pleased her- that did not even interest her, for it seemed to her

that it was all extremely simple and that she had known it a long time (it seemed so to her because she knew that it sprang from Pierre's whole soul), but it was his animated and enthusiastic appearance that made her glad.

The literary giant that he is, Tolstoy skilfully and exquisitely sketches his character. It is not such issues as whether or not women should be confined to the home or whether they should be discouraged from taking any interest in social problems that Tolstoy conveyed through the character of Natasha. To Natasha these problems were "all extremely simple and she had known them a long time".

The confidence she had came from a far deeper source, that is her belief in, and understanding of, Pierre's heart and soul. Natasha was able to realise that to know a man's heart is the greatest endeavour in life. I think that very few other literary works portray the bond of wife and husband as beautifully and as impressively as this one.

We realise that now, more than ever, there is an urgent need for a healthy family life based on the strong bond of wife and husband, especially when we view recent incidents such as the baseball-bat murder, the rapid increase in violence in junior and senior high schools, and violence at home. Of course, I understand that this problem is now too extensive and deeprooted to cope with only in the home, but I sincerely hope that the members of each family will try their best to build a firm foundation, becoming an oasis in a desert or a shelter in a wasteland, in which people can enjoy peace of mind.



NOVEMBER				NSGI Monthly Meeting Schedule				DECEMBER			
Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	Date	Time	Meeting	Venue				
Nov 1	08:00	Himchuli Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC	Dec 5	17:00	Fri Peace Prayer	NPC				
Nov 7	17:30	All Leaders Meeting/FPP	NPC	Dec 6	08:00	Annapurna Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC				
Nov 8	08:00	New Era District Zadankai Meeting	District	Dec 13	08:00	New Era District Zadankai Meeting	District				
Nov 15	11:00	Leaders Training	NPC	Dec 20	11:00	All Leaders Meeting	NPC				
Nov 16-21		All District Divisional Meeting	Member's Home	Dec 21-26		All District Divisional Meeting	Member's Home				
Nov 22	08:00	District Study Meeting	District	Dec 27	08:00	District Gosho Meeting	District				
Nov 24		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District	Dec 29		Monday Fighting Daimoku	District				
Nov 29	08:00	Divisional Meeting	NPC								

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