



THE NSGI TIMES



POETRY SYMPOSIUM



MY COUNTRY : MY PRIDE



A monthly magazine on Human and Social Development.



10/19

OCTOBER

Life is a chain. All things are related. When any link is harmed, the other links are affected. We should think of the environment as our mother. There is no crime worse than harming one's mother.



Year of Soka Victory - Toward our 90th Anniversary

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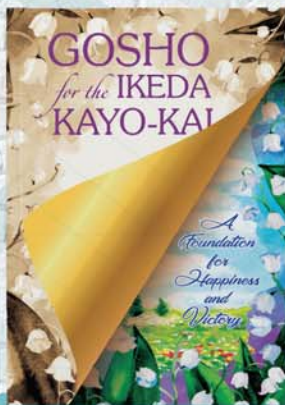
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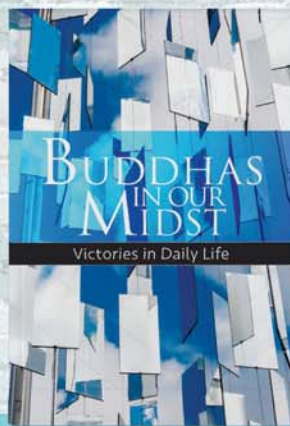
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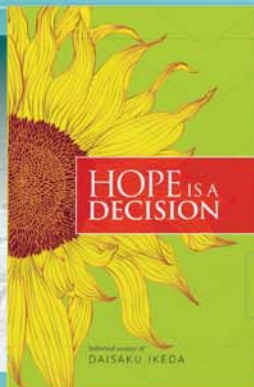
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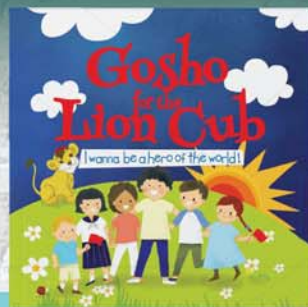
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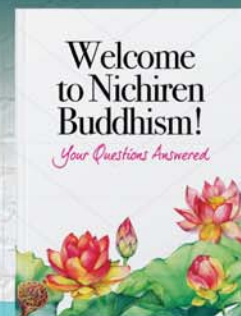
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Make the Brilliant Light of Encouragement Shine

On October 2, 1960, I was en route to Hawaii for my first overseas trip. Placing my hand on the breast pocket of my jacket, in which I had tucked a photograph of my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, I engraved in my life this passage from Nichiren Daishonin's writing "The Selection of the Time": "Can there be any doubt that . . . the great pure Law of the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] will be spread far and wide [Jpn. kosen-rufu] throughout Japan and all the other countries of Jambudvipa [the entire world]?" (WND-1, 550).

As my mentor's representative, I felt that now was the time to actualize this great declaration of a global religious movement. My heart blazed with the determination to beckon forth Bodhisattvas of the Earth everywhere I went.

During that trip, I chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as if to infuse the earth at each destination with daimoku and engaged in wholehearted dialogue with each member I met.

Responding to my call to join me in working for the happiness and welfare of all humanity, they stood up as noble pioneers of kosen-rufu while grappling with their own hardships and struggles.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a people-centered teaching that seeks to encourage each individual.

In a letter to Shijo Kingo, who was facing enormous difficulties, the Daishonin says: "I have been ceaselessly praying for your sake to the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha, and the god of the sun, for I am convinced that you are a person who can inherit the soul of the Lotus Sutra" (WND-1, 839).

The light of the Daishonin's profound compassion brightly illuminated the life of his disciple, awakening in his innermost being—"the depths of the Dharma nature" (OTT, 119)—the awareness of a joyously emerging Bodhisattva of the Earth.

Inheriting the Daishonin's spirit, we chant for and encourage our fellow members, believing that each is "a person who can inherit the soul of the

Lotus Sutra" and a Bodhisattva of the Earth. We are united by our bonds of shared purpose.

Having stood up in faith thanks to the prayers and encouragement of fellow members, we in turn strive to support others in the same way and to foster the next generation in a beautiful ripple effect of repaying gratitude and showing appreciation.

Almost 60 years have passed since I first set forth on my voyage for worldwide kosen-rufu. We have demonstrated that Bodhisattvas of the Earth are certain to emerge across the globe and that a solidarity of people dedicated to realizing peace through human revolution can be created.

It is wonderful to see vibrant new leaders steadily appearing and initiating fresh efforts for kosen-rufu in the places where they have vowed to fulfill their mission. The more we encourage others, the more our network of Bodhisattvas of the Earth will grow. Linked by the ties of mentor and disciple, let's make the brilliant light of encouragement shine again today!

As long as
Soka encouragement lives on,
capable, hope-filled individuals
will forever appear throughout the world
in accord with the principle of "emerging
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(Translated from the October 2019 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal)

SGI President Ikeda's Encouragement for the Future Division

Messages from Our Brilliant Planet

A series of photo essays by SGI President Ikeda addressing members of the boys and girls division.

[11] The Cherry Blossoms at Soka University

This winter was especially harsh. I would like to praise my young friends in the snowy, colder regions of Japan for bravely enduring such extreme conditions.

Congratulations also to the sixth graders on your remarkable development and graduation from elementary school! I know you all worked very hard, and I join your parents and members in your local area in offering you a huge round of applause. I am sure that the cherry trees that have weathered the winter to bloom so beautifully are celebrating along with you.

*

I love cherry blossoms. During the dark days of World War II when I was a young boy, many cherry trees were either cut down for fuel or went up in flames during the air raids. Seeing this, I dreamed of someday planting cherry trees around all the train stations in Japan so that their flowers would brighten people's hearts.

When I grew older, I planted cherry trees in many places. I have an especially fond memory of planting cherry trees with 100 fellow members, including boys and girls division members, in May 1967, some 50 years ago, on the planned site for the Soka University campus in Japan. No buildings had yet been constructed, but together, we planted more than 16,000 trees and shrubs of different kinds, including cherries, plums, and azaleas.

On that occasion, I remember telling those young friends around me:

"Let's set our sights on what we would like to accomplish by the time these saplings—small as they are today—will have grown into tall trees!"

To plant a tree is to plant life. To nurture a tree is to nurture hope. To protect a tree is to protect peace.

Just as all the young people who were there that day continued making steady efforts to improve themselves year after year, Soka University has also developed splendidly, now becoming a great educational institution drawing top-class students from across the world.

Every year, I have looked forward to taking photographs of the cherry trees in bloom on the Soka University campus. And when I point my camera in their direction, I always try to listen to what the blossoms could be saying as the trees joyfully celebrate spring.

*

Two cherry blossoms—neighbors—are sitting next to each other, swaying in the spring breeze and chatting away as usual. At first glance, it seems as if they are enjoying a friendly conversation, but that's not exactly the case.

"Ah, it's nice and warm. Spring is here!" says one of the cherry blossoms. "How wonderful! I can finally bloom after patiently enduring the cold winter!" Overjoyed, it opens up its petals with a bright smile.

The cherry blossom next to it, however, remains hesitant. "Are you sure? It still feels quite cold to me!" it complains, unfolding its petals just a tiny

bit. It really doesn't like the cold. "I hate having to put up with the cold winter! I wish it was spring all year long. Who needs winter?" it grumbles.

"But it's because of winter that we are able to bloom so beautifully," the smiling blossom replies.

"What?!" the cold blossom says, surprised. In shock, its petals open up a little bit more.

"Yes, it's the truth!" exclaims the forsythia, a shrub with bright yellow flowers, from below. "The cherry trees on which you grow were making preparations starting last summer so that you could bloom this way in the spring. First of all, they had to produce buds. The buds are quietly sleeping, but the winter cold wakes them up. Without the cold of winter, the flowers won't wake up in time to blossom. Living right below them, I've seen how the cherry trees have braved the bitter cold. I know well how hard they have worked."

Wide-eyed with amazement, the cold blossom opens its petals even more. "This year was extremely cold," it says, "but I guess it's because of that cold weather that we can now bloom along with all the other cherry blossoms."

The smiling blossom adds: "On even the coldest days, my tree encouraged me, saying, 'You will surely bloom beautifully in the spring and bring joy to everyone. Don't give up!' It gave me the strength to keep going."

With cheeks flushed pink, the cold blossom says, "You're right. I won't let the cold beat me any longer!" Finally, it unfolds its petals all the way.

Looking up at the wonderful cherry blossoms, the people down below exclaim: “How gorgeous!”

“Winter always turns to spring, doesn’t it?”

“Let’s do our best, too!”

Grinning in full bloom, the two neighboring cherry blossoms look at each other proudly, gently swaying in the spring breeze.

*

My mentor, Josei Toda, also loved cherry blossoms.

One spring day, he and I were gazing at cherry trees blooming magnificently against a bright blue sky. With a smile, he commented that the trees had weathered yet another bitter winter in order to blossom.

On another occasion, when Mr. Toda’s business was in serious trouble and he faced a period as challenging as

a cold winter, he smiled and said to me, “Winter always turns to spring.” I can still picture him saying this.

As Mr. Toda’s disciple, I have worked alongside my fellow members—dear friends who have remained undefeated in the face of all kinds of hardship—to sow seeds of peace throughout Japan and the world. And now, spring has come! Just like cherry blossoms in full bloom, our members in 192 countries and territories are bringing their flowers of human revolution to blossom.

March 11, 2018 will mark the seventh anniversary of the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that struck the northeastern part of Japan in 2011. In the spring of that year, cherry trees still bloomed, even in places that had been struck by the giant waves of the tsunami. Like those cherry trees, our trustworthy members living in Tohoku have refused to be defeated by the disaster and are

courageously making new flowers blossom in their families and communities every year.

I’m sure you’ve gone through all sorts of experiences this past year, both happy and sad. Some of you may have tried your hardest, yet failed to achieve the results you were aiming for. Even so, please remember that as long as you stay positive and continue making efforts without giving up, you can absolutely achieve your dreams and bring wonderful flowers to bloom in your lives.

*

In this final installment of “Messages from Our Brilliant Planet,” we have returned to Japan after a year of travel, marking an end to this journey.

The end of one journey, however, is the start of a new one. In that spirit, I look forward to meeting you all again in the new school year.

Thank you for traveling with me this year!

*



(Translated from the November 1, 2017, issue of Boys and Girls Hope News, the Soka Gakkai monthly newspaper for the boys and girls division)

This concludes the series Messages from Our Brilliant Planet.

Background:

Soka University opened in Hachioji, Tokyo, on April 2, 1971. President Ikeda founded the university to realize the ideals of Soka education that he inherited from Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai.

As of March 1, 2018, Soka University is attended by some 8,000 students, including 660 international students from 49 countries and territories. It has taken part in academic exchanges with nearly 200 universities around the world, and its graduates are active in both Japan and globally.

President Ikeda has also founded the Tokyo and Kansai Soka Elementary, Junior, and Senior High Schools, and Sapporo Soka Kindergarten, thereby creating a comprehensive system of Soka education that runs from kindergarten to university. There are several other Soka educational institutions worldwide, including Soka University of America (SUA); kindergartens in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and South Korea; and the Brazil Soka schools from kindergarten through high school—all of which are fostering leaders for the 21st century.



Part 3: Kosen-rufu and World Peace

Chapter 25: The Mentor-Disciple Relationship Is the Heart of the Soka Gakkai—Part 1 [of 2]

Introduction to the Chapter:

SGI President Ikeda, speaking with a group of young people who had just graduated from college and entered the workforce, reflected on the days of his own youth: “I gave my all to serving and supporting my mentor, Josei Toda. It was very demanding, but at the same time, truly enjoyable. The time I spent undergoing his strict but compassionate training was the hardest time of my life, but it stands out as one of my happiest memories.

“There is no greater good fortune than to have a mentor watching over you, to whom you can report the results of your efforts.”

He was silent for a while, and a solemn mood fell over the room. Then, lightly tapping his chest, he added: “But President Toda is here in my heart right now. That’s why I am fearless and never in doubt.

“I am a lion. The word ‘lion’ (Jpn. shishi) is written with two Chinese characters that respectively also mean ‘mentor’ and ‘disciple.’ Those who base their lives on the spirit of mentor and disciple are lions.”

The way of mentor and disciple is the very essence of Nichiren Buddhism.

To overcome every difficulty and follow through on the path of human revolution and kosen-rufu, we need to firmly embrace the mentor-disciple relationship, which is a source of endless inspiration. The history of the Soka Gakkai clearly attests to this. The noble mentor-disciple relationships shared by first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, second president Josei Toda, and third president Daisaku Ikeda opened the great path of kosen-rufu in Japan and around the world.

This chapter contains President Ikeda’s guidance discussing the importance of the mentor-disciple relationship.

*

25.1 The Mentor-Disciple Relationship Is a Sublime Spiritual Relay

Introduction:

In conjunction with the publication of a Bulgarian-language edition of his dialogue with the Bulgarian art historian and Sofia University professor Dr. Axinia Djourova, President Ikeda gave a wide-ranging interview for readers. In it, he touched on the mentor-disciple relationship in general terms, stressing that it is indispensable in transmitting high ideals to future generations.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

From an interview commemorating the publication of the Bulgarian edition of Utsukushiki Shishi no Tamashii (The Beauty of a Lion’s Heart), published in Japanese in the Seikyo Shimbun, on August 10, 2000.

There may be many ways to view the relationship between mentor and disciple, teacher and learner, that differ from person to person, or among institutions or nations.

I believe that the mentor-disciple relationship is indispensable to positively shaping nations, societies, and the times with unwavering integrity, passion, and energy.

Mentors teach their disciples all the goals and all the good they wish to accomplish. Why? Because life is limited. We need to pass the baton on to the next generation, and again to the next, to achieve anything of enduring value.

However, when those in positions of leadership—be they lawmakers, educators, business people, or notable figures in various fields—fail to do this and become autocratic and self-satisfied, clinging to their own status or position, it creates a toxic situation. They give in to destructive behavior patterns, growing ever more arrogant and looking down on their protégés and others who seek to succeed them—ultimately bringing about their own and others’ ruin.

What we need to do instead is dedicate ourselves with a spirit of humility to enabling young people, our successors, to surpass us and achieve more than we could, affirming their strengths and their mission. Repeating this process is the way that humankind grows and develops. It is the way to forward progress. A country, an institution, a person who forgets this truth is certain to end up in unfortunate circumstances and become stuck with no way forward.

We need to give greater attention to passing on, from one generation to the next, the noble treasure of the mentor-disciple relationship, a relationship unique to human beings. We need to revive this relationship and find ways for its true expression. Otherwise, the human race will be condemned to endlessly repeating the same suffering, the same mutual antagonism, the same conflict. This is my fear. This is the result we can expect if we allow the mentor-disciple relationship to perish.

All great revolutions—whether in world history or, for example, the Meiji Restoration in Japanese history—were carried out through the joint

struggles of mentors and disciples. The mentors stood up with vision and resolve, but in many cases, they were imprisoned or assassinated, or they died of illness, or in battle, before they could achieve their aims. The disciples inherited their mentors’ aspirations and worked hard to see them to fruition. There is nothing more beautiful, more inspiring, than this spiritual relay, the passing of the baton to those who will carry on the struggle.

Without the mentor-disciple relationship, anything we undertake just ends with our own lifetime. It becomes nothing more than a small drama and a pursuit for our own self-satisfaction. In contrast, the mentor-disciple relationship enables us to live a life connected to the great flow of humanity, a life like a mighty river, a life that is part of an unending relay race.

Buddhism teaches the oneness of mentor and disciple. This is not a hierarchy, with the mentor above and the disciple below. Mentor and disciple share the same goal and advance together toward it. We also see many tales in the Buddhist scriptures in which the disciple in this lifetime is the mentor in the next.

At the same time, the mentor must show decisive leadership, or harmony is destroyed. Where the mentor is confident and resolute, things always move in a positive direction. Were that not the case, confusion would reign.

Mentors and disciples are like runners in a relay race. They are pressing ahead, passing the baton forward on the shared path of justice, happiness, and peace for all humanity. The mentors run ahead, to later pass the baton to the disciples.

Nothing great can be achieved without mentors, and as such, they deserve the highest respect. Disciples put into action what they have learned from the mentor and carry on the work the mentor has left for them to accomplish in the future.

President Toda would often say that disciples should seek to excel their mentors.

Only small-minded mentors demand that their disciples follow them and accept everything they say with blind obedience. Genuine mentors urge their disciples to surpass them, to accomplish what they themselves could not accomplish. And genuine disciples earnestly strive to do just that.

*

25.2 Mentor and Disciple Are Like a Needle and Thread

Introduction:

President Ikeda explains through an easy-to-grasp example that the mentor-disciple relationship is not authoritarian or hierarchical, but is the supreme way by which we can grow and develop our fullest human potential through the shared effort to realize a lofty ideal.

President Ikeda’s Guidance:

Adapted from the book Watakushi no Ningengaku (On Historical Personalities and Society), published in Japanese in August 1988.

We need to be aware of the importance of the mentor-disciple relationship in terms of awakening to and carrying out our personal mission in life, as well as promoting the betterment and development of society.

For many today, the words “mentor and disciple” have a feudalistic, old-fashioned ring, but that is not how it should be.

In order to master anything, whether academic learning or sports, we need an instructor or a coach. Having a good instructor or coach speeds our improvement and mastery. Trying to learn on our own, in contrast, often leads to much wasted effort or soon finding ourselves stuck, not knowing how progress further. In the same way, to live our lives in the most meaningful and worthwhile fashion, we need a good

instructor or coach—a mentor in life—who can teach us basic values and attitudes for life.

This relationship is not a hierarchical one of superior and inferior, nor a contractual one based on profit and payment. It is the most spontaneous and purest spiritual bond, built on a foundation of mutual trust, in which two individuals share a common purpose. It is only through this person-to-person bond that human potential is truly fostered and can develop to its fullest.

In that respect, encountering a good teacher, a great mentor, is the key to leading the best possible life. In addition, a lofty ideal can only be achieved when it is shared by a mentor and disciple, the disciple carrying on and realizing the vision articulated by the mentor.

The relationship between mentor and disciple is like that between a needle and thread. The mentor opens the way and reveals the principles, while the disciple, carrying on the mentor's work, applies, develops, and actualizes those principles. The disciple must also go on to surpass the mentor. The mentor, meanwhile, is ready to give everything, even their own life, for the sake of the disciple.

I have always pledged that it is my duty to spare no pains or efforts, to make every sacrifice, to open the way to a bright future for our young people and build the stage for their activities.

*

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25.3 Following the Path of the Disciple to Develop One's Fullest Potential

Introduction:

Through the example of Shakyamuni's ten major disciples, President Ikeda outlines how making efforts to put into practice what our mentor is teaching can help us develop our individuality and ability, and actualize our potential and unique mission.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From a speech delivered at a youth division leaders meeting, Tokyo, April 20, 1990.

Shakyamuni had ten major disciples. Following Shakyamuni's guidance and instruction, they were each able, through their Buddhist practice, to develop their own unique character and qualities, which they put to use as their "weapons" in their selfless struggle to propagate Buddhism.

(1) Shariputra was known as "foremost in wisdom." Originally a follower of a non-Buddhist teacher, he joined Shakyamuni's community of practitioners along with Maudgalyayana. Shariputra was such an outstanding disciple that he was able to preach the teachings in Shakyamuni's stead, but, unfortunately, he died before Shakyamuni.

(2) Mahakashyapa was known as "foremost in ascetic practices (dhuta)." He seems to have been a quiet, introverted person, but he excelled in performing certain strict disciplinary practices, so he must have been a man of stalwart character. And though he had a rather subdued personality, he played a key role in preserving the community of practitioners after Shakyamuni's death.

(3) Ananda was known as "foremost in hearing the Buddha's teachings." He was in constant attendance on Shakyamuni, so he heard the greatest number of his discourses. He was a genial, kind-hearted, and pleasant youth who acted as an advocate for women wishing to renounce secular life and join the Buddhist Order.

(4) Subhuti was known as "foremost in understanding the doctrine of non-substantiality." He was an even-tempered individual who got along with everyone, a person of well-rounded character.

(5) Purna was known as "foremost in preaching the Law." His special quality was his eloquence.

(6) Maudgalyayana was known as "foremost in transcendental powers." One such power is the ability to travel anywhere at will. While his frequent companion Shariputra was oriented toward ideas, Maudgalyayana was an intuitive and passionate man of action.

(7) Katyayana was known as "foremost in debate." He was a precise logician who focused on debating representatives of other religions and explaining Shakyamuni's teachings.

(8) Aniruddha was known as "foremost in divine insight." On one occasion, he fell asleep while Shakyamuni was preaching, and was severely reprimanded by him. After that experience, he engaged in a practice to avoid sleep, taking it to such an extreme that he eventually went blind. But his loss of physical sight was compensated by his acquisition of divine insight, which afforded him incredibly deep powers of perception and judgment.

(9) Upali was known as "foremost in observing the precepts."

He was from a low caste and had no special talents, but he sincerely upheld Shakyamuni's teachings. He can be seen as a representative of ordinary people.

(10) Rahula was known as "foremost in inconspicuous practice"—skilled in highly meticulous and precise practice. He was the son of Shakyamuni, born before the latter renounced secular life. Rahula began practicing Buddhism at the age of 15. Though as Shakyamuni's son he faced many difficulties, he was also very perceptive and sensitive to details, which earned him the respect of all.

The ten major disciples are described in various scriptures, and by combining those sources, we arrive at this general picture of them. As we can see, Shakyamuni succeeded in bringing the unique qualities and talents of such distinct and different individuals into full flower.

When the new Buddhist group established by the youthful Shakyamuni started out, it lacked any established organization, facilities, or public trust and acceptance. There were only the ties of mentor and disciple. This was the actual starting point of Buddhism.

Responding to the message communicated to them by Shakyamuni, his disciples set out to spread his teachings.

Shakyamuni had his followers engage in propagation soon after they joined his group. He instructed them to go forth alone and preach the Law, to embark on their journey of propagation immediately.

Spreading the teachings encompasses all forms of practice in Buddhism. There is no better way to forge character. If we neglect this basic practice of sharing the teachings, we cannot cultivate ourselves as human beings.

All too often when leaders fail to grow as individuals, they resort to using the power of the organization to manipulate the members. This is where the corruption of the organization starts.

Making continuous, dedicated efforts in propagation is the lifeblood of Buddhism. This is Shakyamuni's teaching and the direct path to attaining Buddhahood that Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, taught his followers at the risk of his life.

The ten major disciples didn't set limits on their practice. By throwing themselves heart and soul into their practice and striving arduously to build the Buddhist Order, they honed their unique qualities and developed their personal skills and fortes.

They engaged in a ceaseless struggle to find ways to put into practice their mentor's teachings, which they had etched in their beings. For disciples striving to respond to and apply what their mentor taught them, every instant was an earnest struggle, a battle for the sake of the Law from which they refused to retreat a single step.

At the same time, the teacher, by providing opportunities for his disciples to take action, gains a full understanding of their potential and abilities. These are things that are not

always obvious through superficial observation.

Only after training and testing ourselves to the limit do we succeed in revealing our true intrinsic nature, making the diamond of our unique personality sparkle from the depths of our lives. It is impossible to fully develop our humanity in the realms of politics or business, and even education has its limits. This is the profound significance of our practice of Nichiren Buddhism, which enables us to polish our lives at the most fundamental level.

25.4 The Mentor-Disciple Relationship Is the Cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism

Introduction:

Citing passages from the Daishonin's writings, President Ikeda explains that the unity of mentor and disciple is the path to ensuring the eternal flow of kosen-ruffu.

President Ikeda's Guidance:

From a speech delivered at a Tokyo No. 2 Area executive leaders conference, Tokyo, April 5, 2008.

What is the most important requirement for us to advance together in the unity of "many in body, one in mind"? It is for each of us to make the oneness of mentor and disciple the center of our lives. Sharing the same heart and spirit as our mentor is the key to us, a gathering of diverse individuals, uniting in a single purpose—embodying the spirit of "many in body, one in mind."

To the Ikegami brothers, disciples who were exerting themselves earnestly in their Buddhist practice amid challenging circumstances, the Daishonin instructs: "Though I may seem presumptuous in saying so, you should join together in paying honor to Nichiren. If the two of you should fail to act in harmony, then you may be sure

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that you will cease to enjoy the protection of [the Buddhas and heavenly deities]" (WND-2, 914).

Aligning our hearts with our mentor and deepening our determination to advance kosen-rufu is key to achieving solid unity in the spirit of "many in body, one in mind." It is through such unity that we can activate the true brilliant power of the Mystic Law.

I'd like to share with you some other passages from the Daishonin's writings:

Those who call themselves my disciples and practice the Lotus Sutra should all practice as I do. If they do, Shakyamuni, Many Treasures, Shakyamuni's emanations throughout the ten directions, and the ten demon daughters [guardian deities of Buddhism] will protect them. (WND-1, 978)

*

[The Lotus Sutra states:] "If one stays close to the teachers of the Law, one will speedily gain the way of enlightenment. By following and learning from these teachers one will see Buddhas as numerous as Ganges sands" [cf. LSOC10, 208]. (WND-2, 375)

*

If lay believers and their teacher pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water. (WND-1, 795)

*

To forget the original teacher who had brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death. (WND-1, 747)

As these golden words indicate, the mentor-disciple relationship is an important cornerstone of Nichiren Buddhism.

The Daishonin's direct disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin, writes:

In the teaching of the Daishonin, one attains Buddhahood by correctly following the path of mentor and disciple. If one errs even slightly in the path of mentor and disciple, then though one may uphold the Lotus Sutra, one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Striving in faith with the same spirit as the mentor is fundamental to attaining Buddhahood. It is also the great path for ensuring the eternal flow of kosen-rufu.

As I have said many times in the past, the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple is the decisive factor that separates Nikko Shonin from the five senior priests who betrayed the Daishonin. Nikko Shonin proudly called himself a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin, whom he properly revered as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. In contrast, the five senior priests, fearing persecution and seeking to curry favor with the authorities, foolishly

called themselves priests of the Tendai school.

Moreover, the five senior priests burned or otherwise destroyed items that they were embarrassed or ashamed to have associated with their mentor, such as letters that the Daishonin had written in common everyday language to ordinary people. Nikko Shonin alone carefully preserved the Daishonin's vernacular writings, convinced that at some time in the future they would be translated and transmitted abroad to China, India, and the world at large.

[Nikko Shonin declares that when the time comes to widely propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Japanese texts of his writings are sure to be translated and disseminated throughout the world (cf. GZ, 1613).]

The unmistakable difference here lies in the fact that Nikko Shonin faithfully upheld the spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple, while the five senior priests did not.

Kosen-rufu is possible when disciples embrace the same spirit as their mentor. Without the solid pillar of the mentor-disciple relationship, it is all too easy to be swayed by one's own emotions and the trends of the times, and one will readily cave in and give up when one's faith is challenged.

For more than five decades after the Daishonin's passing, Nikko Shonin carried on the solemn struggle of oneness of mentor and disciple. Through his fierce determination to refute the erroneous and reveal the true, he utterly demolished the false assertions of the five senior priests.

Fifty years have passed since Mr. Toda's death (on April 2, 1958). I am confident beyond a shadow of doubt that through my efforts as his direct disciple, I have established an enduring model of what it means to follow the path of a disciple, the path of a successor, and the path of oneness of mentor and disciple.

To be continued.

Aligning our hearts with our mentor and deepening our determination to advance kosen-rufu is key to achieving solid unity in the spirit of "many in body, one in mind." It is through such unity that we can activate the true brilliant power of the Mystic Law.

Poetry Symposium My Country ! My Pride

NSGI Times

September 20, 2019

Naturally, we all have a deep love for our place of birth, and everyone tends to express this love in their own way. Patriotism is something that springs from the depths of the heart. "The pen is mightier than the sword" - meaning that ideas have a broader impact than weapons - a more effective way to protect our nation.

Nepal SGI has held a poetry symposium based on the theme "My country: My Pride" to mark the fourth anniversary of the establishment of a constitution after

six decades of political struggle. More than 120 people attended the symposium at Nepal SGI Peace Centre, Kathmandu. The organizer commented that " a poem is a work of construction which inspires us to fight against injustice and instills a sense of responsibility towards society. This is an indication of how the poet senses the world around him in non-confirmatory manner.

The symposium commenced with the inauguration of the event by lighting the lamp by Chief Guest Dr. Bom Bahadur Thapa '*Jitali*' and

Chairperson Sahana Shrestha. Addressing a welcome speech, Vice General Director Sagar Thapa shared on the importance of transformation of society through arts and culture which is one of the main goals of SGI. Focusing on such transformations through striving to become a good citizen and a true patriot. We can bring about a transformative change in the family, community, and the world as a whole. He spoke also about SGI President Dr. Daisaku Ikeda who is also a renowned World poet laureate and his contribution to world peace.



Inauguration of the event by lighting the lamp by Chief Guest Dr. Bom Bahadur Thapa '*Jitali*' and Chairperson Sahana Shrestha.

The curtain of the symposium was raised with a musical story of a young lady Grishma Dhungel who returned to her motherland after not being happy in Australia. The story accompanied by a beautiful song which conveys in part : "*paisa hoina paso chha pardeshma.*" The story concludes happily with her return to Nepal and landing a job at the Alfa Beta office in Kathmandu.

The poetry reading began with the poem of Dr. Ikeda "*Shanti ko mirmire*" which was recited by Naresh Jung Thapa on his behalf. The symposium of self expression found many admirers who came in search of literary entertainment on a serene afternoon. It was a soulful display. Various forms of poetry

were employed including the critic and Ghazals. Describing their thoughts in a beautiful language, they kept the audience in raptures. There were both sublime and humorous verses at the symposium which captivated the audience.

The anchor and the program co-ordinator Rajan Bikram Thapa invited the 35 poets to recite by turn and the most admired Dr. Bom Bahadur Thapa was to perform at the last. The Chief Guest was a lyricist of the widely popular national song, "Jaha chhan Buddha ka ankha", in which a metaphor of the Buddha's eyes are used as symbol of peace, to express his love for motherland, as presented in his poem "Rashtra ko geet".

आमाको कोखमा नौलो सृष्टि हुन्छ सधैंभर
आमाको खोकिलोजस्तो धर्ती अर्को कहाँ छ र ।
आमाको सम्झना गर्छु नेपाली भूमिमा बसी
"जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी ।"

(Excerpt verse of *Rastrako Geet* by Dr. Bambahadur Thapa "Jitali")

With heartfelt appreciation, gratitude was expressed for their wonderful creations to all the eminent poets by the Chairperson Shrestha.

Tanka Prasad Acharya created a cheerful moment as his critic "Majja Arkai" were echoed time and again in the hall. Rita Khatri recited her long poem by heart in her own unique way and was well appreciated. Reflecting on social issues, Prabha Baral, Jyoti Jungle, Krishna Pradhan, Gita Regmi and many other eminent poets dealt with contemporary and cultural issues. Ram Bahadur Pahadi lived up to his reputation of Ghazal melody with his riotous splash of verses "Sayad Ma Aja Bahula Bhaechu."

A very short yet profound poem of the symposium was "ma" recited by Ram Hari Koirala.

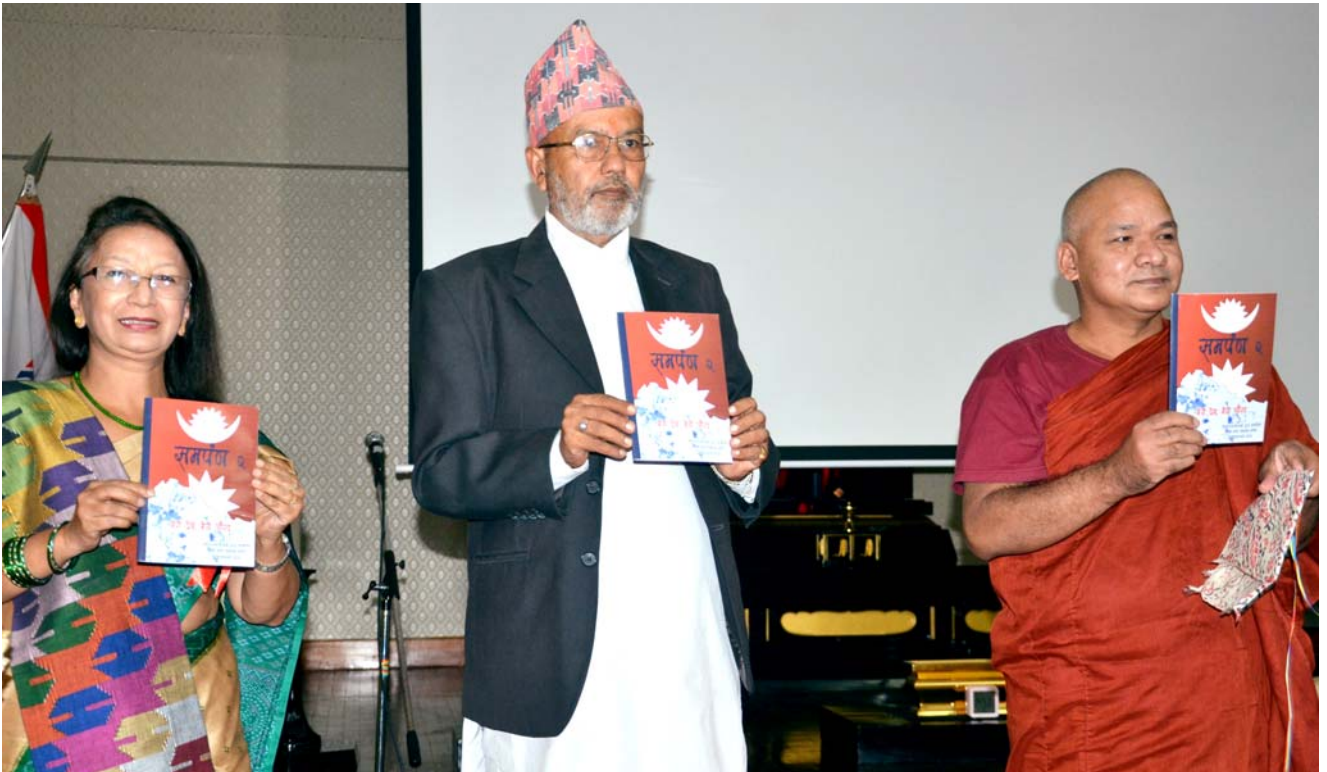
हिद्व्य अफेरो बाटो
देख्यौं भने कुनै दिन
चट्टानी भिरमा मुश्किलले उभिएको रुख,

र त्यसमा फुलेको एउटा फूल
सम्झनु त्यो मै हुँ ।

Proceeding at a leisurely pace, just when the audience was getting into an entertaining mood, Laxman Gannage began to regale them with the witty lines "Khau Sathi ho Khau".

The poets expressed appreciation for the opportunity to recite in such a very serene environment and brought to light some prominent issues and expressed bright dreams for the future ahead and of territories yet unimagined.

All the recited poems were covered in the book "Samarpan- 2" which was released on that very day, by the Chief Guest Dr. Thapa "Jitali", Chairperson Shrestha and respected Buddhist monk Ven. Ananda. Among the dignitaries present was the Sanat Kumar Thapa, Director of KMC, campaigners of Bagmati Cleaning and local people from the community.



A compilation of poems "Samarpan- 2" released on that very day, by the Chief Guest Dr. Thapa "Jitali", Chairperson Sahana Shrestha and respected Buddhist monk Ven. Ananda.

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION

- Daisaku Ikeda

Awaiting the Time

Volume 30, Chapter 2, Installments: 43-56

Nineteen eighty began—the year that would mark the 50th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Page three of the January 1 issue of the Seikyo Shimbun carried a picture of Shin'ichi Yamamoto and two poems he had composed to celebrate the New Year:

*My heart free and limitless
at the start of a new year
in the eternal journey of life,
I pray with fresh resolve
and press onward.*

*

*Let us once more cross
mountains and valleys
together
proudly holding high
the banner of kosen-rufu.*

Many of the Soka Gakkai members who saw the photo and accompanying poems sent letters expressing their delight to Shin'ichi and to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and the Seikyo Shimbun.

A man from Kyushu wrote to Shin'ichi: "I didn't expect you to be in the Seikyo Shimbun's New Year edition, but seeing a photo of you looking so well along with the poems you wrote has encouraged me no end.

"While there are still Nichiren Shoshu priests in the area where I live

who speak ill of the Soka Gakkai, I am certain that right and wrong will be clearly revealed. I will advance in my efforts for kosen-rufu again this year, filled with pride in being a Soka Gakkai member."

A woman from Kansai wrote: "I sense your firm determination in the words, 'Let us once more cross / mountains and valleys.' They give me strength. I, too, will do my best, with fresh determination and a renewed spirit, undefeated by anything. We of Ever-victorious Kansai will triumph over everything as your proud disciples."

How admirable they were, these noble lions of Soka! They remained true and steadfast in their faith while enduring repeated attacks from malicious priests and certain sectors of the media. Reading their letters, Shin'ichi could feel the strength of their commitment as indomitable as a mountain.

The new decade dawned amid a time of turmoil in many parts of the world.

In April 1979, following the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty earlier that year, the new Islamic Republic of Iran was established with the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as its supreme leader.

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, where civil

war was ongoing. It seemed likely to become a protracted and costly conflict that might further exacerbate tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The deteriorating situation in the Middle East, meanwhile, resulted in an oil crisis that could wreak havoc on the global economy. It was extremely difficult to see what lay ahead, and the new year began shrouded in uncertainty.

At the Shizuoka Training Center on the morning of January 1, Shin'ichi Yamamoto prayed deeply, vowing in his heart to make even greater efforts to open the way to peace and advance worldwide kosen-rufu.

Before noon on January 14, Shin'ichi and his wife, Mineko, were in a room at the Kanagawa Culture Center gazing out at the harbor.

White clouds floated in the azure sky and the sea sparkled a deep blue. Looking through binoculars, Shin'ichi could see a white ship approaching. A bright orange sun was emblazoned on its side, and passengers were visible on deck. It was the large passenger ferry Sunflower 7. Turning slowly with a trailing wake, it headed toward the Osanbashi Pier in Yokohama.

On that day, some 800 members from Shikoku [the smallest of Japan's four main islands] arrived at the Kanagawa Culture Center to see Shin'ichi after a day's journey by chartered ferry.

The weather had been bad the previous day, and snow had also fallen in Tokyo and Yokohama. A low-pressure system was moving toward Japan's eastern seaboard, and rough seas had been forecast. This had prompted discussions of whether the trip should be cancelled. But the Shikoku members were determined to go ahead with their visit and set out across the stormy seas.

On the evening of their departure, Shin'ichi had earnestly chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, praying that everyone would arrive safe and sound. He wanted them to create an enjoyable story of kosen-rufu.

Having such personal stories linked to the great drama of kosen-rufu enriches our lives.

Over the months since Shin'ichi's resignation, hopes grew stronger among the Shikoku members that he would visit their region. And it was not just the Shikoku members who felt this way. Many of the letters Shin'ichi received from members throughout the country were requests for him to visit their areas.

In Shikoku, the prefecture leaders discussed the matter.

With a serious expression, a women's division leader began: "Would it be possible to ask Sensei to visit us in Shikoku? I think the only way to accelerate the movement for kosen-rufu here is for our members to renew their commitment to the shared struggle of mentor and disciple and, together with him, make a fresh start filled with the joy of faith."

An elderly men's division leader responded: "But Sensei is not allowed to offer guidance at large meetings or appear in Soka Gakkai publications, so I'm afraid we'll just have to wait."

"How long do we have to wait? Five years? Ten?"

"I don't think anyone knows how long . . ."

Pained by this exchange, Shikoku Region Leader Seitaro Kumegawa thought to himself: "There must be some way to fulfill everyone's wish. We have to do something . . . Since Sensei stepped down as president, a feeling of emptiness has spread among the members, and I sense that they are gradually losing their joy in their Buddhist practice. I know that this is the time for genuine disciples to stand up. But we need something—something to ignite their passion, and naturally the best way would be to create an opportunity for our members to meet Sensei. But how can we make that happen?"

Just then, an idea came to him.

He said decisively: "Since Sensei's activities are restricted, let's go to visit him!"

At these words, Shikoku Region Youth Division Leader Okimitsu Owada leaned forward eagerly and said: "Yes, why don't we do that! There shouldn't be any barrier separating us from Sensei. If any such barrier exists, it is an inner one created by the disciples themselves."

On December 16, 1979, while at the Kanagawa Culture Center to attend a Soka Gakkai Central Executive Committee meeting, Shikoku Region Leader Seitaro Kumegawa had the chance to participate in an informal meeting with Shin'ichi Yamamoto, along with other regional leaders.

"Sensei," he said, "I have a request. We're thinking about having a group of some 800 Shikoku members visit the Kanagawa Culture Center while you're here. If we can, we'd like to charter a ferry to Yokohama Harbor. Would it be possible for you to meet with the members if they come?"

Shin'ichi said with a smile: "You're saying they're going to come all the way from Shikoku to visit me? Then, of course, I'll meet with them. I am delighted at their spirit. I'll be waiting for them."

Kumegawa felt like dancing with joy at Shin'ichi's reply.

Later, the schedule for their visit was arranged. They would depart by ferry from Takamatsu [the capital of Kagawa Prefecture in Shikoku] on January 13 and arrive at the Kanagawa Culture Center around noon on the 14th. The program of events for the day was to include an exchange meeting with Kanagawa members and smaller discussion sessions, with the group making their return voyage that same evening.

The Shikoku leaders had less than a month to make all the arrangements, and the New Year's holiday period fell right in the middle. They immediately set to work chartering the ferry and organizing who would make the trip, and before they knew it, the day of their departure had arrived.

At 1:00 p.m. on January 13, 1980, the large passenger ferry Sunflower 7 left Takamatsu Harbor under cloudy skies. Soon after their departure, a leaders meeting was held on board.

One of the leaders who rose to speak said: "During Nichiren Daishonin's lifetime, Shijo Kingo traveled from Kamakura to visit the Daishonin, who was exiled on Sado Island. And in spite of his advanced age, Abutsu-bo, who lived on Sado, later made almost yearly visits to the Daishonin at Mount Minobu.

"Following their examples, let us visit Kanagawa filled with seeking spirit and strengthen our determination to write a new page in the history of kosen-rufu!"

The members responded with great enthusiasm. People with a seeking spirit brim with joy.

At the shipboard leaders meeting, Shikoku Region Leader Kumegawa said: "The Soka Gakkai is in a challenging situation right now, and it's difficult for Sensei to travel around the country and offer guidance. But no force can sever the bonds we share with him!"

"If Sensei's activities are restricted, then we, his disciples, can go to see him. When we burn with a powerful seeking spirit, there is no obstacle we cannot surmount. Let us, the Shikoku members, take the lead in celebrating together with Sensei the start of the year of the Soka Gakkai's 50th anniversary!"

The leaders applauded in enthusiastic agreement. All were excited and inspired.

As in other parts of Japan, there were several areas in Shikoku—such as Ozu City in Ehime Prefecture and Kochi City in Kochi Prefecture—where members had suffered bitterly as they endured callous treatment and verbal abuse by malicious priests. In addition, a plot had been launched to sever the ties of mentor and disciple, the lifeline of faith for Soka Gakkai members. The members in Shikoku refused to quietly accept this situation any longer. That was their genuine feeling and determination.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto received regular updates on the progress of Sunflower 7.

He sent a message asking the members to relax and enjoy their voyage. When he learned that one of the meeting halls on the ship was equipped with a film projector, he encouraged them all to watch a movie there.

The voyage was pleasant, but late that night the low pressure system caused rough seas.

The ship rolled and shuddered, but members of the Doctors Division

were on hand as first-aid staff. They had taken precautions such as making motion sickness medication available beforehand to anyone who needed it, and as a result no one fell ill.

Careful preparation is key to achieving success and avoiding accidents. That's why Nichiren Daishonin stressed the importance of "usual prudence" (WND-1, 1000).

The ship plowed on through the churning waves, and the members drifted off to sleep as they thought of their meeting with Shin'ichi the following day.

The morning of January 14 dawned. The waves were calm as the slowly rising sun cast its light over the ocean.

From the deck of Sunflower 7, a snowcapped Mount Fuji gradually came into view. The members were struck by its dauntless image, having themselves endured slander and abuse from Nichiren Shoshu priests and triumphed over bitter storms of adversity.

From the ship's lounge, members could be heard singing the well-known "Song of Friends" and other tunes. The young women were rehearsing, hoping to perform for Shin'ichi and Kanagawa members.

The ship sailed into the harbor in Yokohama just before noon. On the ship's left side, members had put a row of banners, each bearing a large letter, to spell the words "Hello, Sensei!" But it turned out that the ship was going to dock on its right side.

"We need to move the banners to the other side!" someone shouted.

Young men's division members quickly set to work to make the change, but in the confusion they positioned the banners in the same order they had been in on the left side, as a result now spelling the phrase backward. It made for a funny story.

When the ship arrived in the harbor, Shin'ichi said, "Let's all go out to meet them!" and rushed out of the Kanagawa Culture Center.

The Shikoku members were standing on deck.

A banner reading "Welcome to Kanagawa" was set up at the pier, where a band comprising Kanagawa members was energetically playing the Shikoku Soka Gakkai song "Our Land." Shin'ichi, wearing a black coat, stood in front of the musicians and waved to the Shikoku members aboard the ship.

Waving back, the members cried out "Sensei! Sensei!" the voices of some choking with tears of joy and emotion.

"Welcome! I've been waiting for you!" Shin'ichi called to them.

The Shikoku members walked down the gangway and were engulfed in the applause of Kanagawa members.

A Kanagawa young women's division representative presented a bouquet to Shikoku Region Leader Kumegawa on behalf of Shin'ichi.

With a smile, Shin'ichi said: "Are you all feeling well? Thank you for coming. You have triumphed! The 21st century is now in view! You have made a fresh breakthrough for kosen-rufu!"

Committed action opens the door to a new age.

Shin'ichi welcomed the men's division members with a smile, shaking hands, hugging shoulders, and offering words of encouragement: "I was waiting for you! I am so happy to see you. Let's make a fresh start!"

The passionate seeking spirit of the Shikoku members brought him immense joy. As long as they retained that determined commitment, the Soka mentor-disciple spirit to dedicate one's life to kosen-rufu would live on forever.

Shin'ichi said to Kumegawa: "Who'd have thought you'd actually come by sea! What an exciting idea! That alone is enough to inspire everyone. In any sphere, it's important to think creatively. To win in our efforts for kosen-rufu, we need wisdom and resourcefulness.

"All kinds of obstacles will arise on our way to kosen-rufu. But we must press on for our own and others'

happiness, and for the sake of peace. If a land route is blocked, for instance, then we'll quickly have to think of new, alternative ways to proceed, such as going by air or sea, and keep moving forward. We can't allow ourselves to be defeated."

A thousand years ago, the great Kyrgyz poet Yusuf Khas Hajib (also known as Yusuf Balasaguni; c. 1018–69), wrote: "As long as you live, any wish can be realized. As long as you have wisdom, any goal can be attained."

Shin'ichi's welcome of the Shikoku members was not covered by the Seikyo Shimbun. The paper wasn't allowed to report on it.

When the young women's division member presented Kumegawa with the bouquet from Shin'ichi, Shin'ichi was standing beside her, applauding the moment. But in the Seikyo Shimbun, Shin'ichi was cut out of the picture, and only his arms were shown. The paper's editor had reluctantly taken this step.

In front of Kanagawa Culture Center, too, Kanagawa members warmly welcomed and applauded their fellow members who had traveled all the way from Shikoku. They shared their spirit of faith in sincerely seeking their mentor.

One of the Shikoku members proclaimed indignantly: "We refuse to meekly submit to [the priesthood's] demands saying that we as disciples cannot meet with our mentor or address him as 'Sensei!'"

The Shikoku members divided into several groups to tour the Kanagawa Culture Center and the adjacent Toda Peace Memorial Hall.

The memorial hall had opened the previous year, in August 1979. A historic red brick building, formerly known as English House No. 7, it had been restored and renovated as an exhibition hall open to the public. It was created to pay tribute to the spirit and significance of Josei Toda's Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons—delivered in Yokohama on September 8, 1957—and exhibit

materials to highlight the horrors of war and promote peace.

Visitors could listen to a tape recording of Toda's declaration. Also available for viewing was a 56-volume series of antiwar publications that the youth division had been producing since 1973, along with an English translation of selections from that series titled *Cries for Peace: Experiences of Japanese Victims of World War II*.

In addition, there were displays featuring photo panels and other materials capturing the lives of Japanese people during World War II, including the cruel battlefield conditions, scenes of the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the destruction caused by air raids throughout Japan, the Battle of Okinawa, and the plight of demobilized troops and civilians returning from abroad after the country's defeat. There was also a corner where visitors could listen to recordings of accounts shared by those who had directly experienced the war.

One display showed the history of the Soka Gakkai's peace movement, and another featured Shin'ichi Yamamoto's peace proposals and his dialogues promoting friendship with world leaders and thinkers.

The Shikoku members viewed the displays, listened to the tapes, and not only reconfirmed the misery and brutality of war, but were deeply impressed by the fact that the Soka Gakkai was indeed creating a great groundswell for world peace. And they renewed their vow to build peace.

The UNESCO Constitution states that to achieve peace we must construct "defenses of peace" in people's minds. An indispensable ingredient for achieving this lies in our human revolution, in each individual building a state of life that rises above all negative impulses such as greed and hatred.

The Soka Gakkai has built countless networks of friendship around the globe while constructing the defenses of peace in people's hearts.

Our social mission as Nichiren Buddhists is to actualize the ideal of "establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land"—that is, of realizing a prosperous society and peace for all humankind.

At 1:30 p.m., the meeting hall on the third floor of the Kanagawa Culture Center was filled with happy smiling faces. The Shikoku-Kanagawa Joint Leaders Meeting was under way.

A Kanagawa leader stood up and said with deep feeling: "Dear friends from Shikoku! Welcome to Kanagawa!

"We have learned many things from you on this occasion. One is being united in faith, joining our hearts to seek our mentor and carry out our mission for kosen-rufu. Another is the spirit of bold initiative to forge ahead through stormy seas and achieve dynamic progress."

It was almost nine months since Shin'ichi had resigned as Soka Gakkai president. In that time, the Kanagawa members—indeed, members throughout Japan and the world—had felt there was something terribly amiss with this state of affairs where disciples were being deliberately kept apart from their mentor.

That's why the Kanagawa members were so inspired and moved by the courage and seeking spirit of the Shikoku members, who gave voice to their desire to come and meet with their mentor.

Next, a Shikoku representative rose to speak.

"I have heard that snow fell throughout Yokohama yesterday, but today we have warm, springlike weather. I feel we have been protected by the prayers of President Yamamoto and our fellow members.

"From now on, groups of Shikoku members will continue visiting Kanagawa when President Yamamoto is here, so please give them a warm welcome."

General Director Kazumasa Morikawa thanked the Shikoku members for their dedicated efforts and then said: "An ocean voyage is not always smooth sailing. Sometimes there will be rough seas. Raging storms may also lie ahead. The same is true of the situation presently facing the Soka Gakkai. Carrying on with daimoku and unity, let's begin a new hope-filled advance.

"Also, since our theme for this year is the Year of the Community, let's show actual proof of development and

victory in our communities and make a breakthrough in creating a new age."

Action and actual proof are crucial.

Shin'ichi entered the room where the joint leaders meeting was being held. He had come to do gongyo with everyone and pray for the visiting Shikoku members' safe return and for the health and well-being of all the participants and their families.

He saw many familiar faces in the audience.

After addressing several members individually, he turned to speak to a group of Shikoku men's division leaders seated to one side.

"Soka Gakkai leaders mustn't be arrogant or scold people," he said. "We must always respect and treasure our fellow members as children of the Buddha.

"President Toda sometimes scolded his disciples, but when he did so there was always some profound reason.

"First, was when he was trying to train his disciples for kosen-rufu, elevate them to the same life state as himself, and entrust them with the future of our movement. Especially since some would take on great responsibility one day, he could be very, very strict in the guidance he gave them.

"Second, was when he wanted to help people stand up in faith by defeating the devilish functions that were preventing them from moving forward.

"Some people speak and act on impulse without considering consequences, making it difficult for them to get along with others; some give in to self-destructive thinking; some try to avoid difficulty at any cost; some are quick to pass the buck when a problem arises and pretend they weren't involved. Such tendencies and the weakness, dishonesty, and cowardice behind them represent serious faults. They act as devilish functions obstructing the growth of one's faith and causing one to go astray from the path to happiness. President Toda would sometimes scold members to make them

aware of such major downfalls and to put an end to them.

“Third, he would take members to task when they were causing trouble for many others or disrupting the unity of our movement for kosen-rufu, to put a stop to their actions for the sake of those individuals and others who might be affected by their behavior.

“In other words, whenever Mr. Toda scolded anyone it was always motivated at the deepest level by his profound compassion. To scold members without understanding this, simply trying to mimic his actions, is absolutely unacceptable. No leader has the right to do so. Even when you have to correct someone’s errors, you can do it by speaking to them in a calm and reasonable fashion.”

Shin’ichi asked some of the members present what was going on in their lives, and used the topics that came up as opportunities to offer guidance and encouragement on faith and leadership.

Everyone had been hoping to have just this kind of free and open conversation with Shin’ichi.

The subject moved on to leaders’ interactions with members.

“As leaders, you must always respect the members’ wishes and be careful not to offend them or hurt their feelings.

“There are, of course, all kinds of people. Not everyone will simply accept what you have to say. Being a leader is very challenging, but true Buddhist practice lies in striving with an open heart to embrace everyone, doing your best to help them become happy, and patiently continuing to encourage them. All those dedicated efforts will bring you benefit and good fortune. It is because we are constantly buffeted about in a sea of humanity, that we can polish our life and make it shine. When we continue tenaciously to talk with members who have grown negative about their practice, and strive earnestly to encourage them, we will be able to deepen our character.

“All right, let’s do gongyo!” Shin’ichi said, and sat down to lead. The

sound of mentor and disciples reciting the sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with a shared vow for kosen-rufu reverberated powerfully.

From 3:30 p.m., dinner-discussion meetings were held. Shin’ichi took part with the men’s division and women’s division members on the eighth floor, and listened to reports from those seated at his table. After finishing their meal on the fifth floor, youth division members joined the gathering on the eighth floor, and a series of performances began.

A chorus sang the song “Leaving Tosa Behind,” and a dance group performed the Awa Odori dance, followed by a number of other musical items. Shin’ichi clapped enthusiastically for each performance and encouraged the members to have a good time.

When the singing and dancing came to an end, he said: “All right, let me play the piano for you.”

He began with the tune “Atsuta Village” [written in memory of his mentor leaving his hometown in Hokkaido].

He played the piano with the wish that the members would press forward bravely, emulating the courage and the determined spirit of his mentor, Josei Toda, as he made his way alone during his youth through the blizzards of Hokkaido.

Hardships forge character. Those who intrepidly challenge the fierce blizzards impeding the way to kosen-rufu are the greatest heroes.

Shin’ichi also played on the piano “The Three Martyrs of Atsuhara” and “Cherry Blossoms.” His performance was infused with a prayer for all present to develop into brave and resolute people of faith who would lead lives blooming with happiness like the cherry trees in springtime.

Shin’ichi thought about the bold initiative taken by the Shikoku members. Their hearts aflame with seeking spirit, they had crossed turbulent waters to visit Yokohama at this particular time. Their actions would shine forever in the annals of kosen-rufu,

a story passed down to future generations. What matters, he thought, is the kind of action we take to make a breakthrough when the Soka Gakkai is facing adversity.

“Finally,” Shin’ichi said, turning to address the audience, “I will play ‘Dainanko’ (The Great Hero Kusunoki). Let’s meet again.” He then faced the keyboard and played.

The lyrics to this song tell the story of the famous 14th-century Japanese warrior Kusunoki Masashige asking his son Masatsura to carry on his cause when he is no longer there. As they listened to the melody, the members were reminded of the Soka mentor-disciple bond. They pledged anew to carry on the Soka Gakkai spirit and pave the way forward for kosen-rufu, no matter what the circumstances. Shikoku, they vowed, would never be defeated, but instead would raise high the banner of Soka victory.

Tears glistened in the eyes of many of these members who possessed such ardent seeking spirit.

The gathering closed with the audience joining together in three cheers for the Soka Gakkai in Shikoku and a resounding round of applause.

Shin’ichi said: “Thank you! Stay well! I’ll see you off later today. Please give my very best to your family and all your fellow members in your local areas who took care of things in your absence. And youth division members, be good to your parents!”

Night had already fallen when the Shikoku members left the Kanagawa Culture Center.

More than 200 Kanagawa members had gathered on the pier to see them off on their return journey.

The Music Corps played the Shikoku Soka Gakkai song “Our Land” as the Shikoku members threw colorful paper streamers from the ship’s deck to those below.

Then, the Kanagawa members sang their prefecture song “Ah, the Sun Rises,” after which everyone joined in singing “Onward to Kosen-rufu” and “Song of Indomitable Dignity.”

The hearts of the members, comrades in faith, merged as one, their voices rising into the starry night sky.

The ship's whistle echoed over the night sea as the Sunflower 7 signaled its departure.

The Shikoku members were all out on deck. The ship quietly set sail.

The Kanagawa members who had gathered on the pier to see the Shikoku members off waved and shouted "Good-bye!" "Come again!"

The Kanagawa Culture Center, lights glowing in its windows, stood on the shore with the bright cityscape of Yokohama stretching out into the distance. The next moment, all the lights in the center went out. Then, many small moving lights appeared in the windows of the top two floors.

A call came in over the shore-to-ship telephone. "President and Mrs. Yamamoto are on the center's top floor waving flashlights to see you off. Can you see the lights from the ship?"

This was immediately communicated to the Shikoku members over the ship's intercom.

From the deck, they all waved toward the Kanagawa Culture Center's top floor and called out: "Sensei! Shikoku will do its best!" "Please rest assured!" "We will be pioneers of kosen-rufu in the local community!"

Tears filled their eyes.

Shin'ichi and Mineko continued to wave their flashlights until the ship was out of sight. They couldn't hear the voices of the members shouting as the ship sailed away, but they could hear what was in their hearts. The light that both sent out that day came to shine as an inextinguishable flame of courage and hope in the hearts of the Shikoku members.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The great distances these persons traveled are indicative of their devotion" (WND-2, 1030). Those with a seeking spirit experience growth, savor joy, and have appreciation, and this in turn

becomes a powerful driving force for fresh development.

That evening, Shin'ichi chanted that the ship sail smoothly and everyone return home safely. He also contacted the ship late that night and once again asked that everyone convey his very best regards to the members who could not make the trip.

The next morning, he also phoned to check whether the voyage was progressing safely.

To him, his disciples were his most precious treasure, a bright source of hope for the future.

On February 17, 1980, about a month after the Shikoku members traveled aboard the Sunflower 7 to visit the Kanagawa Culture Center, a group of 86 young women's division members from Kyushu's Amami Oshima Regional Headquarters made their way to the Soka Gakkai Tachikawa Culture Center (in Tokyo), where Shin'ichi Yamamoto was.

On February 1, 1979, the previous year, Shin'ichi had attended a Kyushu Region leaders meeting at the Kyushu Training Center. It was right before his trip to India, which would cap the completion of the Seven Bells.

Representatives from each prefecture of Kyushu were present, including a young women's division leader from the outlying Amami Islands, of which Amami Oshima is the largest. While joining members in a group photo, Shin'ichi said to the Amami representative: "If you have any requests, please let the national young women's division leader know later. Anything is fine. Please don't hesitate. I'd like to respond to your requests as much as possible. I know that all of our young women living on the Amami Islands have been fighting hard in an extremely challenging environment."

The Amami representative spoke with the national leader and asked

whether it would be possible for the Amami Oshima Region Headquarters young women to hold a meeting at the Soka Young Women's Center.

The Soka Young Women's Center had opened in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, in December 1977. Since then, young women's division members from around the country were eager to visit it.

Shin'ichi gladly gave the green light to the Amami leader's request.

The young women of Amami vowed together to make even greater efforts to spread Nichiren Buddhism in their communities and then gather in Tokyo where President Yamamoto, their mentor and leader of kosen-rufu, was.

Nichiren Shoshu priests continued their malicious attacks against the Soka Gakkai. But the young women's division members in Amami held high the banner of justice, defending the Soka Gakkai's integrity, and strove with great passion to introduce others to their Buddhist practice. Then, less than three months after the young women's leader met him at the Kyushu Training Center, Shin'ichi resigned as president.

It felt as if the sun was suddenly covered by clouds. Still, the members refused to be disheartened. They told one another: "This is the very time to reassure Sensei by achieving a great victory in our efforts to spread Buddhism."

Adversity is a touchstone revealing a person's true worth.