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SGI President Ikeda's Editorial

A Triumphant Song of Happiness for the 65th Anniversary of the Women's Division

Around the time when my mentor, Josei Toda, was inaugurated as second Soka Gakkai president, he and I would often read "On Reprimanding Hachiman."

In that letter, Nichiren Daishonin writes of the struggle he had undertaken to spread the Mystic Law since first proclaiming his teaching (in 1253): "I, Nichiren, . . . have labored solely to put the five or seven characters of Myohorenge-kyo into the mouths of all the living beings of the country of Japan. In doing so, I have shown the kind of compassion that a mother does when she labors to

put milk into the mouth of her infant child" (WND-2, 931).

As the Daishonin indicates, actions to spread the Mystic Law—which embody the actions of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—are akin to the compassion of a mother caring for and nurturing life.

The first thing Mr. Toda did after receiving the Soka Gakkai Joju Gohonzon (in May 1951) was to establish the women's division (on June 10).

Indeed, the gateway to "kosen-rufu through the

..... continued on page 2

Four Points for Victory

The List

SGI President Ikeda discussed four points for victory in his message to a leaders conference, which originally ran as a three-part series in the June 20, 27 and July 4, 2008, World Tribune. The following are excerpts.

1) PRAYER

Prayer for the sake of kosen-rufu is crucial. What I mean here is: Prayer infused with a vow to support and protect the Soka Gakkai—the organization actualizing kosen-rufu—and contribute to its vibrant success and development; prayer based on the winning spirit of Buddhism, so that we can show actual proof of the greatness of the Mystic Law in our own lives; and prayer directed at refuting the erroneous and revealing the true, so that we can vanquish those powerful forces that would obstruct kosen-rufu.

2) ACTION

Buddhism doesn't exist without action. How hard we have

worked to achieve kosen-rufu is the true manifestation of our faith. How far we have gone in our journey to learn about Buddhism and to spread its teachings is an expression of the depth of our resolve.

3 UNITY OF MANY IN BODY, ONE IN MIND

It is no exaggeration to say that our success solely depends on building organizations where everyone is unified in their commitment for kosen-rufu. [Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda explained the unity of 'many in body, one in mind' in a very accessible way, saying that it simply means to join with others who are also experiencing hardships and sufferings and to chant together with them in front of the Gohonzon.

4 THE ONENESS OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

[The Lotus Sutra states:] "If one stays close to the teachers of the Law, one will speedily gain the way of enlightenment..." ("On the Five Seasonal Festivals" *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol.2, p.375).

.....As these golden words indicate, the mentor-disciple relationship is at the heart of Nichiren Buddhism. . . Kosen-rufu is possible when disciples embrace the same spirit as their mentor. Without this central commitment, 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 when their faith is challenged.

Triumphing Over Reality

Q. 1 often times feel five steps behind the starting line of life. Can I really change my circumstances?

Answer

In volume 9 of SGI President Ikeda's novel *The New Human Revolution*, Shin'ichi Yamamoto encourages a young

woman who doesn't believe she can become a teacher because she lacks the financial means to attend school and has a physical disability. He writes: Shin'ichi

looked straight at Kimiko Kudo and said in a firm tone of voice: "You have the Gohonzon! You mustn't be swayed. What good is it to feel sorry for yourself because of your disability? No matter how much you pity yourself, it won't change anything. Everyone has some kind of problem to deal with. There is not one person in the world blessed with everything. To

be a Soka Gakkai member is to bravely challenge every situation and circumstance and become a victor in life. The question is not what will happen to you; it's what you're going to make happen.

"If you really wish to be a teacher, then decide that you're going to, no matter what. If you

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My dear friends of Nepal SGI, I wish you a brilliant Soka Gakkai Day and a happy Soka Gakkai Mothers Day!

I am delighted and proud to be able to celebrate May 3 in great victory, together with fellow members in 192 countries and territories. The success of our movement owes everything to your tireless, dedicated efforts and solid unity. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Nothing gives me greater joy than the many reports I receive each day of the wonderful development of our SGI organizations around the world and the contributions they are making to their local communities and countries. And I am especially overjoyed to hear about the inspiring growth of our youthful successors and their efforts to expand our movement.

We have entered an age when Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism of the sun is beginning to shine ever more brightly as a world religion, illuminating all humankind. As proof of this, the SGI—a gathering of Bodhisattvas of the Earth—is becoming an increasingly radiant presence across the globe.

The Daishonin would surely shower us with his highest praises, and the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, would certainly rejoice immensely.

Please be absolutely confident that not only you, but all your family members and loved ones, will eternally share in the benefit and good fortune arising from your efforts to promote this magnificent movement of worldwide kosen-rufu.

The Lotus Sutra states: "If one [is able to] expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One's work."

Reaching out to a friend, listening to their problems, telling them about the Mystic Law, chanting together, helping them win over their challenges, rejoicing together—such seemingly ordinary and modest efforts are actually the supremely noble work of the Buddha and, as such, the best and surest things we can do for people's happiness.

As SGI members, we engage in such efforts "day by day and month after month, never slackening in our resolve," based on the spirit of valuing and respecting each person, which is the epitome of Buddhist humanism. That is why the Buddha's wisdom, compassion, and power pulse vibrantly in our lives.

The Daishonin writes: "In

judging the relative merit of Buddhist doctrines, I, Nichiren, believe that the best standards are those of reason and documentary proof. And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact."

Our Buddhist practice is backed up by a clear and profound philosophy of life, reasonable and universal principles that all can accept as valid and true. Therefore, let us continue exerting ourselves in faith, practice, and study, and proudly show even greater actual proof—actual proof of gaining benefit by putting faith into practice in our daily lives and achieving victory by applying the teachings of Buddhism in society. The human revolution of each one of us attests to the brilliance of Nichiren Buddhism as a world religion for the 21st century.

Mr. Toda declared: "It is the Soka Gakkai's mission to repay the debt of gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin and to pave the way for the lasting happiness of humanity by drawing up a grand

100-year plan—no, a grand plan for peace encompassing several millennia."

May 3 is a day of fresh departure, when we renew our vow as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. I call on you to join me and fellow SGI members around the globe in moving forward anew in our grand march for kosen-rufu, brimming with hope and courage, and aiming for the happiness of humanity and world peace.

Our lives are connected by the Mystic Law. My wife, Kaneko, and I are continually chanting for all of you, our most dear and precious fellow members. We are praying with all our hearts for the vibrant health and long life; the safety and security; and the happiness and victory of you, your families, and loved ones, as well as all those in your communities. Please advance cheerfully, in a spirit of harmony and friendship!

May 3, 2016
Daisaku Ikeda
President, Soka Gakkai International

Triumphing Over Reality...

don't have the money for college, you can work part time to pay for it. Or you can work during the day and go to night school.

"Dedicating your life to your mission is not some kind of idealistic talk. It isn't an intellectual game. Faith is realizing where you are and triumphing over reality. The light of faith shines in a person who surmounts difficulties.

"Your mission is to become the strongest, brightest and most pure-hearted of all, regardless of your circumstances, and to live a life in which you can declare that you are supremely happy."

Kudo bit her lip and nodded repeatedly as she listened.

Shin'ichi continued: "That's right. Don't be defeated. Whatever happens, don't let yourself be defeated. Become strong and do your very best!"...

Kudo was not the only member there that day experiencing hardship. Several others were from single-parent families, and none of them were well-off financially. As a result, they all shared Kudo's feelings to a certain extent. Shin'ichi could sense this, which is why he offered Kudo such strict guidance in front of everyone. (pp. 153—55)

A Triumphant Song

compassionate propagation of the great Law," to which this Gohonzon is dedicated, was opened by the women's division, which celebrates its 65th anniversary this June.

The central force of our people's movement is the spirit of the women's division members, the mothers of kosen-rufu, striving to make their own lives and those of others shine with supreme dignity. That's why our movement is so vibrant, positive, and warmhearted.

Our women's division members lead very busy lives. Many juggle work with looking after the home, raising children, and taking care of their health and that of their families, while perhaps even nursing a loved one who is ill or elderly. While facing the daunting challenges of today's rapidly aging society, they continue to strive energetically in Soka Gakkai activities. How noble they are!

Inheriting the strength and optimism demonstrated by their predecessors in the early days of our movement, our women's division members of the new era of worldwide kosen-rufu are bringing beautiful flowers of trust and friendship to bloom in their neighborhoods and communities on an unprecedented scale.

Though it may entail a great deal of hard work, they should be completely assured that, each day they exert themselves for kosen-rufu, they are accumulating benefit that surpasses "a hundred years of practice in the Land of Perfect Bliss" (WND-1, 736).

The Daishonin offers the following words of encouragement to one of his disciples [the lay nun Myoho]: "A person who stumbles and falls to the ground pushes himself up from the ground and rises to his feet again" (WND-1, 882).

In the course of life's long journey, there may be times when we trip and fall. But that doesn't mean it's all over. We just need to get back up again. Faith in the Mystic Law is the source of hope that enables us to do so. And none more than our women's division members embody such indomitable hope.

The Daishonin also

writes: "When with our mouths we chant the Mystic Law [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], our Buddha nature, being summoned, will invariably emerge. The Buddha nature of [heavenly deities such as] Brahma and Shakra, being called, will protect us, and the Buddha nature of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, being

summoned, will rejoice" (WND-1, 887).

Wherever the chanting of women's division members resounds, wherever their encouraging voices ring out, a drama of limitless revitalization

and joy unfolds.

I once said to a group of women's division members from Ever-victorious Kansai with whom I had shared the joys and struggles of kosen-rufu over many years: "The swan that seems to be gliding effortlessly across the water is actually paddling very hard beneath the surface."

We must never forget that our movement for kosen-rufu is propelled by the tireless, and often unseen, efforts of our women's division members day in and day out.

Let us respond to the prayers and efforts of our women's division members by fostering as many capable young Bodhisattvas of the Earth as possible who will contribute to people's happiness and world peace. Sending such an invincible force for good and truth into society is the key to victory in the effort to realize the Daishonin's ideal of "establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land."

Let us celebrate the 65th anniversary of our peerless women's division with a triumphant song of happiness resounding with unrestrained joy!

Like the sun
rising in the sky,
the mothers of kosen-rufu
will shine eternally
with happiness and
victory.

(Translated from the June 2016 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai monthly study journal)

THE WISDOM FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND PEACE

SELECTED EXCERPTS OF SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

Part 2: Human Revolution

Chapter 12: The Principle of “Cherry, Plum, Peach, and Damson”

Introduction to the Chapter:

A young man, who was indecisive about whether to begin practicing Nichiren Buddhism, said he felt that committing to a religion meant having to conform to some externally imposed standard of behavior, sacrificing one's individuality. Addressing his concerns, President Ikeda explained:

Nichiren Buddhism teaches the principle of “cherry, plum, peach, and damson.” A cherry tree is a cherry tree; a peach, a peach. We don't all have to be cherries; just as trees bloom in their own distinct way, we should

strive to live in the way that is most natural for us. This is the purpose of our Buddhist practice. Nichiren Daishonin also stressed that our essential identity is “something that was not worked for, that was not improved upon, but that exists just as it always has” (OTT, 141). It's fine to just be who you are. You are respectable just as you are. Pretending to be something you're not or putting on airs actually diminishes and weakens you. That said, there is a

difference between “being who you are” and “staying as you are.” If you content yourself with staying as you are, you'll never grow or develop. By deeply pondering the questions of who you really are and what your purpose in life is, and by making effort after effort and tirelessly challenging yourself, you will bring to blossom the flower of your mission in life. That's what happens when you put into practice the principle of “cherry,

plum, peach, and damson.”

To live genuinely in a way that is true to yourself, you need to carry out your human revolution—that is, to continue to develop yourself at the deepest level. If, to borrow your words, you “conform” with the “standard” of striving for your human revolution, you'll most surely be able to live your youth in the most meaningful way.

A short time after hearing this confident encouragement, the young

man decided to join the Soka Gakkai.

Each of us possesses within us, like a dormant seed, the potential to fulfill a unique and important mission in life. The purpose of life is to make that seed sprout and flower to the fullest.

President Ikeda has said that faith in the Mystic Law means “not envying others or demeaning yourself. It means living true to yourself and fulfilling your own unique mission in your own unique way. It also means to become a person you yourself can respect and be proud of.”

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12.1 “Still I Will Bloom”

INTRODUCTION

During a visit to Yamagata Prefecture in Tohoku, the northeastern region of Japan, President Ikeda touched on the Buddhist principle of “cherry, plum, peach, and damson,” and called on members to lead noble lives dedicated to carrying out their individual missions.

PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

From a speech delivered at a Yamagata Prefecture general meeting, Yamagata City, Yamagata Prefecture, April 18, 1983.

This is my first visit to Yamagata in nine years. Wishing to see you all as soon as possible, I took the train here from Niigata. From the train window, I could see blue streams and green forests amid the lingering mountain snow. Golden forsythia, bridal veil, daffodils, and cherry blossoms were in beautiful bloom.

Observing the scenery, I was reminded of how, in *The Record of the Orally Transmitted*

Teachings, Nichiren Daishonin states that the cherry, plum, peach, and damson each embody the ultimate truth just as they are, without undergoing any

change (cf. OTT, 200). This teaching provides us with a basic model for the way we should live our lives.

The cherry tree blossoms as a cherry tree, living to fulfill its own unique role. The same is true of the plum, peach, and damson trees. Each of us should do likewise. We each have a unique personality. We have a distinct nature and character, and our lives are each noble and respectable. That's why we should always live with a solid self-identity, in a way that is true to ourselves.

Each of us has a mission and a way of life that is ours alone. We don't need to try to be like anyone else.

The cherry tree has its own life and inherent causes for being a cherry. The plum, peach, and damson also each have their own inherent causes. And in the same way, from the viewpoint of Buddhism, we each have a mission we were born to carry out in this world, and each one of us has our own inherent causes to be who we are. Practicing the Mystic Law enables us to experience the joy of discovering this.

The most fundamental happiness in life is to bring forth our inner Buddhahood through the power of faith in the Mystic Law.

Some of you may envy those who live in bustling cities such as Tokyo. Others might wish to have a glamorous job, or live in a big luxurious house.

But in Tokyo, you can't enjoy this natural environment [of Yamagata] with its pure, clean air, the bright moonlight or the twinkling stars at night, or beautiful mountains draped softly in their white mantles, like Mount Zao standing out against the morning sky. At the same time, our happiness in life does not depend on the land or environment in which we live, our workplace, or the size of our homes.

The grass always seems greener on the other side. To those living in Yamagata, life in the big city might seem appealing, but city dwellers long for the beautiful natural environment of Yamagata. The key is to give full play to our capabilities and carry out our mission in our own communities, wherever we are, without being swayed by immediate circumstances or events.

A writer [Saneatsu Mushanokoji (1885–1976)] once remarked: “Whether seen by others or not, still I will bloom.” The Gohonzon is aware of all our actions. It is important to live in our own unique way, always embraced by the Mystic Law, whether or not anyone is watching. This is what the principle of cherry, plum, peach, and damson teaches.

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12.2 Bringing Out Our Positive Qualities

INTRODUCTION

After attending a student division meeting, the protagonist of President Ikeda's serialized novel The New Human Revolution, Shin'ichi Yamamoto, encourages a young person who is worried about being timid by nature.

PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

Adapted from The New Human Revolution, volume 16, “Heart and Soul” chapter, published in Japanese in October 2006.

Shin'ichi said: “Gentleness and timidity can be seen as two different expressions of the same underlying nature. When that underlying nature takes the form of gentleness, it's a strength; when it takes the form of timidity, it can be a weakness. When that underlying nature consistently acts as a weakness, it can become the cause of unhappiness.

“For example, people with a fiery temper by nature may often end up arguing with coworkers. This could alienate those around them, making for strained relations. In some cases, their hotheadedness could even lead to them being fired or quitting. And since that is their underlying nature, the same problem is sure to crop up wherever they go.

“Our basic underlying natures don't change, but through our Buddhist practice, we can redirect our

natures in a positive manner. Nichiren Daishonin says: ‘When one comes to realize and see that each thing—the cherry, the plum, the peach, the damson—in its own entity, without undergoing any change, possesses the eternally endowed three bodies [of the Buddha] . . .’ (OTT, 200).

“Buddhism teaches the way for each of us, just as we are, to attain happiness while bringing out the best of our innate disposition and potential—in the same way that the cherry, plum, peach, and damson each manifest their own unique nature.

“People with fiery tempers are often also passionate, with a strong sense of right and wrong. By exerting themselves in Buddhist practice, they will no longer lose their tempers about unimportant things, but become people strongly committed to opposing evil

and injustice.

“Likewise, people who tend to be too agreeable or easily manipulated by others are often very kindhearted and able to get along well with others. Through practicing Buddhism, they can bring out this latter strong side of their natures. Positively transforming ourselves in this way is what we call human revolution. The important thing is how to make that transformation happen.

“Basically, the key is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and continue developing your life. It's crucial to reflect on yourself and discover your problematic qualities and life tendencies.

“We all have faults. Perhaps we tend to blame others when something bad happens to us, or we lack perseverance, or are unwilling to listen to the opinions of others. These

faults can become negative tendencies obstructing our personal growth and happiness.

“But unless someone points these negative tendencies out to us, we may not be aware of them. That's where our seniors in faith and fellow members come in. They can draw our attention to them and support us in the effort to overcome them. We also need to chant earnestly to challenge and transform our negative tendencies.

“In addition, we can also forge and develop ourselves through Soka Gakkai activities. As Nichiren Daishonin writes: ‘The flaws in iron come to the surface when it is forged’ (WND-1, 497).

“Refusing to allow our weaknesses to defeat us and triumphing in one activity after another is the way we train and strengthen ourselves; it is the path of human revolution for each of us winning over our negative tendencies. Soka Gakkai activities are the ‘place of practice’ or ‘training ground’ where we develop and strengthen our lives. By dedicating ourselves to the mission of kosen-rufu and continuing to strengthen and improve ourselves, we can also transform our karma.”

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12.3 Live True to Yourself

INTRODUCTION

President Ikeda introduces guidance from his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, and stresses the importance of living true to oneself.

PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

From a speech delivered at a gathering commemorating April 2, the anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's death, Ota Culture Center, Ota Ward, Tokyo, April 3, 1993.

To know oneself, to know the nature of human beings, to know the preciousness of life—herein lies the important significance of religion.

President Toda remarked:

Whether one is suffering because of poverty, a business failure, a bitter quarrel with one's spouse, an injury caused by tripping over a *hibachi* [a charcoal brazier]—ultimately,

all these things are a reflection of one's life. That is, they are outward expressions of one's inner state of being. When viewed in this way, everything in our lives occurs as a result of the changes

unfolding within us. That's why it is important for us to strive to change for the better and ceaselessly create our own happiness.

You therefore have to be true to

yourself and take responsibility for your own life. Indeed, it's vital to recognize that you have no choice but to do so. It's a mistake to blame others or things outside you for your circumstances, to constantly think: "If only he or she would do this or that" or "I'd be happy if only the situation in society were such and such."

However, human beings are weak. They are easily controlled by others or their external circumstances, no matter how they may resolve to be true to themselves, to follow their own convictions. . . .

This is why I believe the only way to make one's life shine with supreme strength, brilliance, and happiness is to base one's life on Buddhism, which

teaches the principles of three thousand realms in a single moment of life and the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.

People who have vibrant life force are happy. People with strong conviction are happy. They can lead positive, successful lives. Those who are weak, in contrast, are miserable. They create misery and unhappiness for themselves. Practicing Nichiren Buddhism enables us to become as strong as we possibly can. To live in such a way that we can perceive everything in terms of faith and are always determined to overcome everything through faith means to walk the path to eternal happiness.

You yourself are precious beyond measure—each and every one of you. The Daishonin taught this to his disciples while he himself was facing major persecution. And the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo

Makiguchi and Josei Toda, faithfully embraced the heart of the Daishonin's Buddhism and taught it to people from all walks of life.

With great conviction, let us continue to forge ahead powerfully along this path, which is directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin.

President Toda once gave the following guidance to members of the youth division:

To believe in your own mind is especially important when you are young. Yet it is difficult to trust one's mind. This is particularly true during one's youth, a time of emotional turmoil and confusion. . . .

I've seen the American cartoon "Popeye." The main character, Popeye, is so weak that he is constantly being beaten up by others. But when he eats spinach, he instantly

acquires strength and easily triumphs over his adversaries. This is because he believes in the power of spinach. . . .

We all need to have something we believe in. "I have the G o h o n z o n . Therefore, I will be able to overcome any problem. Everything will be fine."—If you have such firm conviction, you can do anything. . . .

If you feel that this is the path in life for you, that it's the right way to go, then believe in the Gohonzon and make it the core of your convictions. You will definitely be able to overcome any obstacle, including illness and poverty. But it requires the essential ingredient of faith. . . .

For youth, the stronger your faith, the more invincible

you will be in any situation. Young people need to have something to believe in. You must trust your own hearts.

Yet, because the human heart can be such an unreliable thing, it is important that you make the Gohonzon the foundation of your faith. If you do so, I am sure you will be able to lead your lives with confidence and ease. Please lead your lives that way and help others do the same.

Mr. Toda dearly loved young people and held the highest hopes for them. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than seeing the energetic endeavors of the youth division members who brimmed with powerful conviction in faith.

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12.4 Appreciating Your Uniqueness

INTRODUCTION

President Ikeda warmly encourages an SGI-USA member who asked how to deal with his lack of self-confidence.

PRESIDENT IKEDA'S GUIDANCE

From remarks at a question-and-answer session with SGI-USA Culture Department representatives, Nagano Training Center, Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, August 7, 1992.

No one has absolute confidence in themselves. In fact, it is quite normal not to have much confidence. In many cases, people who go around bragging about their confidence are merely arrogant, always clashing with and greatly disliked by those around them. A person can be miserable with either too much or too little self-confidence.

The important thing is that all of you shine in your own way, win in your own daily endeavors, and develop

your life in the way most suitable and natural for you. All you need to do is just keep on improving yourself as you steadily advance toward your goal.

After all, you are you, not someone else. There is no need for you to compare yourself with others; it's *your* life. The important question is, What do you really feel and think in the depths of your being? Buddhism expounds the principle of cherry, plum, peach, and damson, each having their own unique

characteristics, and the related principle of revealing one's intrinsic nature.

Cherry blossoms are cherry blossoms, and peach blossoms are peach blossoms. A cherry blossom can never become a peach blossom. Nor is there any need for it to try to do so. It would be perfectly miserable if it did.

Similarly, you are none other than yourself. You can never be someone else, however much you might wish it. What matters is that

you become the kind of person who can cherish, praise, and feel content with your own precious, irreplaceable life.

Chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is fundamental to this, enabling you to reveal your innate Buddhahood just as you are. Not only will chanting give you a wonderful, fundamental self-confidence, it will also adorn and dignify your life with the brilliance of your true and highest potential.

Buddhism expounds the principle of cherry, plum, peach, and damson, each having their own unique characteristics, and the related principle of revealing one's intrinsic nature.

Please have absolute confidence in yourself, because you are living the noblest possible life, with a beautiful heart.

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The New Human Revolution

Volume 25, Chapter 2
Shared Struggle



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

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Shin'ichi emphasized the importance of inner strength because he wanted to make the point that Nichiren Buddhism is not "dependent faith" but a philosophy of human revolution.

In closing, he quoted the Goshō passage: "Even embracing the Lotus Sutra would be useless without the heritage of faith" (WND-1, 218). Lastly, he emphasized that the true heritage of faith exists within the Soka Gakkai, advancing kosen-rufu just as Nichiren Daishonin taught.

After the end of the commemorative gongyo meeting, Shin'ichi met with representatives of the Chugoku region

youth division and spoke with them over dinner at a restaurant in front of Tokuyama Station.

Two days earlier, he had sent home youth division and staff

who had come from Hiroshima and other locales to help out at the Yamaguchi Culture Center. He did this because he wanted

to be able to focus on training the Yamaguchi staff and youth.

Yet Shin'ichi was painfully aware of how sad the youth who had been sent back to their home prefectures felt, so he decided to invite them to a casual gathering in Tokuyama.

Shin'ichi sat at the table with them, giving friendly advice to the young people in table manners and other things as they ate. After they'd finished eating, he continued to speak with youth division members in a Japanese-style room at the restaurant.

He said to the young women's division leaders: "Most of you will probably get married

and eventually join the women's division. For a time your life may become very busy with childrearing and others things, and you'll be stretched to the limit. Activities at the front lines of the organization may also be difficult. But never forget your pride and spirit from the time when you were young women's division leaders.

"Remember that you were entrusted with an important role in the Soka Gakkai organization and many people looked up to you. Make that awareness your starting point and try your hardest. Striving as a leader in the young women's division brings great benefit and fortune. Don't forget that no matter what difficulties and challenges you may face later, you're certain to attain happiness and victory in life if you stick with this Buddhism."

Shin'ichi sincerely spoke to them from the bottom of his heart.



Shared Struggle 57

Shin'ichi Yamamoto said to the Chugoku Region young men's division leaders: "It is important that we stay in rhythm with the Soka Gakkai Headquarters and strive in accord with the guidance of our mentor. When we follow the correct path that is the path of the Soka Gakkai, we are able to polish and train ourselves, and grow into outstanding individuals.

"If you selfishly try to lead the organization in a direction that is merely convenient for you, both you and the organization will stray from the correct path of kosen-rufu and end up getting nowhere.

"When leaders try to manipulate the organization according to their own views, the first thing that happens is that they make biased, unfair personnel appointments, only appointing people who agree with them. Eventually they will find themselves surrounded by only those who hope to gain favor through doing their bidding. As a result, the Soka Gakkai, which should be an

organization based on faith in the Mystic Law, will become a distorted organization based on cronyism. That's exploiting the organization, and is on par with the actions of the worms within the lion's body, destroying the Soka Gakkai, the organization in accord with the Buddha's intent and decree, from within. Factions must never be allowed to form within the Soka Gakkai.

"When carefully examined, those organizations that are experiencing difficulty growing or seem to have lost the clear purpose of faith that once motivated them are often times afflicted with this problem.

"To avoid this, all those involved in making personnel appointments need to have a strong sense of responsibility and integrity. Never forget that irresponsible or poor personnel decisions can lead to the destruction of the Soka Gakkai."

Shin'ichi continued speaking with all his strength, for the sake of the future. Responding to the youth's words and actions, encouragement and guidance



poured out of Shin'ichi like a gushing torrent.

"Young people need to strive assiduously and become capable. Negativity is their greatest foe. They should never put

themselves down because they might be poor or haven't gone to the best schools. Soka youth, having dedicated their lives to the highest of ideals, kosen-rufu, should always be positive and

willing to take on one challenge after another!"

After this session of encouragement, Shin'ichi left Tokuyama by car just after 8:00 p.m.



Shared Struggle 58

Shin'ichi was riding in the car from Tokuyama to the Yamaguchi Culture Center. After about 30 or 40 minutes, his wife, Mineko, said: "I heard that members from Hofu have gathered at their community center."

Mineko was told this by the Chugoku Region women's division leader Mitsue Shibano. According to the driver, the Hofu Community Center was just a few minutes away.

"Let's go!" Shin'ichi said. "I'd like to encourage them wholeheartedly, even if we don't have much time. After all, they're waiting for us. . . ."

The members had gathered at the Hofu Community Center in hopes that President Yamamoto would stop by and visit them. But now that it was after 8:30 p.m., they were about to go home. Just at that moment,

Shin'ichi's car pulled up in front of the center.

"Good evening!" said Shin'ichi, smiling, as he stepped into the entryway. Mineko was standing behind him. Members cheered.

It was a small, wooden community center. As soon as he entered, Shin'ichi asked: "If we were to do gongyo, would it bother the neighbors?"

"Not if we close the wooden shutters," someone responded.

"Well then, let's do that, and even if we have to chant softly, let's do gongyo. I want

to pray for your health, long life, and the prosperity of all your families."

After gongyo, Shin'ichi walked toward the electric organ in the room.

Saying, "Think of this as my small gift to you," he turned down the organ's volume and started playing "Atsuta Village," "The Three Martyrs of Atsuhara," and several other songs for them.

"I know you have all been waiting a long time. I somehow want to respond to your sincerity. The world operates according to self-

interest, but Buddhism is a realm of sincerity.

"The Soka Gakkai brings together mentor and disciple, fellow members, and people's hearts in the effort to attain kosen-rufu. The Soka Gakkai is a humanistic organization that must always put people ahead of bureaucracy. That's what makes the Soka Gakkai strong. I'm doing my utmost to ensure that the Soka Gakkai is always a pure realm of such a spirit."



Shared Struggle 59

Looking at the members assembled in the Hofu Community Center, Shin'ichi said: "Although new culture centers have been opened in Yamaguchi City and Tokuyama

City, please remember that Hofu is ultimately the starting point of the Soka Gakkai in Yamaguchi and is the driving force of kosen-rufu in Yamaguchi Prefecture."

On May 3, 1960, when Shin'ichi was inaugurated as the third president of the Soka Gakkai, the Yamaguchi chapter was established, with an office based in Hofu City. Then in 1965, when the Hofu Community Center was built, it became the prefectural headquarters for the Soka Gakkai.

Historically speaking, Hofu was once the flourishing

capital of the former Suo Province, which was made up of the southern and eastern portions of present-day Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Shin'ichi continued: "Please advance with the awareness that you are the core of the Soka Gakkai in Yamaguchi, and this is the starting point to lead the people of Yamaguchi to happiness."

In the words of the Armenian poet Avetik Isahakyan (1875–1957): "Maintain your dignity and pride, whatever happens."

Self-confidence is the backbone of the human spirit. People with self-confidence are strong. As long as one has confidence, one won't be defeated by the harshest adversity.

Shin'ichi then said: "Today I'd like to present you, our Hofu members, with a poem:

The citadel of Hofu—
starting point
of kosen-rufu.

"You are all emissaries of the Buddha who have emerged here

in Hofu for a profound reason. My trustworthy disciples, we are inseparable. Please continue to follow the path of kosen-rufu courageously, with pride in those facts.

"I look forward to our next meeting!"

Shin'ichi was only able to be with the Hofu members for a short time, but it was an unforgettable experience for them all.

It was almost 10:00 p.m. when Shin'ichi arrived back at the Yamaguchi Culture Center.



Shared Struggle 60

May 22 was Shin'ichi's last day in Yamaguchi Prefecture. At 4:00 p.m., he was set to depart for Kitakyushu City in Kyushu.

That afternoon, a memorial service for deceased pioneers who had made significant contributions to

kosen-rufu in Yamaguchi Prefecture was held at the culture center. Shin'ichi led the service, chanting sincere daimoku for the peaceful repose of the deceased pioneer members.

After conferring a number of posthumous honorary titles on the deceased, such as Honorary Vice General Director, Shin'ichi spoke: "The deceased members we are honoring today dedicated their lives to Buddhism, as Nichiren Daishonin taught, building the foundation for kosen-rufu as outstanding Bodhisattvas of the Earth. They are indeed noble Buddhas.

"I hope their descendants will succeed to and follow the example of these pioneers who have walked such an honorable path. In that sense, please seriously think of yourselves not just as their surviving family members, but as their successors in kosen-rufu, upholding Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the fundamental law of the universe.

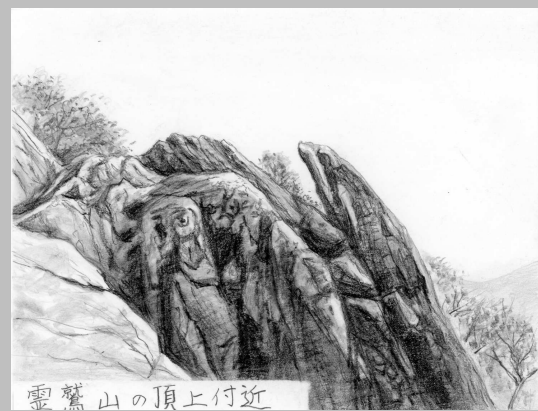
"We have just presented a number of posthumous honorary titles, but these are not symbols of worldly power or authority. These titles are a solemn testament that these cherished

predecessors have dedicated themselves to faith, practice, and study, just as Nichiren Daishonin instructed.

"Taking these honors lightly is equivalent to invalidating the noble achievements of our beloved pioneers, who devoted their lives to kosen-rufu. I hope the surviving family members will regard these honorary titles as the highest honors, follow the great path of faith as successors, and demonstrate proof of the virtues of the deceased. Without a doubt, this will cause flowers of benefit to bloom in their families."

Shin'ichi then described what happens to dedicated

practitioners after they pass away, noting the Daishonin's clear explanation in a letter addressed to the lay nun Sennichi titled, "The Treasure of a Filial Child": "Some may wonder where the spirit of the late Abutsu-bo may be at this moment. But by using the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra to reflect his image, I, Nichiren, can see him among the assembly on Eagle Peak, seated within the treasure tower of Many Treasures Buddha and facing toward the east [i.e., facing the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures]" (WND-1, 1042).



Shared Struggle 61

The lay nun Sennichi became a follower of Nichiren Daishonin, along with her husband Abutsu-bo while the Daishonin was in exile on Sado. In this letter, written after Abutsu-bo's passing, the Daishonin tells

Sennichi that, viewed in the clear mirror of the Lotus Sutra, there was no doubt that her late husband was among the assembly on Eagle Peak, seated within the treasure tower of Many Treasures Buddha and facing toward the east (cf. WND-1, 1042).

Speaking confidently, Shin'ichi explained: "Eagle Peak is the name of the mountain in India where Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra. From the perspective of the life philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, the

treasure tower of Many Treasures Buddha that appeared before the assembly at Eagle Peak represents the Gohonzon [the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo].

"We of the Soka Gakkai, valiant Bodhisattvas of the Earth actively spreading the Mystic Law, are embraced after death by the Gohonzon [the world of Buddhahood in the universe], and in future existences, we will be born together with the Gohonzon [the Mystic Law], our lives brimming with vibrant life force, like the morning sun rising in the eastern sky. In other words, through dedicating our lives to the unprecedented, noble undertaking of kosen-rufu, we

are certain to be reborn in this world, or another realm like it somewhere else in the universe, and once again devote ourselves joyously to kosen-rufu.

"Furthermore, Mr. Toda often asserted: 'Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the deceased is the only way we can truly bring positive benefit to their lives.' The Mystic Law functions to connect our lives to others in the universe, much like radio waves. This is another reason why it's important to chant vigorous daimoku. When our daimoku for the happiness of the deceased resonates with powerful life force, it not only imparts strength and vitality to their lives, but our own lives are

also invigorated as a result. The purpose of our prayers for the deceased is for our lives to commune with our deceased loved ones and countless ancestors.

"I'm sure that today's solemn memorial service is also bringing particular joy to our deceased fellow members.

"Instead of simply offering prayers for the deceased suffused with the grief of bereavement, let us resolve to walk the path of kosen-rufu with our deceased loved ones throughout the three existences of past, present, and future, with strong faith and confident of the wondrous life force of the Mystic Law."



Shared Struggle 62

After the memorial service, Shin'ichi participated in an informal meeting with about 30 young members from Yamaguchi belonging to the Future Group, a training group within the future division. The group had been formed about three years earlier, and by this time the oldest members had already entered university.

After sitting for a commemorative photo with the members, Shin'ichi spoke to them individually, impressing on them the importance of persevering in Buddhist faith and practice.

"Some people practice with pure faith as high school students, but once they enter university they succumb to various temptations, stop trying to polish their character, and spend all their time amusing themselves.

"Others remain constant in their Buddhist practice throughout university, and then get a job at a top-ranking company. They start to think they're important people and fail

to appreciate the true greatness of members who, though poor, strive valiantly in Gakkai activities. Some of them even start to feel disdain for ordinary citizens and end up drifting apart from the Soka Gakkai.

"I don't want that to happen to you. Your duty is to protect the ordinary people and the Gakkai members whose lives are the hardest. The role of members from the Future Group is to carry out that mission.

"I hope you will burn with ever brighter enthusiasm for kosen-rufu with each passing year."

The eyes of the members sparkled brightly.

A large number of members had gathered in the garden of the Yamaguchi Culture Center to see Shin'ichi off on his departure for Kitakyushu. When Shin'ichi received word of this, he instructed that they be let into the main meeting room of the center. It was already 3:30 in the afternoon. Shin'ichi had to leave at 4:00, but he went to the meeting room to greet them.

"Let's chant daimoku together. This is a special daimoku session. I'll chant earnestly that all your prayers will be answered."

Kosen-rufu cannot be achieved without a willingness to give everything for the sake of

Buddhism and one's fellow members. To ignite an undying flame in the hearts of others, you have to brim with a passionate commitment yourself. Shin'ichi wanted to communicate this through his own actions. That was also the aim of his second "Yamaguchi Campaign."

When they'd finished chanting, Shin'ichi said: "All right, now let me play the piano for you!"

(This concludes "Shared Struggle," chapter 2 of volume 25 of The New Human Revolution.)



नेपाल इग्गे नएवइ

1st Chapter General Meeting in the New Era of Worldwide Kosenrufu

Mahendra Pyatha NSGIT

May 3rd, Soka Gakkai Day and Soka Mother's Day was commemorated on May 7th by Jugal and Himchuli districts (Svet Kamal Chapter) at Nepal SGI's peace centre with heart's filled with joy and the enthusiastic participation of the members and their guests. Every participant was given a souvenir before they entered the main hall which was beautifully decorated with flying balloons encouraging us to fly high.



Svet Kamal Chapter

The hall resounded with a vigorous, vibrant gongyo followed by daimoku that brought peace surged through every heart and to every nook and corner of the hall.

The stage was then opened for the art division members who powerfully performed song: "shoulder to shoulder". With the marvelous voices of the women and the foot tapping beats of Madal, the music was extraordinary.

Vice General Director Mr. Devendra Man Singh heartily welcomed and expressed gratitude to all the participants for their valuable time.

The enthusiasm of the members was increased still further by an inspiring message from SGI President Ikeda read by Mr. Krishna Dawadee. In the message Ikeda expressed his wish that everyone participating at this Soka Gakkai Day and Soka Mother's Day have success in their efforts to achieve absolute happiness.

SGI is globally renowned, bonding people from all over the world in the same arena of faith. The short video that was shown during the program inspired us the more to keep practicing, sharing and chanting. Grounded in the reality of our daily lives, the prayers of SGI members never go unanswered no matter which country of the world you belong to.

Sabina Shrestha, YWD chief next spoke on the significance of May 3rd, and revealed the importance of other dates in SGI history, inspiring all to expand Kosenrufu in their daily lives.

Every personal experience holds the potential to inspire the lives of others. District YWD- Chief Ms. Sneha Churiwal, shared her personal struggle with everyone, showing how one can overcome the difficulty in choosing a career and proceed along the path of victory and absolute happiness through the continued chanting of Nam Myo Ho Renge Kyo.

The program further preceded with the classical melodious song Okali Orali sung by YWD member Ms. Smarika upadhyaya. Everyone responded to her mesmerizing voice.

Another experience was shared by Block MD-Chief Mr. Bijen Shrestha that surely inspired everyone as he spoke of continual self renewal and transformation through the harsh journey of life. Although his past was full of challenges and ordeals he continued fighting for Kosenrufu and finally paved the path of his musical journey. He encouraged everyone to fight through every hardship in life and build up the confidence to win.

Last but not the least, WD member Mrs. Dvya Tara Shakya shared a very heart touching experience of life from pain to gain. She inspired everyone to keep faith in the Gohonzon and chant Nam myo ho rene kyo in every trying situation of life to remain positive of seeing spring after every winter. She taught us to never become daunted by failures and problems. Rather we should take them as opportunities.

YWD Chapter leader Ms. Niva shakya and WD Chapter leader

Mrs. Kanta Rizal shared with us their determinations which focused on expanding the membership of NSGI, joining hand to hand with all for peace and tranquility.

It has been more than a year since a devastating earthquake hit Nepal taking thousands of lives and destroying cultural sites and buildings. As a tribute to the lost lives, a crew of dancers came to the stage and expressed in contemporary dance with the sound track of the song: 'We'll arise'. Well choreographed by Ms. Niva Shakya, the dance motivated to stay strong and rise up again whenever we fall down. After that a song called titled Ram Shaili was performed by duet Paribesh and Prajan. It was the perfect bonding between guitar tune and soft voice.

Lastly the program was closed by three daimoku Sanso. However all the members and guests with big smiles gathered together for the commemorative photograph. Everyone enjoyed the refreshment served by the members, cooked at their homes.

[NSGIT Editor : Nepal SGI organized 1st Chapter General Meeting commemorating May 3rd on May 7 in Nepal SGI Peace Center and in the hall of Amadablam District.

On May 3rd, NSGI announced 4 Chapters, 2 new Blocks, 10 New Chapter leaders, 3 District Leaders and 8 Block leaders. It was a very joyous moment for all, to be determined to work for Kosenrufu, hand in hand and one in mind with mentor. The 4 Chapters are Sveta Kamal (White Lotus) Chapter, Sungava (Orchid) Chapter, Sayapatri (Marigold) Chapter and Indra Kamal (Gardenia Jasminoides) Chapter. Focusing on the Garden of beautiful people, chapters are named with flowers.

All the 4 Chapters celebrated their 1st General meeting with lots of joy and enthusiasm. The target to bring 90 guests from all the districts surpassed to 150 guests and 200 members active participation. Outstation districts in Pokhara, Hetauda and Illam also celebrated the May 3rd Day with joy.



Skit performance by Indra Kamal Chapter



A
series of
encouragement
from SGI President Ikeda
addressing members of the
boys and girls division.

[12] Helen Keller, Author and Social Activist:

Undefeated by Adversity

Congratulations to all those who will graduate from elementary school [in March]. You have worked very hard these past six years. Together with your family, I would like to offer a big round of applause to all of you who have grown so remarkably.

Please do not forget to be grateful to your teachers, who supported and helped you through your elementary school years.

I still have vivid memories of my elementary school teachers. They helped me discover the joy of learning. They taught me how vast the world is, the importance of having a dream, and the true value of sincerity and making efforts.

Today, let's learn about the famous author and social activist Helen Keller (1880–1968), and the encounter she had with her great teacher, Anne Sullivan (1866–1936), who encouraged and fostered her potential.

*

I'd like to ask you to cover your eyes with your hands. You probably cannot see anything. Now, cover your ears with your hands so it's difficult for you to hear. Lastly, try to ask your father or mother for something without talking. Were they able to understand you? It is quite challenging, isn't it?

Helen Keller was unable to see, hear, or speak when she was a child. Yet in spite of her disabilities, she was a woman who lived a positive and cheerful life.

Helen was born in the United States in June 1880. But

during the winter when she was 19 months old, she suddenly came down with a severe fever that continued for several days. Her father and mother nursed her as best they could, hoping for her recovery. Their prayers were answered when Helen's fever eventually went down.

However, when her parents tried talking to her, she didn't respond. Helen's illness had left her unable to see or hear. She even forgot how to use her voice.

Gradually, she was able to communicate her feelings by using gestures, such as shaking her head. But when people couldn't understand her or something upset her, she cried and screamed, and took her frustration out on them.

Helen's parents, who were doing everything they could to help their daughter, were then introduced to a young woman named Anne Sullivan. She had just graduated from school with highest honors.

Anne lost her mother when she was eight years old. She and her younger brother lived with their father, who was an alcoholic and unemployed. They were very poor. Anne battled blindness [that ended in a successful operation that partially restored her vision].

Those who live undefeated by their hardships are able to truly understand the suffering and sadness of others. It makes them kind and compassionate.

Anne Sullivan became the tutor of the seven-year-old Helen who eventually came to trust her. Anne believed in her potential and taught her with great patience.

Helen learned fingerspelling, which enabled her to spell out words with her

fingers. Anne taught this by shaping letters on Helen's palm.

At first, no matter how many times Anne tried to teach her, Helen was unable to grasp the idea that everything had a name.

Helen couldn't make the distinction between a cup and the water in it. One day, Anne Sullivan pumped water from the well in the yard, and had Helen hold a cup with one hand, placing it underneath the water spout. Water overflowed from the cup, gushing over Helen's hand.

Anne took Helen's other hand and spelled out the word "water," over and over again. Suddenly, Helen made the connection. She realized that the cool liquid flowing over her hand had a name: it was called "water."

Helen then understood the meaning of words such as "father," "mother," "sister," and "teacher," and learned many words quickly. She began to see and hear with her mind. The light of learning began to illuminate her heart.

Helen learned to communicate with fingerspelling with her teacher by placing her hands over her teacher's palm. Later, after learning to read Braille—a way of writing that uses raised dots on a piece of paper to represent letters—she began to read books. She continued her efforts until she learned how to write sentences and to use her voice to speak. Filled with the joy of learning, Helen made excellent progress. And her teacher, Anne Sullivan, was always at her side.

*

Helen had a big dream. She wanted to attend college. Her

school of choice was Harvard University, one of the most prestigious universities in America, and where I have been invited to lecture at on two occasions.

All of Helen's friends said that it would be impossible for her to get in, so she should give up the idea. But she and Anne Sullivan united as teacher and pupil in their efforts to get accepted.

Around this time, Helen's beloved father passed away, deeply saddening her. But with the support of many, she succeeded in being accepted to Radcliffe College, which was Harvard's associated women's college. There, she studied diligently and graduated with honors.

Helen then went on to devote herself to helping others who were blind and deaf so that they could lead happy lives. She traveled around the world calling for peace and encouraging others.

She also visited Japan three times. Her first visit was about 80 years ago in April 1937, when the cherry trees were in full bloom. Addressing a Japanese audience, she shared her belief that our smiles are more radiant and beautiful when we help those in need.

A letter written by Helen Keller is displayed at exhibitions sponsored by the Soka Gakkai such as *Human Rights in the 21st Century—Treasuring Each Individual* (2005–) and *Books—Heritage of Humanity* (2006–). Visitors find the letter deeply inspiring.

In this letter, Helen wrote: "If you can enjoy the sun and flowers and music where there is nothing except darkness and silence you have proved the Mystic Sense." Helen's teacher

Anne Sullivan was the one who drew out the spiritual power from within Helen's heart.

*

People around the world applauded the teacher-student relationship built by Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan.

On June 15, 1932, the University of Glasgow in Scotland presented Helen Keller with an honorary doctorate and praised her and her teacher.

Incidentally, on the same day 62 years later (in 1994), this university conferred an honorary doctorate upon me, and also paid tribute to the encounter I had with my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda.

Reflecting on her relationship with Anne Sullivan, Helen said with the deepest appreciation: "I cannot picture anyone else in her place."

I, too, cannot imagine anyone other than Mr. Toda as my mentor in life. Having him as my mentor made me who I am today. He enabled me to live an incredible life. He empowered me to work for world peace and to meet and build friendships with people around the globe.

I have also had the good fortune to encounter all of you, the members of the boys and girls division. Just as being able to meet Mr. Toda is a great treasure in my life, I regard all of you to be great treasures, not only for me, but for the future of humanity.

(Translated from the March 1, 2015, issue of *Boys and Girls Hope News*, the Soka Gakkai monthly newspaper for the boys and girls division)

The Basics of Nichiren Buddhism

for the New Era of Worldwide Kosen-rufu



Chapter 1

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin

Nichiren Daishonin's Life and Teachings

3. Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime and Kosen-rufu

1) Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime

The fundamental purpose of our Buddhist faith and practice is to attain the life state of Buddhahood.

By embracing faith in the Gohonzon and striving sincerely in Buddhist practice for oneself and others, anyone can realize the state of Buddhahood in this existence. This is the principle of “attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.”

“Practice for oneself” means to carry out Buddhist practice for one’s own benefit. “Practice for others” means to teach and guide others to Buddhist practice so that they, too, can attain benefit. Specifically, “practice for oneself and others” indicates doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, while also reaching out to talk with others about Buddhism, teaching and guiding them, and thereby propagating the Mystic Law. (A more detailed explanation appears in chapter 3.)

Nichiren Daishonin wrote: “If votaries of the Lotus Sutra carry out religious practice as the sutra directs, then every one of them without exception will surely attain Buddhahood within his or her present lifetime. To cite an analogy, if one plants the fields in spring and summer, then, whether it be early or late, one is certain to reap a harvest within the year” (“The Doctrines of Three Thousand Realms in a Single Moment of Life,” WND-2, 88).

Attaining Buddhahood, or becoming a Buddha, does not mean becoming some kind of special human being, completely different from who we are now, nor does it mean being reborn in a pure land far removed from this world in our next lifetime.

The Daishonin explains the “attain” of attaining Buddhahood as follows: “‘Attain’ means to open or reveal” (OTT, 126). Attaining Buddhahood, therefore, simply means revealing our innate Buddhahood.

As ordinary people, we can reveal this enlightened state of life, just as we are. This is expressed in the Buddhist concepts of “the attainment of Buddhahood by ordinary people” and “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.”

Attaining Buddhahood does not mean going to some other world. Rather, it means establishing a state of absolute and indestructible happiness here in the real world.

The Daishonin says that “one comes to realize and see that each thing—the cherry, the plum, the peach, the damson—in its own entity, without undergoing any change, possesses the eternally endowed three bodies [of the Buddha]” (OTT, 200). As this passage suggests, attaining Buddhahood means living in a way in which we make the most of our unique inherent qualities and develop our potential to the fullest.

In other words, in attaining Buddhahood, our lives are purified, allowing us to give full expression to their inherent workings; we gain a strong inner state that is not swayed by any hardship.

Attaining Buddhahood is not the achievement of a final goal. The state of Buddhahood is characterized by an unremitting struggle based on faith in the Mystic Law to eliminate evil and generate good. Those who strive tirelessly for kosen-rufu are Buddhas.

“The Attainment of Buddhahood by Ordinary People” and “Attaining Buddhahood in One’s Present Form”

The terms “ordinary person” or “common mortal” appear frequently in Buddhist sutras and texts, indicating an unenlightened person. The Lotus Sutra teaches that ordinary people inherently possess the life state of Buddhahood and that they can reveal that state of life. That is, it is possible for us to manifest within us that noble life state as ordinary people. This is expressed in such Buddhist terms as “ordinary people are identical with the highest level of being” (OTT, 22) and “an ordinary person is a Buddha” (“The Izu Exile,” WND-1, 36).

Attaining Buddhahood is a process of manifesting the life state of a Buddha, which is originally present within all people (the inherent world of

than the Lotus Sutra teach the attainment of Buddhahood, they all require at least two conditions.

The first is that one not belong to any of the following groups, which were deemed incapable of attaining Buddhahood: practitioners of the two vehicles (voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones), evil people, and women.

Practitioners of the two vehicles believed that it was impossible for them to attain the elevated life state of the Buddha, and so contented themselves with seeking to gain the stage of arhat—the highest stage of awakening in the teachings for the voice-hearers. These practitioners aimed for the annihilation of body and mind in arriving at this stage, in which all earthly desires were completely extinguished, ending the cycle of rebirth into this world. Many Mahayana sutras harshly condemned such practitioners as being unable to attain Buddhahood.

These sutras also taught that evil people had to first be reborn as good people, and women be reborn as men, before they could attain Buddhahood. Neither evil people nor women were considered able to attain Buddhahood as they were. Though these sutras taught the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, only a limited number of people could meet the requirements to actually do so.

The second condition for attaining Buddhahood in Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra was that one had to engage in Buddhist practice over repeated cycles of birth and death (known as “countless kalpas of practice”) in order to free oneself from the life state of an unenlightened, ordinary person and achieve the life state of a Buddha.

Buddhahood means living in a way in which we make the most of our **unique inherent qualities** and **develop** our **potential** to the **fullest**.

Buddhahood). A Buddha, therefore, is not a special being separate from or superior to human beings. The Daishonin taught that attaining Buddhahood is revealing the highest humanity—that is, Buddhahood—in our lives as ordinary people.

This is called “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form.” This means that people can realize the life state of a Buddha just as they are, without having to be reborn and changing their present form as an ordinary person.

Though Mahayana sutras other

Attaining Buddhahood as an Ordinary Person in This Lifetime

In contrast, the Lotus Sutra teaches that attaining Buddhahood is not a matter of becoming some sort of exceptional or extraordinary being, but that each person can reveal the life state of Buddhahood within them, just as they are.

Nichiren Daishonin further clarified that the fundamental Law by which all Buddhas attain enlightenment is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. He also manifested his enlightened state of life that is one with that Law in the form of the Gohonzon—the object of devotion of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

By embracing faith in the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, anyone can reveal the Buddhahood inherent in his or her life.

Nichikan wrote: “If we accept and believe in this object of devotion and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to it, then our lives are themselves the object of devotion of three thousand realms

in a single moment of life; we are the founder, Nichiren Daishonin” (“The Commentaries of Nichikan”).

By believing in the Gohonzon and continuing to exert ourselves in faith and practice for the sake of kosen-rufu, we can manifest in our lives as ordinary people the same life state of Buddhahood as Nichiren Daishonin.

This is also expressed as the principles of “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” and “attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.”

[Note: Nichikan (1665–1726) was a scholar priest who lived during the Edo period (1603–1868) of Japan. He systematized and placed fresh emphasis on the Buddhist principles of Nichiren Daishonin as inherited and transmitted by his direct disciple and successor, Nikko Shonin.]

The idea of “attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form” can be expressed from another distinct perspective as the principles that “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.”

The various sutras and scriptures traditionally categorized as Hinayana teachings in the Daishonin’s day taught that the cause of suffering lies in one’s earthly desires or deluded impulses, and that there is no way to eliminate suffering other than to extinguish such desires or impulses. The aim of these teachings was emancipation (awakening that brings about release from suffering) through upholding numerous precepts (rules of discipline) and accumulating the results of prolonged and intensive practice and training.

However, trying to achieve a state utterly devoid of earthly desires led people to seek to annihilate both the physical and spiritual self and thereby escape the cycle of birth and death, never to be reborn in this world again. This ultimately amounts to a complete denial or rejection of life.

In the Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, persons of the two vehicles who practice the Hinayana teachings, evil people, and women are denied the possibility of attaining Buddhahood.

This represents a way of thinking that is essentially quite similar to the Hinayana doctrines, creating a gap or divide between ordinary people and the Buddha that is difficult to bridge.

These sutras also

present fictitious Buddhas—as in the case of Amida Buddha or Mahavairocana Buddha—who far transcend human beings in their attributes and dwell in separate realms far removed from the real world.

These sutras teach that for ordinary people to become Buddhas, they must learn, practice, and acquire aspects of the Buddha’s enlightenment a little at a time over the course of many successive lifetimes.

Also, the belief that one could not through one’s own efforts or power alone become a Buddha gave rise to an emphasis on seeking salvation through the absolute power of a Buddha.

In contrast, the Lotus Sutra reveals that all human beings inherently possess the world of Buddhahood, a life state of compassion and wisdom, and that it is possible to tap and bring forth this inner Buddhahood.

Even ordinary people whose lives are dominated by earthly desires, burdened by negative karma, and afflicted by suffering, can, by awakening to

the reality that Buddhahood exists within their own lives, manifest the wisdom of the Buddha’s enlightenment, liberate themselves from suffering, and realize a state of complete freedom.

A life tormented by earthly desires and suffering can become a life of limitless freedom that shines with enlightened wisdom, just as it is. This is the meaning of the principle that “earthly desires are enlightenment.”

Nichiren Daishonin teaches that the world of Buddhahood within us is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

When we believe in the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, chant daimoku, and awaken to our true, noble selves, the wisdom to live out our lives, the courage and confidence to face the challenges of adversity and overcome them, and the compassion to care for the welfare of others will well forth in our lives.

“The sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” means that, though we may be in a state of suffering caused by the painful realities of birth and death, when we believe in the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, we can manifest in our lives the tranquil life state of the Buddha’s enlightenment (nirvana).

The principles of “earthly desires are enlightenment” and “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” teach us that when we base ourselves on faith in the Mystic Law, we can lead positive, proactive lives, transforming every problem and suffering we have into a cause for growth and happiness.

Relative Happiness and Absolute Happiness

Second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda (1900–58) taught that there are two kinds of happiness: relative happiness and absolute happiness. Relative happiness describes a condition in which our material needs are fulfilled and our personal desires satisfied. But desires know no limits; even if we may enjoy a sense of those desires being fulfilled for a time, it is not lasting. Since this kind of happiness is dependent on external circumstances, if those circumstances should change or disappear, then so will our happiness. Such happiness is called relative because it exists only in relation to external factors.

In contrast, absolute happiness is a state of life in which being alive itself is a source of happiness and joy, no matter where we are or what our circumstances. It describes a life condition in which happiness wells forth from within us. Because it is not influenced by external conditions, it is called absolute happiness. Attaining Buddhahood means establishing this state of absolute happiness.

Living amid the realities of this world, it is inevitable that we will meet with various

problems and difficulties. But in the same way that someone who is strong and physically fit can easily climb a mountain, even when carrying a heavy load, those who have established an inner state of absolute happiness can use any challenge they encounter as an impetus for bringing forth powerful life force and calmly overcome adversity. For strong mountain climbers, the steeper and more demanding the ascent, the greater enjoyment they feel in overcoming each challenge on the path to the summit. Similarly, for those who, through Buddhist practice, have acquired the life force and wisdom to overcome hardships, the real world with all its troubles and challenges is a place for creating value, rich in satisfaction and fulfillment.

In addition, while relative happiness, which depends on external factors, disappears with death, the absolute happiness of the life state of Buddhahood persists eternally. As the Daishonin writes: “Passing through the round of births and deaths, one makes one’s way on the land of the Dharma nature, or enlightenment, that is inherent within oneself” (OTT, 52).

In the Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, persons of the two vehicles who practice the Hinayana teachings, evil people, and women are denied the possibility of attaining Buddhahood.

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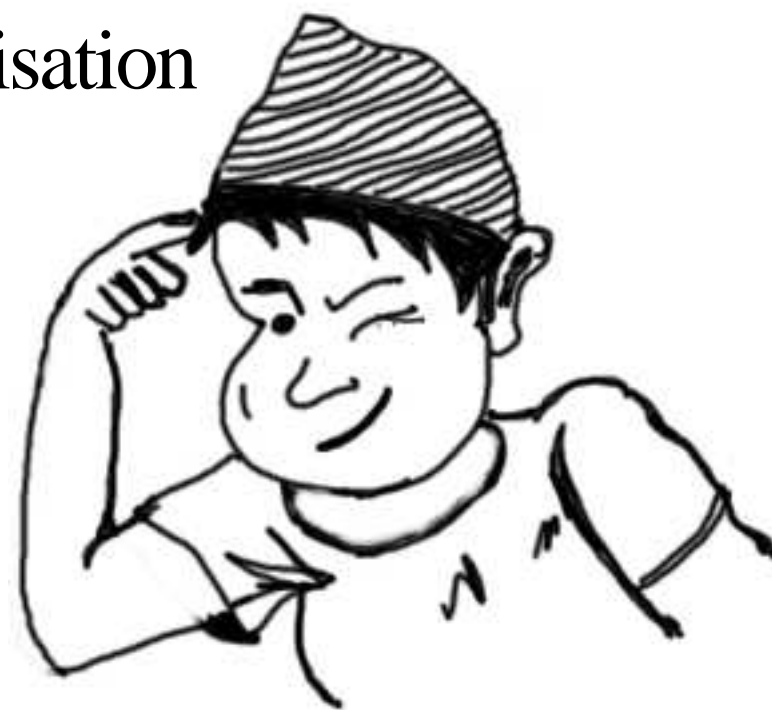
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Q&A for New Members

On the SGI Organisation



Question: To me, faith is something personal and should be carried out on an individual basis. Why do we need “organizational activities”?

Answer: The word “organization” probably conjures up certain images of being restrained or losing personal freedom. However, if we relook at our daily lives, we will realize that we are actually part of some kind of “organization” the closest and smallest unit being our families. Schools, companies, interest groups, local communities — all are organizations.

Organizations are made up of individuals, intertwined and interacting with one another. Our lives cannot exist apart from others. If one avoids contact with fellow members and practise faith alone, one will unknowingly fall into the trap of “self-propounded views”, veering away from the correct path of Buddhist

practice. As a result, one will find it difficult to maintain faith.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “The best way to attain Buddhahood is to encounter a good friend.” (WND-1, p 598) Good friends enable Buddhist practitioners to attain Buddhahood. In the SGI, they refer to seniors in faith and fellow practitioners who pray for the growth of fellow members and offer wholehearted encouragement along the journey of faith.

Our characters and humanistic qualities will be polished through our encounters, interactions and dialogues with people from all walks of life with differing backgrounds, statuses and personalities. Just as diamonds can only be polished by diamonds, human beings can only be

Activities within the SGI organisation, including engaging in dialogues on Buddhism, home visitations and offering encouragement, constitute actions taken based on the belief in one’s Buddhahood (limitless potential inherent in one’s life) and the wish to help manifest it.

Activities within the SGI organisation, including engaging in dialogues on Buddhism, home visitations and offering encouragement, constitute actions taken based on the belief in one’s Buddhahood (limitless potential inherent in one’s life) and the wish to help manifest it. Taking such actions will in turn help us to open forth our own Buddhahood, thereby helping us to grow as an individual.

SGI President Ikeda once said, “Living out our lives together as we encourage one another along our journey of

polished through their interactions with fellow human beings.

In addition, our dialogue-based movement through lending an ear to others, imparting courage and hope and

offering heartfelt encouragement, forms the basis of SGI activities. As the Goshō states, “If one lights a fire for others, one will brighten one’s own way.” (WND-2, p 1060)

Buddhist practice — Buddhism pulsates within such human bonds that bind us together.”

While exerting ourselves tenaciously in our personal practice such as doing gongyo, chanting daimoku and studying the Goshō, engaging ourselves in the activities of the SGI, an organization dedicated to the realisation of happiness of all people, is the “short cut” to achieving great personal growth.



June 2016

NSGI Monthly Meeting Schedule

July 2016

Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	Date	Time	Meeting	Venue
June 1	17:30	Chapter & National Leaders meeting with GD	NPC	July 1	17:30	Chapter & National Leaders meeting with GD	NPC
June 3	17:30	All Leader's Meeting	NPC	July 2	08:00	Jugal Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC
June 4	08:00	Amadablam Kosenrufu Meeting	NPC	July 6	11:00	Women Division Leaders Meeting	NPC
June 4-5		Summer Training Course	NPC	July 7	16:00	Memorial Gongyo	NPC
June 8	11:00	Women Division Leaders Meeting	NPC	July 9	08:00	New Era District Zadankai Meeting	District
June 9	17:30	Men Division Leaders Meeting	NPC	July 16	08:00	Guidance Meeting with Rev. Watanabe	NPC
June 11	08:00	New Era District Zadankai Meeting	District	July 17	17:30	English Medium Meeting	NPC
June 18	09:00	20th Women Division General Meeting	NPC	July 18-21		Chapter Divisional Meeting	Member's Home
June 19	17.30	English Medium Meeting	NPC	July 23	08:00	District Study Meeting	District
June 20-23		Chapter Divisional Meeting	Member's Home		13:00	PU 7 th Class	NPC
June 22	17:30	Goshō Meeting “Reply to the Mother of Ueno”	District	July 30	08:00	MD/WD Quarterly Divisional Meeting	NPC
	13:00	PU 6 th Class	NPC		11:30	Youth Quarterly Meeting	NPC

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