



THE NSGI TIMES



Living the GOSHO

Mentor and Disciple Are Eternally United

With regard to believing in the Lotus Sutra, I [Nichiren] am the foremost sage in Jambudvīpa [the entire world]. My name resounds throughout the pure lands of the ten directions, and heaven and earth no doubt know it. If [one declares oneself to be] Nichiren's disciple, I do not think that evil demons of any kind can claim ignorance of my name.

From "The Good Medicine for All Ills" (WND-1, 938).

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- Nichiren Shōnin

The Mystic Law is the fundamental law governing life and the universe. The names of all dedicated practitioners of this Law will resound throughout the Buddha lands of the ten directions.

When we declare ourselves to be disciples of Nichiren Daishonin and champions of Soka, even "evil demons" will become our allies. Linked by the bonds of mentor and disciple, all of us who are working for kosen-rufu can forever travel the path of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity throughout the three existences—past, present, and future. Those who have exerted themselves in faith with sincere devotion will definitely win in the end.

(Translated from the June 21, 2013, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

Applauding Our Men's and Women's Division Group Leaders

Inspiring people can be found among the most humble of ordinary citizens. Especially, the efforts of many wise and courageous women—unsung heroes who speak out for justice—are a powerful driving force for building a peaceful society. These are points on which the Australian peace scholar Stuart Rees and I found deep agreement.

The SGI is filled with the shining presence of such genuine heroes of the people all around the world.

I would particularly like to express my deepest respect and gratitude to the men's and women's division group leaders, who are striving day after day on the front lines of our movement for kosen-rufu to pave the way forward for fresh development and victories. Thank you for your constant efforts!

Nichiren Daishonin writes:

In this entire country of Japan, I am the only one who has been chanting Nam-myōhō-rengyō. I am like the single speck of dust that marks the beginning of Mount Sumeru or the single drop of dew that spells the start of the great ocean. Probably two people, three people, ten people, a hundred people will join in chanting it, until it spreads to one province, two provinces, and all the sixty-six provinces of Japan, and reaches even to the two islands of Iki and Tsushima. Those persons who have spoken

slandrously of me will in time chant in the same way. (WND-1, 672)

The Daishonin himself opened the great path of kosen-rufu through his personal efforts to awaken the Buddha nature in one individual after another. Carrying on his deeply compassionate spirit, our leaders at the group and district levels, in particular, are reaching out to their fellow members in honest, heart-to-heart dialogue, helping those who are struggling reinvigorate their lives, and personally fostering capable people for kosen-rufu.

In our blocks and districts, we find the very essence of Buddhist practice. We find a realm of encouragement and support that characterizes the people-centered Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, as well as a preeminent model for a human community that can illuminate the future.

The Daishonin writes: "All those who keep faith in the Lotus Sutra are most certainly Buddhas" (WND-1, 756); and "[The Lotus Sutra] says [regarding a person who accepts and upholds this sutra], 'You should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha' [LSOC28, 365]. You should respect one another [as Buddhas]" (WND-1, 757).

Today, members from throughout Japan and around the world are gathering at the Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu (in Shinanomachi, Tokyo), where they are

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being welcomed by youthful staff members embodying this spirit of "rising and greeting others from afar, showing them the same respect one would a Buddha." This spirit, which the Daishonin declared was "the foremost point he [the Buddha] wished to convey to us" (OTT, 192), is also embraced by all our dedicated SGI leaders everywhere who are sincerely supporting their fellow members day and night.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, said: "All of our members are Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have emerged in the garden of the Soka Gakkai. Even members who may not be attending meetings now are certain to join us at a crucial moment."

While I was in Osaka in July 1956, I paid a home visit to a Kansai women's division group leader. Just like many of our women's division group and district leaders today, she strove earnestly for kosen-rufu while raising her young children—often bringing them to meetings with her—and caring for her ill mother-in-law. This women's division leader passed away recently, but she remained actively engaged in Soka Gakkai activities to the very end. She once declared: "Our local community is a treasure land that has been entrusted to us by the Daishonin. There's no way we won't be able to expand our network of capable people and friends who share a connection with the Daishonin's Buddhism." Loved and appreciated by members and nonmembers alike, she adorned her life



with brilliant victory. This is the true Soka Gakkai spirit.

The hearts of my wife and I are always with our men's and women's division group leaders who are striving harder than anyone.

I hope you will all actively involve yourselves on the front lines of our movement. Please work together with your fellow members, supremely noble champions of the people, so that our groups and districts, which directly reflect the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, will flourish even more strongly and vigorously.

Cheerfully making our way on the journey of kosen-rufu, dedicated to encouraging others, we travel happily with fellow members who are our eternal family.

(Translated from the September 2014 issue of the *Daibyakurengē*, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal)

Opening a New Era of Kosen-rufu Together

(12) Shining with Boundless Good Fortune and Benefit

One-on-one encouragement is an SGI tradition. Because we have put great energy into personally visiting and encouraging members, there are capable leaders for kosen-rufu all around the world today. I have also made every effort to meet with members individually and offer them wholehearted encouragement.

Don't worry that you may not be an eloquent speaker. Just persevere with a positive spirit. Remember, you are carrying out the noble work of the

One-on-one encouragement is an SGI tradition.



Buddha. All of your present efforts are part of your training to become a fine leader. The struggles you undertake each day to visit a member or meet with someone to talk about Buddhism enable you to deepen your life and shine with good fortune and benefit.

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The benefit of embracing faith in the Gohonzon is truly immeasurable. Nichiren Daishonin assures us: "The Gohonzon will be with [you] and protect [you] always. Like a lantern in the dark, like a strong guide and porter on a treacherous mountain path, the Gohonzon will guard and protect you . . . wherever you go" (WND-1, 832). This passage perfectly describes the noble lives of each one of you who is striving for kosen-rufu with tireless dedication and commitment.

At times, life may present you with indescribable challenges, but the Gohonzon and the Daishonin are always with you. Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said: "The unexpected happens, but it's important to view everything from the perspective of the eternity of life. If we strive hard to fully transform our negative karma now, we will be able to open the way to happiness that endures eternally. The important thing for our movement is that we enable each person to bring forth their full potential so that they can win through all and have no regrets."

As long as we brim with the vibrant spirit of faith, the SGI will always

be able to succeed in its endeavors. Striving together energetically, let's lead profound, meaningful, and joyful lives of absolute victory.

(Translated from the March 23, 2014, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

(13) The Sun of Happiness Resides in Our Own Lives

In spring, when the cherry trees are in bloom, I am always filled with special nostalgia for my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, his indomitable figure rising in my mind's eye.

suffering. The SGI is a genuine friend to such people. No matter what obstacles we face, we continue to exert ourselves for others' happiness. There is surely nothing nobler than this.



In a time of war, Mr. Toda maintained steadfast faith in Nichiren Buddhism even at the risk of his life. I'm sure he would be overjoyed to see the high hopes and warm praise that many people around the world today have for the SGI's great network for peace.

At the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters branch office in Tokyo's Ichigaya area [during the early 1950s], Mr. Toda used to hold personal guidance sessions for members on an almost daily basis. Some had so many difficult problems that they didn't know which way to turn. Mr. Toda would pour his whole being into giving each person the powerful conviction that they could achieve absolute victory through practicing Nichiren Buddhism.

Every individual has great potential; every individual is a treasure. We must impart courage and hope to each precious person.

Mr. Toda said: "I am like a single individual standing up amid a dark, swirling torrent, holding aloft a single banner. Should I relax my vigilance in the least, both I and the banner will be swept away by the surging waters."

Each interaction, each opportunity to encourage someone is crucially important. A truly humanistic religion seeks to help those who are

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People around the world are seeking Nichiren Buddhism. Let's tell others about our movement in a very natural and honest way. Nothing is stronger than the truth.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "A lantern [can light up even] a place that has been dark for a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years" (cf. WND-1, 923).

The sun of happiness resides in your own lives. I hope that when you are faced with challenges or difficulties, you will earnestly chant daimoku, brightly vanquish the darkness of even the most painful adversity, and unstintingly impart the warm sunshine of encouragement to others.

With all divisions uniting together as one, let's foster the youth division, support the future division, and realize a magnificent blossoming of benefit and joy, and of capable people for kosen-rufu. Let's do so with the spirit of repaying debts of gratitude.

(Translated from the March 30, 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

2.4 The Gohonzon Encompasses All of the Ten Worlds

Introduction:

The Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin has Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—the ultimate law of the universe and life—in the center, surrounded by representative beings of the Ten Worlds. In this excerpt, President Ikeda explains how, through our practice of gongyo and chanting daimoku (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) before the Gohonzon, the Ten Worlds within us, just as depicted on the Gohonzon, come to be based on the Mystic Law and function to create positive value and contribute to our happiness and attainment of Buddhahood.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

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

The Japanese word *honzon* means “object of fundamental respect or devotion”—in other words, the object that we respect and devote ourselves to as the basis of our lives. It is only natural, therefore, that what we take as our object of devotion will have a decisive impact on the direction of our lives.

Traditionally, objects of devotion in Buddhism were often statues of the Buddha. In some cases, paintings of the Buddha were used. While statues of the Buddha did not exist in early Buddhism, they later began to appear in the Gandhara region of northwest India, due to the influence of Grecian culture. They were, if you like, a product of cultural exchange on the ancient Silk Road. Through statues and paintings, people became familiar with the image of the Buddha, leading them to arouse faith in the Buddha and revere him.

The object of devotion in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, however, is the Gohonzon, which consists of written characters. In that sense, rather than simply a visual or graphic depiction, I would call it the highest and noblest expression of the world of the intellect, of the great wisdom of the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. In this respect alone, the Daishonin's object of devotion is fundamentally different from those traditionally worshipped in Buddhism.

Written words are wondrous; they have tremendous power. Take people's names, for example. When people sign their names, it embodies everything about them—their character, social position, power, emotional and physical condition, personal history, and karma.

Similarly, the daimoku of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo [which is inscribed down the center of the Gohonzon] encompasses all things in the universe. All phenomena are expressions of the Mystic Law, as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai indicates when he states (in *Great Concentration and Insight*): “Arising is the arising of the essential nature of the Law [Dharma nature], and extinction is the extinction of that nature” (WND-1, 216).

The true aspect of the ever-changing universe (all phenomena) is perfectly expressed, just as it is, in the Gohonzon. The true aspect of the

macrocosm of the universe is exactly the same for the microcosm of each of our lives. This is what the Daishonin tells us in his writings. In addition, the Gohonzon embodies the principle of the “oneness of the person and the Law,” and expresses the enlightened life state of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

In that sense, the Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin is an embodiment of the fundamental law of the universe that should be revered by all people; it is the true object of fundamental devotion.

The universe contains both positive and negative workings or functions. Representatives of the Ten Worlds are all depicted on the Gohonzon—from the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures, who represent the world of Buddhahood, to Devadatta, who represents the world of Hell. The Daishonin teaches that such representatives of the positive and negative workings of the universe are all without exception illuminated by the light of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, enabling them to display “the dignified attributes that they inherently possess,” and that this is the function of the Gohonzon (cf. WND-1, 832).

When we do gongyo and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo before the Gohonzon, both the positive and negative tendencies in our lives begin to manifest “the dignified attributes that they inherently possess.” The world of Hell with its painful suffering, the world of Hunger with its insatiable cravings, the world of Anger with its perverse rage—all come to function to contribute to our happiness and to the creation of value. When we base our lives on the Mystic Law, the life states that drag us toward suffering and unhappiness move in the opposite, positive direction. It is as if sufferings become the “firewood” that fuels the flames of joy, wisdom, and compassion. The Mystic Law and faith are what ignite those flames.

In addition, when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the positive forces of the universe—represented by all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly deities such as Brahma and Shakra (the tutelary gods of Buddhism)—will shine even more brightly, their power and influence increasing and expanding endlessly. The gods of the sun and moon that exist in the microcosm of our lives will also shine brilliantly to illuminate the darkness within. All of the workings—both positive and negative—of the Ten Worlds and the three thousand realms function together at full power, propelling us toward a life of happiness, a life imbued with the four virtues of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity.

In life, it is only natural that we sometimes fall ill. Based on the teaching of the Mystic Law, however, we can look at illness as an inherent part of life. Seeing it this way, we will not be swayed by illness when it happens to us, or allow it to be a source of suffering and distress. Viewed from the perspective of the eternity of life, we are definitely on the way to establishing a “greater self” overflowing with absolute happiness. In addition, we will be able to overcome any obstacle we encounter in life, using it as a springboard for developing a new, more expansive state of being. Life will be enjoyable, and death will be peaceful, marking the solemn departure for our next wonderful lifetime.

When winter arrives, trees are, for a while, bare of flowers and leaves. But they possess the life force to grow fresh green leaves when spring comes. Similar to this, but on an even more profound level, for us, as practitioners of the Mystic Law, death is the dynamic process by which our life itself transitions, without pain, to quickly begin its next mission-filled existence.

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2.5 “Never Seek This Gohonzon outside Yourself”

Introduction:

Sometimes people think that the Gohonzon is greater than themselves. In this excerpt, however, President Ikeda discusses the profound significance of the Daishonin’s teaching that the Gohonzon exists within our own lives. We possess within us boundless life force and infinite wisdom, which our practice of Nichiren Buddhism enables us to tap freely.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From a speech at a Representatives Gathering Commemorating April 2, the anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s passing, held at the Ota Culture Center, Tokyo, April 3, 1993.

In any religion, the object of worship or devotion holds a place of prime importance. What, then, is the true meaning of the object of devotion, or the Gohonzon, in Nichiren Buddhism?

In “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” the Daishonin states: “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (WND-1, 832). Discussing this passage in one of his lectures, Mr. Toda said:

Although we may pray to this great Gohonzon thinking it exists outside us, the reality is that it resides directly within the lives of us who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith in the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws. This passage from the Daishonin is truly inspiring.

Those who do not yet have faith in the Mystic Law are people at the “stage of being a Buddha in theory” [the first of the six stages of practice], where the Buddha nature, while appearing vaguely to be present, does not function in the least. We [Soka Gakkai members], on the other hand, because we chant to the Gohonzon, are at the “stage of hearing the name and words of the truth” [the second of the six stages of practice]. At this stage, the Gohonzon already shines brilliantly within us.

However, the degree to which it shines will differ depending upon the strength of each person’s faith. It’s like a light bulb. A high-watt light bulb shines brightly, and a low-watt light bulb shines faintly.

To continue with the analogy of a light bulb, for those who haven’t yet embraced the Mystic Law, the light bulb isn’t connected to a power source. Whereas for us, practitioners of the Mystic Law, the light bulb that is the Gohonzon is turned on. Therefore, our lives shine brightly.

Everything depends on the strength of our faith. When we have strong faith, our life itself becomes a “cluster of blessings” (WND-1, 832), which is how the Daishonin describes the Gohonzon. He further states: “This Gohonzon also is found only in the two characters for faith” (WND-1, 832).

People of strong faith, therefore, never reach a deadlock. No matter what happens, they can transform everything into a source of benefit and happiness. Naturally, in the long course of our lives, we are bound to encounter various kinds of problems and suffering. But we will be able to turn all difficulties into nourishment for developing a higher state of life. In this respect, for practitioners of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, everything is ultimately a source of benefit and happiness at the most profound level. The word “unhappiness” does not exist in the vocabulary of those who have strong faith.

Toward the end of his *Commentary on “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,”* Nichikan Shonin (1665–1726), a great restorer of Nichiren Buddhism who began the task of systematizing the Daishonin’s teachings, writes:

When we embrace faith in this object of devotion [the Gohonzon] and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, our lives immediately become the object of devotion of three thousand realms in a single moment of life; they become the life of Nichiren Daishonin. This is the true meaning of the phrase “he [the Buddha] then adorned the necks of the ignorant people of the latter age [with the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo]” (cf. WND-1, 376). Therefore, we must venerate the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law and strive to develop our own power of faith and power of practice. We must not spend our lives in vain and regret it for all eternity, as the Daishonin says (cf. WND-1, 622).

In this passage, Nichikan Shonin clearly states that, through faith in the Gohonzon, our lives can instantly manifest the object of devotion and life state of Nichiren Daishonin. It was for this very purpose that the Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon. Here, we find the supreme essence of Nichiren Buddhism.

Faith enables us to manifest the Gohonzon that exists within us; it allows us to bring forth the diamond-like state of the Buddha and make it shine brightly.

Within the depths of our lives, we each inherently possess boundless life force and a wellspring of infinite wisdom. Faith allows us to freely tap that inner life force and wisdom.

Mr. Toda often used to say: “What’s inside you comes out. What’s not there, won’t.” The strong and pure state of Buddhahood and the weak and base states of Hell, Hunger, and Animality all exist within our lives and are manifested in response to causes and conditions in our environment.

Since life is eternal throughout the three existences of past, present, and future, our past karma may also assail us in the present in the form of some major problem or suffering. However, just as the cause of suffering lies within our lives, we also possess the power to transform our suffering into happiness. This is the power of the life state of Buddhahood.

As Mr. Toda declared, ultimately human beings are the product of what lies inside them, no more, no less.

It’s vital, therefore, that we each cultivate the “earth” of our lives and put down deep and extensive “roots” of happiness. We must manifest the Gohonzon that exists within us and forge a self that is as unshakable as a mighty tree. In terms of our life state, this will be expressed as outstanding humanity and exemplary behavior, while in terms of our daily lives, it will manifest as benefit and good fortune.

The crucial point is whether we have faith. We must never make light of the Daishonin’s assertion that “It is the heart that is important” (WND-1, 1000).

What matters is not form or a person’s position or wealth. Those who have faith in their hearts are truly happy.

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2.6 The Gohonzon Is the “Mirror” That Reflects Our Lives

Introduction:

In this excerpt, President Ikeda explains that the Gohonzon is like a mirror that reflects the true nature of our own lives. The Gohonzon is the ultimate expression of Buddha wisdom, enabling all people to attain enlightenment by perceiving the true reality of their lives.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From a speech at an SGI-USA Women’s Division Meeting, Soka University Los Angeles Campus, Calabasas, California, February 27, 1990.

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The New Human Revolution

Volume 24, Chapter 3
HUMANISTIC EDUCATION



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

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In 1967, Hagino fulfilled his cherished dream of becoming a teacher.

At the second school he was assigned to, an elementary school in central Tokyo, he was in charge of a sixth-grade class. There was only one class of sixth graders at the school, consisting of 20 students. It was a class of students that over the years had gained a reputation for being uncontrollable.

The students did things like take dirt from the flowerbeds situated on the school rooftop and throw it down onto the street and shops below. They ganged up on younger schoolmates. They built barricades with desks and chairs in their classroom. During music class some of them would beat so hard on the drums that they broke the drumheads, and they destroyed many other instruments, one after another. They descended in groups on department stores, where they engaged in shoplifting; when caught by store clerks, they would claim to be from another school.

Their previous teacher, after struggling with the class for a long time, finally decided to transfer to another school.

Hagino was worried about how to handle the class, and he thought long and hard about the best approach. "This might simply prove to be too much for someone as inexperienced as me," he thought.

At that time, he recalled that Shin'ichi Yamamoto had referred to children as the "treasures of humanity" and "the hope of the world."

"That's right," thought Hagino. "All these children were born with a noble mission to shoulder the future. Such precious children can't really be bad at heart. My job is to teach them that they each have a noble mission!"

He felt a ray of light illumine his heart. From that day, he began to think about each student and chant for them.

However, despite his best efforts, many of the students continued to talk or face the rear of the room during class. One girl didn't even attend at all because she was being bullied. Hagino wrote a letter to encourage her.

Hagino had decided to trust the children, whatever happened. He never



scolded them harshly. He knew that without having first established a trusting relationship with the students, scolding would have no positive effect.

As the French poet Paul Éluard (1895–1952) wrote: "Of all of my ways of being/ to be trusting is the best."

Hagino started to chant even more seriously. He gained a sense of control over the situation, and he was even able to acquire a positive outlook. "They aren't bad; they're just mischievous and have too much energy!"

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Hagino thought deeply about how he could enable his students to find a constructive outlet for their energy.

He came up with the idea of having them play dodge ball during recess and after school. Using the strong rivalry existing between the girls and boys, he divided the students into girls and boys and had them play against each other. Gradually their energy was poured into dodge ball. Hagino joined the girls' team and played with the students.

During gym class, as a warm-up he had the students jog around the schoolyard three times—not just running but also making use of the jungle gym, bars, and other equipment on the school grounds. When gym class was over, the students were all exhausted. While expending their pent-up energy, they also began to form bonds as a class, and quiet was restored to the classroom.

In the autumn, there was a ward-level track and field meet that representatives of the sixth graders participated in. Because there were so few students at Hagino's school, almost all of his students were expected to take part in

the meet. They began to train very hard after school. All the students gave it their all.

At the track meet, one of them came in first in the 100-meter (100-yard) dash. Another came in second in the high jump. The students did their best and they were even able to place sixth among 36 schools in the boys' relay race.

Both the principal and other teachers at the school were full of praise for Hagino's class, saying that it was unheard of for a school with only 20 sixth graders to do so well in the ward contest.

The joy of succeeding after putting in dedicated effort becomes a great source of self-confidence. One victory leads to a breakthrough and serves as a springboard for all future victories.

Some of Hagino's students began to say that they wanted to attempt the examinations to enter into private junior high schools.

"This class is not very strong academically, and things might not go as well as they did with the track meet," thought Hagino.



However, the students brimmed with self-confidence: "By winning in the track meet, we learned how to win through effort. We think we can do the same in the entrance examinations."

Some of the students began to use all their recess time to study. Hagino

decided, "I'll make study printouts for them every day and support them!" He made himself available after school to help students with things they didn't understand.

The students who had decided to take the entrance examinations were filled with enthusiasm.

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By the time the February junior high school entrance examinations came around, Yoshimasa Hagino's students had given their all to studying for their exams despite the limited time they had to prepare. They each gave their best effort.



Several days after the examinations, the results began to be announced. Of the eight students who took the examinations for private junior high schools, seven passed. It was an unprecedented achievement in the school's history, where usually only one or two students a year passed the private junior high school examinations.

The day of the school play was approaching. The students said that they wanted to do something to show the teachers and parents for whom they had caused so much trouble over the years how much they had grown and changed. They decided that they would turn the Osamu Dazai (1909–48) story *Run, Melos!*, which tells of the trust and friendship of the protagonists Melos and Selinuntius, into a play and perform it. Hagino wrote the script for them.

The students started to build the props and scenery themselves, and they rehearsed enthusiastically.

On the day of the school play, they performed with such fervor that when the dramatic scene in which Melos slaps Selinuntius in the face occurred, the sound of the slap rang throughout the hall.

The audience was moved by the students' impassioned performance, and many eyes were filled with tears. These were tears of emotion at how much the students had grown as people over the school year.

Several days before the graduation ceremony, a reception was held during which the students expressed their appreciation to those who had supported them. As organ music played in the background, each student stood up and shared memories of the previous year.

One student spoke of his gratitude for how the school nurse had treated him when he'd hurt himself at school. Another told of how everyone in his class, even those he'd fought with, came to see him when he was at home sick from school.

All the students sincerely thanked their teacher, Mr. Hagino.

Everyone was in tears. Hagino also dabbed at his eyes with a handkerchief. "I'm glad I trusted my students. They all turned out to be wonderful children, just as I thought."

When the appreciation reception came to an end, the principal, who was retiring that year, remarked: "What a wonderful appreciation reception! Thank you. It's amazing to see how much children can grow. I feel like I've learned something vital at the end of my career."

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Not only Hagino but all the members of the Soka Gakkai education department began to energetically expand a movement for humanistic education, beginning in their respective workplaces and communities. As they did so, they felt a need to communicate to the public the concrete



principles behind their movement.

In 1973, the year the education department began to get seriously involved at the community level, Japanese society seemed to be on the verge of losing its purpose.

Although the violent campus unrest had come to an end, neither young people nor society as a whole had a clear sense of direction, and a mood of passivity, apathy, and alienation prevailed. Students seemed to be in a voluntarily state of limbo, avoiding adult responsibilities and not looking for jobs.

The idea that all one had to do to get a good, well-paid job and lead a secure life was to graduate from a top-ranking university led to fierce competition in the university entrance examinations. But Tokyo University, the institution at the pinnacle of that pyramid of good universities, and many other such universities around the country, had been wracked by conflict and dispute.

The students had occupied the campuses and exposed the seamy underside of the authority of the "ivory

tower," calling for democracy, and even the dismantling of the universities. This all came to an end when the autonomy of the universities was abolished and riot police were called in to enforce the University Control Law.

Quiet was restored to the campuses, but people began to feel a powerful distrust in education, learning, and the government. Young people, in particular, felt there was nothing worth dedicating their lives to and, alienated and apathetic, they withdrew and succumbed to a mood of inner darkness and pessimism.

This darkness cast its shadow on the education field as a whole, with many educators losing sight of their ideals and the greater purpose of teaching students.

In this state of purposelessness, without any sure goal or focus to aim for, many teachers felt that it was meaningless to try to polish their skills as educators.

Education department volunteers strongly felt that the time had come for them to stand up and take action. A sense of mission brings forth fresh vitality from within.

Humanistic Education 27

In the midst of the confusion prevailing in the field of education, education department volunteer members dedicated themselves to the study of humanistic education, motivated by their wish to illuminate a way to build a better future.



They studied Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's writings on the philosophy of Soka education, Josei Toda's practical teaching methods, and Shin'ichi Yamamoto's proposals on education, discussing these works and exchanging ideas. They were burning with a powerful sense of mission to establish a new set of educational principles and communicate Soka humanism broadly throughout society.

On February 11, 1974, on the 74th anniversary of the birth of Josei Toda, the Humanistic Education Study Group was established. The study group held its first symposium at the Soka Junior and Senior High School's auditorium in Kodaira, Tokyo, in November of that year.

At the symposium, the members announced the results of their specialist research and experimental studies on such topics as "Adapting *A Deductive Guide to Arithmetic* to Modern Arithmetic Instruction," "Encouraging Enriched Individual Expression through Making Sculptures to Foster Creativity," "Instructing Five-Year-Olds in the Kindergarten Setting," and "Case Study: Children Misdiagnosed

with Autism."

None of the research was arid, abstract, ivory-tower scholarship. The results reported were based on assiduous efforts and actual practice in real educational situations.

As the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) stated: "Only he who himself does research can really teach."

American scholar Dr. Dayle M. Bethel, who was researching the educational ideas of Makiguchi, was also invited to attend the symposium.

Dr. Bethel was unsparing in his praise for the activities of the Humanistic Education Study Group, actually putting humanistic education into practice. Expressing his high hopes for the humanistic approach of Soka education, which also calls for the human revolutions of educators, he noted: "Education is a noble joint effort in which teachers, children, and students strive together to exercise and develop their inner strengths and wisdom to the fullest and make a shared contribution to society."

Prof. Tomitaro Karasawa of Tokyo University of Education also delivered a lecture entitled "Thoughts on the Ideal Qualities of People in Contemporary Education" at the symposium.

Humanistic Education 28

Naturally, the resolution of various concerns regarding policy is also important for educational reform, but the personal growth of the actual protagonists and agents of education—teachers—is the foundation for the



revitalization of education.

In the school setting, teachers play a major role in the educational environment of students. The interaction that takes place between educators and students, this life-to-life communication, is the true starting point of education.

It is also teachers, involved as they are on the front lines of education, who are most aware of problems in educational policies and who can make the most difference in affecting change in those areas.

All of this makes the educator's self-transformation and philosophy on life, education, and humanity critical factors in effectively reforming education.

In order to promote a movement for educational reform, education department members decided it was necessary to set to work, as educators themselves, defining the aims of education, which would be announced as guidelines for a movement for humanistic education.

They began by discussing the kinds of qualities they should strive to cultivate in their students, the next generation who will shoulder

the future.

What characteristics were needed for children to be happy and to make the world a better place? They discussed this topic extensively and from various perspectives before finally agreeing on the ideal qualities that they felt were important to foster through education.

Firstly, they should foster people who can experience the joy of living. Secondly, they should foster people who can harmoniously coexist and thrive with others and nature. And thirdly, they should foster people committed to always developing and improving both themselves and their environment.

Tsunetsaburo Makiguchi defined the aim of education as the formation of a self-motivated character that is able to create great value—in other words, people who could lead happy and fulfilling lives. His conception of happiness transcended a narrowly self-centered personal happiness with no regard for the well-being of others, but embraced a social aspect, the ability to coexist harmoniously with others in society.

Members discussed their ideas from this perspective repeatedly as they worked together to draw up their vision of the ideal qualities that they felt were important to foster in students through humanistic education for the sake of the future.

Humanistic Education 29

After defining the three types of qualities they wished to cultivate in students through humanistic education, education department members began to consider the actual educational principles necessary for fostering such people.



Eventually, they arrived at the following five principles for educators. Education must reflect:

- (1) Respect for the sanctity of life
- (2) Faith in the diverse richness of human potential
- (3) An emphasis on the mutually interactive and inspirational relationship between educators and students
- (4) A shared aim among educators and students to continually create value and strive for self-transformation
- (5) A firm grasp of the abilities of students and appropriate guidance

As they considered these points, they also spoke about the proper foundation for a movement promoting humanistic education.

They agreed that the value of life should be the top priority in all aspects of the educational process, and people should never be devalued or reduced to a means to an end.

They also affirmed that education must always be first and foremost for the sake of the individual, and never become a tool of the government or

any other institution, as it had in the past, when the wartime Japanese government used the education system as a means of indoctrinating the citizenry.

In addition, they agreed that all the peoples of the Earth share a common destiny and that education should aim for the realization of world peace based on a shared philosophy of respect for the dignity of life that applies universally to all peoples and nations.

Passion is the mother of creativity. The impassioned wish of education department members for the happiness of children was giving rise to a new educational philosophy.

The Soka Gakkai designated 1975 as the Year of Education and the Family.

At the beginning of that year, on January 7, the 9th Education Department General Meeting was held in the Tachikawa Civic Hall in Tokyo. At the meeting, they announced the first draft of the guidelines that they had been working on together to initiate a humanistic education movement.

The guidelines cast a bright light dispelling the darkness of purposelessness that was obscuring Japanese society.

Humanistic Education 30

With the start of the Year of Education and the Family, Shin'ichi Yamamoto composed a poem entitled "Education" that was published in the January issue of the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal *Daibyakurenge*. He wished to offer guidance and encouragement to all those who were fostering people including educators and parents alike. The poem read:

Children are not possessions.
They are possessors,
and the shared treasure of all humanity.
Education based on respecting children
will be the driving force for social change.

It is easy to educate others,
hard to educate oneself.
Staying on the correct course in life as long as you live
and continuing to educate yourself is
the path of human revolution.

Even a small piece of advice
can cause the biggest turning point in someone's life.

A careless snide remark
can cause a hurt that never heals in someone's life.
Education and guidance
must start by carefully considering others' feelings.

In his poem, Shin'ichi outlined the basics of education, emphasizing the importance of caring about others, listening to their problems, and sharing their sufferings. He wanted this essential spirit that had been established during the pioneering days of the Soka Gakkai to never be forgotten.

This was the image of leadership that Shin'ichi continually tried to instill in all those who had organizational positions. The Soka Gakkai should be a place that fosters educators in life, making the advance of the Soka Gakkai itself the advance of the

movement for humanistic education.

Buddhism, the philosophy of human revolution, is also the ultimate educational philosophy.



Humanistic Education 31

Youthful teachers were the driving force of the education department's humanistic education movement.

Experience was highly valued in the field of



education, and younger teachers rarely had the opportunity to engage in free and equal exchanges of

ideas with senior teachers or to take full responsibility for any project or initiative. For that reason, the Soka Gakkai education department made a conscious effort to allow young teachers to take the lead and valued their youthful energy, enthusiasm, and their flexible attitudes.

This was Shin'ichi's intent and firm conviction. Fresh advancement is only possible when youth are able to freely exercise their full potential. For this reason, he appointed young people as leaders of the education department.

Because they lacked experience in teaching, they were still unseasoned in some respects, but Shin'ichi had the highest hopes for their lofty ideals, their orientation toward the future, their spirit of self-improvement, and their sincere and passionate resolve.

Inazo Nitobe (1862–1933), the former under-secretary-general of the League of Nations, who was an acquaintance of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, said of the ideals of youth: "Ideals that arise in the purity and innocence of one's youth, when one is free of worldly ambition, untainted by desires for fame

or wealth, are truly noble."

Makiguchi also asserted that he counted on youth to carry out the educational reforms that he conceived of: "This great revolution of our everyday life will be impossible without youthful educators, pure of heart and in search of truth, and willing to strive resolutely for the sake of justice and their country."

At the start of 1975, youthful educators began to speak out, as if to say, "This is the Year of Education and the Family. Now is the time for youthful educators to stand up and stir a huge groundswell for the movement of humanistic education that will spread across Japan!"

At the Education Department Spring Training Course held in March in Shizuoka Prefecture, 2,000 representative education department members gathered from throughout Japan for the 1st Youthful Educators General Meeting.

Shin'ichi was very happy. Nothing is nobler than young people striving to create a new age.

Humanistic Education 32

Shin'ichi wanted to attend the 1st Youthful Educators General Meeting and congratulate and encourage the members on their efforts, but on March 29, the day of the meeting, he had a meeting with the German



environmentalist Dr. Gerhard Olschowy, professor emeritus of the University of Bonn, and another separate meeting with Uganda's interim ambassador to Japan Samsom T. Bigombe and his wife, making it impossible for him to attend the meeting.

Instead, he sent the education department members a message expressing his hopes and high expectations.

The auditorium was decorated with a banner that read in large characters, "Youthful Educators Engaged in a Movement for Humanistic Education," expressing the members' commitment. In his message, Shin'ichi stated, "Only 25 years remain until the dawn of the 21st century. The future of the coming century lies in your hands, because your students will make that century what it is."

Shin'ichi's words brimmed with his impassioned beliefs.

"Education is the undercurrent that creates the future and determines the course of history. The education taking place today will trace the outline of our future. Education can be the breakthrough in solving the ever-intensifying problems that threaten our times. Because

of that, your mission and responsibility are crucial."

Shin'ichi's words made a deep impression on the assembled teachers. They announced their basic approach in advancing the movement for humanistic education in their Declaration of Young Educators:

- (1) Believing that the personal revolution of educators is the first step in education, we pledge to overcome our egoism and arrogance.
- (2) We will exhibit faith in the potential of every child and student, never lose hope, and always extend a helping hand.
- (3) We will share our teaching experiences and earnestly study to improve our abilities as educators.

With these pledges as their foundation, the young educators threw themselves feverishly into their profession. They became like suns illuminating their schools and communities with the light of hope.

Humanistic Education 33

In August 1975, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the summer training courses held for the various Soka Gakkai divisions to offer guidance to the participants.



A summer training course for education department members was held at Soka University on August 12. Shin'ichi had decided that he would attend the education department training course that year, which was designated "The Year of Education and the Family."

On the previous day, August 11, Shin'ichi arrived at Soka University from Shizuoka. Although he wasn't feeling well, he attended the main session of the women's division summer training course to encourage the members.

Some of the education department members were at Soka University, making preparations for the education department training course to be held there the following day. Shin'ichi invited Masaru Kito, the education department chief secretary, and other leaders to meet with him at Man'yo (Myriad Leaves) House on campus, because he wanted to encourage the department representatives.

When the education department representatives entered Man'yo

House, Shin'ichi, lying down with an ice pack on his head, was listening to a report from the university's chairman of the board of trustees. It was Kito's first meeting with Shin'ichi.

"Excuse my appearance," said Shin'ichi.

There was Chinese food on the table in the room. Shin'ichi had arranged for it so they'd have something to eat.

"Please go ahead and help yourself!"

Shin'ichi continued his discussions with the Soka University chairman of the board of trustees. When he'd finished, he sat up and said, "Maybe I'll have some, too," but he had no appetite and after just a few mouthfuls he put his chopsticks down and began to talk to Kito.

"Mr. Kito, you're an elementary school teacher in Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, aren't you?"

Kito couldn't hide his astonishment that Shin'ichi knew about him.

Learning about a person is the foundation for human relations, as well as for education. When people, whether young or old, feel that the person interacting with them knows who they are and has a sincere interest in them, they are able to open up, and that's the first step to forming a relationship of mutual trust.

The Gohonzon - Observing the Mind



"Nichiren's contribution was to establish a clear mirror, the Gohonzon, which perfectly reflects the state of Buddhahood inherent in life, and which could thus enable all people, regardless of their circumstances or ability, to draw out and manifest this Buddha nature. Nichiren's use of script rather than images reflects his commitment that this 'mirror' be universal, free of the connotations of race and gender inherent in depictions of specific person-ages."

Gohonzon for most people, the word "Buddha" conjures up the image of a statue of an Asian male seated in meditation. It may seem contradictory for a religion that is otherwise considered relatively abstract to give such a central place to images of this kind.

These images, however, are generally not worshipped by Buddhists in the same sense that the Biblical "heathens" are said to have worshipped their idols. Rather, they are symbolic depictions of the sublime qualities possessed by Buddhas and bodhisattvas to which practitioners aspire. Ideally, they function as a kind of mirror to aid practitioners in perceiving the profound dignity of their own lives and in manifesting that dignity in their actions.

For Buddhist practitioners, this is the core challenge, to perceive the life condition of Buddhahood in their own life. In the Buddhism of Nichiren (1222--1282) and the tradition from which it draws, this is called the practice of "observing the mind." The difficulty of achieving this is such that practitioners had traditionally to devote their lives exclusively to meditative practice. Nichiren's contribution was to establish a clear mirror, the Gohonzon, which perfectly reflects the state of Buddhahood inherent in life, and which could thus enable all people, regardless of their circumstances or ability, to draw out and manifest this Buddha nature.

The Gohonzon (lit. "object of devotion") is a scroll containing Chinese and Sanskrit script. Nichiren's use of script rather than images reflects his commitment that this "mirror" be universal, free of the connotations of race and gender

inherent in depictions of specific person-ages. On the scroll are arranged the names of figures from the Buddhist canon that collectively symbolize the various potentialities of life. Down its center is inscribed "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo Nichiren," in bold Chinese characters.

Myoho-enge-kyo is the Japanese version of the title of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra (Skt Saddharma-pundarika-sutra). For the tradition within which Nichiren is situated, this sutra is regarded as Shakyamuni's most essential teaching. Nichiren regarded Myoho-enge-kyo itself as the fundamental Law or principle of the universe--of life--to which Shakyamuni was enlightened, the "essence" of Buddhahood. He writes, "Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained in the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo."

Nichiren's name below Nam-myoho-enge-kyo on the Gohonzon expresses his conviction that the state of Buddhahood is not an abstract concept but is manifest in the life and behavior of human beings living in the real world.

Nichiren inscribed Gohonzons for his individual followers, and believers today enshrine a printed transcription of the Gohonzon in their homes. The practice of Nichiren Buddhism is to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, facing the Gohonzon, thereby harmonizing your life with--or calling forth from within--the Buddha nature which it reflects. "Nam," meaning

devotion, signifies this intent of summoning or harmonizing with.

The Buddhist view of life is a profoundly holistic one that sees no essential separation between our lives and the life of the universe. When we draw forth the power of wisdom and compassion through prayer, we are drawing forth and directing the same universal wisdom and creative compassion that manifests in everything from the intelligent bonding of molecules to the symbiotic evolution of species, to the decay and formation of galaxies. Ultimately it is belief in their own potential that enables human beings to develop and to advance in the face of difficulties. The Gohonzon is an embodiment of a belief in the unlimited potential of life. The practice associated with it is an expression and actualization of this belief.

As a "mirror," the Gohonzon could be said to perform a dual function. While it reflects and awakens us to the limitless richness and potential of our inner life, it also, in provoking introspection, helps us confront the bare reality of our life at that moment in time. Regardless of our religious beliefs, the success of any effort to guide our life toward fulfillment and value depends largely on an ability to honestly and courageously look within--to both confront the demons of our shadow and to seek out within our own lives those qualities with which we have invested our saints and idols. It seems that now, more than ever, our collective survival depends on our ability to carry this out.

.. Continued from Page 4 (Happiness)

I would like to speak about an important point with regard to our attitude in faith through the analogy of mirrors. In Buddhism, mirrors have a wide variety of meanings and are often used to explain and illustrate various doctrines. Here, I would like to briefly discuss an example related to our Buddhist practice.

Nichiren Daishonin writes:

A bronze mirror will reflect the form of a person but it will not reflect that person's mind. The Lotus Sutra, however, reveals not only the person's form but that person's mind as well. And it reveals not only the mind; it reflects, without the least concealment, that person's past actions and future as well. (WND-2, 619)

Mirrors reflect our face and outward form. The mirror of Buddhism, however, reveals the intangible aspect of our lives. Mirrors, which function by virtue of the laws of light and reflection, are a product of human ingenuity. On the other hand, the Gohonzon, based on the law of the universe and life, is the ultimate expression of Buddha wisdom. It enables us to attain Buddhahood by providing us with a means to perceive the true reality of our lives. Just as a mirror is indispensable for grooming our face and hair, we need a mirror of life that allows us to look closely at ourselves and our lives if we are to lead a happier and more beautiful existence.

Incidentally, as indicated in the Daishonin's reference to a bronze mirror in the quote I just mentioned, mirrors in ancient times were made of

polished metal, including copper, bronze, and other alloys. Tin was also often mixed in. Unlike today's mirrors made of glass, these ancient mirrors could only produce somewhat blurred reflections. Bronze mirrors not only reflected poorly but also tarnished very quickly. Therefore, unless they were polished regularly, they became unusable. Polishing these mirrors required special skill and was carried out by trained craftsmen called "mirror polishers." These bronze mirrors were commonly used during the Daishonin's day.

This tradition of mirror polishing also underlies the following famous passage from the Daishonin in "On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime":

A tarnished mirror . . . will shine like a jewel when polished. A mind now clouded by the illusions of the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but when polished, it is sure to become like a clear mirror, reflecting the essential nature of phenomena [Dharma nature] and the true aspect of reality. (WND-1, 4)

Originally, every person's life is a brilliantly shining mirror. Differences arise depending on whether one polishes this mirror. A polished mirror corresponds to the life state of the Buddha, whereas a tarnished mirror corresponds to that of an ordinary unenlightened being. Chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is how we polish our lives. Not only do we undertake this practice ourselves, we also endeavor to teach others about the Mystic Law so that they can make the mirror of their lives shine brightly, too. In this respect, we could be called master "mirror polishers" in the realm of life. Even though people work hard at polishing their appearance, they often tend

to neglect polishing their lives. While they fret over blemishes on their face, they remain unconcerned about blemishes in the depths of their lives! [Laughter.]

In the famous novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), the youthful protagonist, Dorian Gray, is so handsome that he is called a “young Adonis.” An artist who wishes to immortalize Dorian’s beauty paints his portrait. It is a brilliant work, an embodiment of Dorian’s youthfulness and beauty. It is then that something mysterious begins to happen. Dorian’s beauty does not fade, even as he is gradually tempted by a friend into a life of hedonism and immorality. Although the years go by, he remains as youthful and radiant as ever. Strangely, however, the portrait begins to turn ugly and lusterless, reflecting Dorian’s dissolute life.

Then, one day, Dorian cruelly breaks a young woman’s heart, driving her to commit suicide. At that time, the face in the portrait takes on an evil and savage expression that is frightening to behold. As Dorian’s disreputable behavior continues, so does the hideous transformation of the portrait. Dorian is filled with horror. This picture would forever portray the face of his soul in all its ugliness. Even if he were to die, it would continue to eloquently convey the truth.

Though Dorian makes a token effort to be a better person, the picture does not change. He decides to destroy the portrait, thinking that if it were gone, he would be able to break free from his past. So he plunges a knife into the painting. At that moment, hearing screams, his neighbors rush over to find a portrait of the handsome, young Dorian and, collapsed before it, an aged, repulsive-looking man, Dorian, with a knife sticking in his chest.

The painting had been a portrait of Dorian’s soul, his inner face, into which the effects of his actions had been etched without the slightest omission.

Though we can cover imperfections on our face with cosmetics, we cannot conceal imperfections on the inner face of our lives. The law of cause and effect is strict and inexorable.

Buddhism teaches that unseen virtue brings about visible reward. In the world of Buddhism, everything counts. Being two-faced or pretentious, therefore, serves us absolutely no purpose.

Our inner face that is engraved with the positive and negative causes we make is to an extent reflected in our appearance. There is also a saying “The face is the mirror of the mind.”

Just as we look into a mirror when we groom our face, we need a mirror that reflects the depths of our life to beautifully polish our inner face. This mirror is none other than the Gohonzon for “observing the mind.”

In “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,” Nichiren Daishonin explains the meaning of “observing the mind,” saying: “Only when we look into a clear mirror do we see, for the first time, that we are endowed with all six sense organs [eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind]” (WND-1, 356).

Similarly, “observing the mind” means to perceive that one’s mind, or life, contains the Ten Worlds, and in particular, the world of Buddhahood. It was to enable people to do this that Nichiren Daishonin bestowed the Gohonzon for “observing the mind” upon all humankind.

In his *Commentary on “The Object of Devotion for Observing the Mind,”* Nichikan Shonin likens the Gohonzon to a mirror, stating: “The true object of devotion can be compared to a clear mirror.” And in *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, Nichiren Daishonin says: “The five characters Myoho-enge-kyo [embodied in the Gohonzon] similarly reflect the ten thousand phenomena [i.e., all phenomena], not overlooking a single one of them” (OTT, 51). The Gohonzon is the clearest of all mirrors, reflecting the entire universe exactly as it is. When we chant before the Gohonzon, we can perceive the true nature of our lives and manifest the world of Buddhahood.

Our attitude or determination in faith is perfectly reflected in the mirror of the Gohonzon and mirrored in the universe. This accords with the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

In a letter to Abutsu-bo, one of his loyal disciples on Sado Island, the Daishonin writes: “You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of

the Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself” (WND-1, 299).

An attitude in faith that reveres and honors the Gohonzon dignifies and honors the treasure tower of our own lives. When we chant before the Gohonzon, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe will instantly lend their support and protection. On the other hand, if we slander the Gohonzon, the opposite will be true [i.e., such support and protection will not be forthcoming].

Accordingly, our attitude or mind is extremely important. Our deep-seated attitude or determination in faith has a subtle and far-reaching influence.

There may be times, for instance, when you feel reluctant to do gongyo or take part in SGI activities. That state of mind will be unerringly reflected in the universe, as if on the surface of a clear mirror. The heavenly deities will then also feel reluctant to play their part, and they will naturally fail to exert their full protective powers.

On the other hand, when you joyfully do gongyo and carry out activities for kosen-rufu with the determination to accumulate even more good fortune in your life, the heavenly deities will be delighted and actively function to support you. If you are going to take some action anyway, it is to your advantage to do so willingly and joyfully.

If you carry out your Buddhist practice reluctantly with a sense that it’s a waste of time, doubt and complaint will erase your benefits. Of course, if you continue in this way, you will fail to perceive any benefit from your practice, only further reconfirming your incorrect conviction that there’s no point in practicing. This is a vicious circle.

If you practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism filled with doubt and skepticism, you will get results that are, at best, vague and unsatisfactory. This is the reflection of your own weak conviction in faith on the mirror of the universe. On the other hand, when you stand up with strong conviction in faith, you will accrue limitless good fortune and benefit.

It’s important that we vibrantly open up and free our mind of faith, which is both extremely subtle and far-reaching, while striving for self-mastery. When we do so, both our life and state of mind will expand limitlessly, and every action we take will become a source of benefit. Deeply mastering the subtle and far-reaching workings of the mind is the key to faith and to attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

There is a Russian proverb that says: “Don’t blame the mirror if your face is awry.” The reflection in the mirror is our own. But some people get angry with the mirror! [Laughter.]

In the same way, our happiness or unhappiness is entirely a reflection of the positive and negative causes accumulated in our lives. We cannot blame others for our misfortunes. This is even more so in the realm of faith.

There is a Japanese folk tale about a small village where no one had a mirror. In those days, mirrors were priceless. A man, returning from a trip to the capital, handed his wife a mirror as a souvenir. It was the first time for her to see one. Looking into the mirror, she exclaimed: “Who on earth is this woman? You must’ve brought a girl back with you from the capital!” And so a big fight ensued.

Though this is an amusing anecdote, many people become angry or distraught over phenomena that are actually nothing but a reflection of their own lives—their state of mind and the causes that they have created. Like the wife in the story who exclaims, “Who on earth is this woman?” they do not realize their own folly.

Ignorant of the mirror of life of Buddhism, such people cannot see themselves as they really are. And ignorant of their own true self, they naturally cannot give proper guidance and direction to others, nor can they discern the true nature of occurrences in society.

(Translated from the May 2014 issue of the *Daibyakuenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal)

Raising our Courageous Successors

Report by: Navin Manandhar

On August 16, 59 Men division members from 8 districts in Kathmandu and Machhapuchhre district in Pokhara held their 15th General Meeting at three different venues in Kathmandu and in lakeside, Pokhara.

At the meetings, Men division leaders stressed the importance of raising courageous successors, as golden pillars to support the noble organization Nepal SGI. This is the very first time that Nepal SGI Men's Division held a meeting at the district level where two and three districts jointly held the meetings in Kathmandu. Annapurna and Dhaulagiri districts held a meeting at Joon Montessori Home Academy at Golfutar, while Amadablam, Jugal and Himchuli districts held a meeting at Bagdole, Nilgiri and Kanchanjunga and Manaslu district held a meeting at Saugal. On the same day, Machhapuchhre district also held the meeting in Lakeside, Pokhara where 10 MD members gathered joyfully.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda sent a message for the event that was read at the meetings. In his message, President Ikeda said: "It is my hope that all of you, who have embraced the Mystic Law, will live out your precious lives together with fellow comrades of faith, holding your heads up high with pride by winning each and every day. We practice faith so that we can enjoy happiness. We engage ourselves in Gakkai activities so that we can live a life of supreme value. I ask that you first decide that "you will come out victorious in the end no matter what" for the sake of yourselves and your beloved families. Deeply cherishing this resolve in your hearts, please chant daimoku through all ordeals and continue advancing with great composure."

SGI President Ikeda's Essay dedicated to the Men's Division and his dialogue with Young Men Division members about work and faith was also discussed on the meeting.

Mr. Khub Bahadur Baral, Machhapuchhre district co-ordinator highlighted the quote of American entrepreneur Dr. Armand Hammer who

said "if we allow ourselves to be discouraged, we make ourselves our own worst enemy." Mr. Naresh Jung Thapa shared that he was encouraged learning from President Ikeda's essay in which Ikeda mentioned that "If I had listened to all the people who have told me, 'It can't be done,' I would never have done anything. I always say, 'don't tell me it can't be done: tell me how I can do it.'" Mr. Gyani Raja Chitrakar shared that the work and faith both are the essential part of our life. He said; the purpose of faith is to make people wise, whereas work is to make our surroundings comfortable and so feel at ease.

MD Chief Mr. Prabal Kiran Manandhar said, since the meeting was held in small numbers, it was successful to open up and establish heart to heart connection between members. All present realized the truth of this and made a vow to do a lot for realizing the dream of our beloved mentor in achieving a grand kosen-rufu movement in the land of Buddha. He also said that the review and the progress of all individual districts will be done quarterly this year to achieve all our determined goals.

SGI Director Mr. Ong Bon Chai and SSA Zone MD leader Mr. Koh How Wee also attended the general meeting. In his address, Mr. Ong Said: "if you say you don't have problems means you are not sincere and responsible. Where there is challenge there is progress, where there is challenge there is hope, where there is challenge there is joy, where there is challenge there is happiness and where there is challenge, there is victory." Challenges are like a shadow of your body, without it we'll not progress" he added.

All the Kathmandu MD leaders gathered again in the evening at the Nepal SGI Peace Centre to report about the meeting held in 3 different venues and had a guidance session with SSA Zone MD Leader Mr. Koh How Wee. He focused on the practice of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism which is more related to changing our karma. He also shared that we should chant or carry out our faith joyfully with the spirit "I know I can win".



Men's Division 15th General Meeting held in Pokhara



MESSAGE

My sincere congratulations on your gathering today to commemorate "Men's Division Day, August 24"! The Men's Division is the golden pillar and mainstay of our kosen-rufu movement. As a Men's Division member, I am joining you in your meeting today with my wholehearted wishes, as I send you my heartfelt applause from Japan.

It has been 13 years since we ushered in the 21 Century. Our world today continues to undergo tremendous changes at an ever increasing rate. There is not a single phenomenon in the universe that remains stagnant and unchanged. I believe this is a reflection of the true nature of our lives and society.

Nichiren Daishonin writes in the Goshu: "A single person in the course of a single day has eight million four thousand thoughts." (WND-2, p 307) The human mind, too, is constantly changing every second, every moment. A person who was filled with anger a moment ago, can be laughing the next. A person who claimed to be free of problems in life today can be plunged into an abyss of agony the following day. In this way, life is a drama that is filled with constant and continuous changes.

The practice of chanting daimoku enables us to align and anchor our changeable minds with the Mystic Law, which is the fundamental Law of this great universe. The Gohonzon is the entity that encompasses all phenomena in the universe. And, the same Gohonzon exists in our very own lives. For this reason, by chanting the daimoku of the Mystic Law we forge and consolidate our inner "self" with Buddhahood, thereby victoriously opening the life state of happiness that remains eternally indestructible over the three existences of life. This is what it truly means to practise "faith for absolute victory".

I am fully aware that while struggling with your personal problems at work, in the family, or with your own health, you are at the same time praying and taking action day and night for the happiness of your fellow members and friends, and the betterment of society at large. Such endeavours are imbued with profound compassion and connected directly to the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin. All of you are individuals with a mission of supreme nobility and the benefits you gain will be boundless and immeasurable.

It is my hope that all of you, who have embraced the Mystic Law, will live out your precious lives together with fellow comrades of faith, holding your heads up high with pride by winning each and every day. We practise faith so that we can enjoy happiness. We engage ourselves in Gakkai activities so that we can live a life of supreme value. I ask that you first decide that "you will come out victorious in the end no matter what" for the sake of yourselves and your beloved families. Deeply cherishing this resolve in your hearts, please chant daimoku through all ordeals and continue advancing with great composure.

Please continue to put in steadfast efforts to contribute your part in the community and at your place of work as excellent citizens and establish firm bonds of trust by illuminating the hearts of the people around you with the warm sunlight of hope.

I will be chanting daimoku earnestly, praying sincerely that the Men's Division members in Nepal whom I cherish with all my heart, will continue to enjoy good health, that you will strive in high spirits and advance along the great path of happiness and victory. I am also praying that your family will enjoy great prosperity and glory.

May you always stay well and healthy!

August 16, 2014
Daisaku Ikeda
President
Soka Gakkai International

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.

In Praise of Each Person's Own Uniqueness

In Japan, we celebrate New Year's Day as the arrival of spring, using it as an opportunity to renew our resolutions for the year. I think this is one of the more positive Japanese traditions.

People feel the passage of time according to how old they are: Time seems to go slowly in their teens; it seems to remain slow even in their twenties; however, it picks up speed in their thirties and seems to go by swiftly in their forties and fifties.

From an objective viewpoint, time has neither colour nor form, and it has neither quality nor substance. Yet, with strictness, it penetrates and governs life, society and the universe as a relentless force.

"History is the greatest dialectical critic." So I once wrote in my reading notes when I was young. Now I feel a little bit self-conscious about it because I was young and overconfident at the time. But it is true that ever since that time I have recognised the selective function of history — time is a kind of ever-present force which distinguishes between truth and falsehood and always, without fail, brings the former out into the open.

For example, Mr Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who founded the Soka Gakkai, was an excellent scholar and educator. He wrote *The Geography of Human Life* at the age of 32 and *The Theory of Value* in his later years; they attracted the attention of very few people then. Recently, however, the number of people who recognise their creativity and foresight has increased tremendously and they are frequently referred to by scholars in their lectures on education held throughout the country. This is one example of the selective function of history.

Last fall (1980), I visited the United States for the first time in five years; it was two decades ago that I first set foot in that country. In the course of these 20 years, I have visited America many times, and each time I have strengthened my friendship with those with whom I had already been acquainted, and I have formed new friendships as well. In

retrospect, I can see the history of two decades in which many footprints have become clearly visible.

During this time, American society has undergone tremendous changes. One of the phenomena which have undergone considerable change is the women's liberation movement. It is true that the women's rights movement, which rapidly developed in the 1970s, though experiencing periods of trial and error, has brought about many achievements in an attempt to solve the contradictions which are inherent in a male-oriented society. But I also hear that, on the other hand, the movement during the last decade has, according to the self-examination of those involved in the activities, sacrificed many other things.

In the present society, there have emerged serious spiritual problems such as ever-increasing human alienation, accompanied by the increase of divorce and the collapse of the family structure, which the conventional women's liberation movement alone cannot solve. As a result, the women's rights movement has now entered its second stage.

In other words, the movement has directed its course from its confrontation with men and the patriarchal society to an ideal coexistence between men and women as human beings. I think that we can see here another example of the selective function of history.

Ms Betty Friedan, one of the main figures of the American women's rights movement, talked about various aspects of the movement in her interview with one of the major Japanese newspapers conducted prior to her visit to Japan last fall. What was most impressive to me in her interview is the following remark: "It is neither a women's liberation movement nor a men's liberation movement; it is a movement for human liberation."

I myself have used the words "human lib" on several occasions. I have realised during these years that we should give first priority to the development of an independent spirit as a human being before

considering our role as a man, woman, child or parent. In other words, in order for a person to become a man, woman, child or parent in the true sense of the word, we must first of all develop our autonomous identity as a human being.

A movement which merely responds to the prevailing current of the times will fade away and pass into oblivion when the current changes its course. It can never withstand the passage of time into history. Any thought or movement that is centred primarily on the human being will survive the vicissitudes of time and continue to flourish. I hope that the women's liberation movement will make steady progress towards the true emancipation of human beings.

In Buddhism the principle of *O-bai-to-ri*, or "the cherry, the plum, the peach, the damson", is expounded. It means that each flower has its own unique character. Each is different, but when it blooms it is the most unique and the most beautiful in its own way. The same is true for human beings. It is unreasonable for one to pattern oneself after other; it is like a cherry blossom trying to become a plum blossom or a plum flower aspiring to be that of a peach.

Of course, it is naturally necessary to organise and develop the environment so that each person can give full play to his or her unique personality. But it is foolish to try to change our basic personality. It is important for us to reflect closely on our own life, and continually cultivate our innermost self.

One of the most memorable occasions of my last visit to the United States was my reunion with the pioneer Japanese women who married Americans after the Second World War and laid the foundation of the Soka Gakkai in the United States. They all evoked fond memories, each one of them having weathered hardships during the two decades since I met them the first time.

When I saw the brilliantly shining faces of these women who are living a vigorous life, having firmly rooted themselves within

American society. I was, in spite of myself, reminded of the sad and depressed faces of these same women who, 20 years ago, lived only with the hopes of returning to their native country, Japan.

A photo magazine once carried a feature on Japanese women in general who married Americans after the war; it included very impressive photographs. However, only two out of the ten among those women interviewed by the magazine said that they wanted to live out their lives in America. Even now, most of those women are still hoping to return to their native country.

Those women of the Soka Gakkai must have also tortured themselves over whether they should stay in America or go back to Japan, naturally having encountered family discord, the difficulties of daily life or sheer isolation in a foreign country where they had no friends with whom to share their troubles. Their continued hardships must be difficult to imagine. At the same time, because of their faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I am sure they exerted their utmost to turn their hardships, derived from karma, into a sense of mission, and to become respectable members of society contributing positively to American society.

They have mastered the language, learned to drive and come to cherish hopes for the future, thereby overcoming all kinds of difficulties. I have seen in those women the beautiful realisation of the principle of *O-bai-to-ri*, which I think is a true example of human liberation.

Time reveals a human being's true aspects. The smiling faces of those women who, like individual flowers, have bloomed beautifully in America, shone brightly just like cherry blossoms in full bloom.

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

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