



Let the Light of Buddhist Compassion Shine in Difficult Times!

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SSA General Director's Message to SSA Members

Together We Dialogue!

My greetings to all SSA members and your families in this youthful month of July where we will commemorate various significant Soka Gakkai milestones such as July 3 – Mentor and Disciple Day, July 11 – Young Men Division Formation Day, and July 19 – Young Women Division Formation Day. I sincerely hope all of you are staying in good health and keeping your spirits up as we enter Phase Two of the reopening of Singapore's economy.

In this mentor and disciple month of July, we have launched a new initiative, “**Together We Dialogue**”, towards November 18. This is an initiative to spur us to conduct joyous dialogues with one more person in front of us. This activity arose in response to Ikeda Sensei's message this May 3, where he had called forth successors of Soka to “powerfully ring in a new renaissance, where all humanity can reveal the life state of Buddhahood”.

Though the “Together We Dialogue” movement will be spearheaded by youth, I would like to call forth all four divisions to work together to ensure its great success! Let us engage in heart-to-heart dialogues, ignite hope in another individual, develop others' inner potential

and foster one more lionhearted disciple! Through such life-to-life encounters, let's ensure that we leave no one behind in these challenging times.

In fact, dialogue can be said to be the core of Buddhism. The Buddha's fundamental desire is to develop wisdom equal to his own in the lives of all people. This is depicted in the phrase that we chant daily in our practice of the gongyo:

Shari-hotsu. Go ju jo-butsu irai. Shuju innen. Shuju hiyu. Ko en gonkyo. Mu shu hoben. Indo shuju. Ryo ri shojaku.

(Translated meaning: Shariputra, ever since I attained Buddhahood I have through various causes and various similes widely expounded my teachings and have used countless expedient means to guide living beings and cause them to renounce their attachments.)

As this implies, we conduct heart-to-heart dialogues to share Buddhism with others out of a sincere wish to fundamentally revitalise their lives, respecting in them the same Buddhahood that exists in ours. A sincere dialogue is like the sun that can warm the hearts of

people. Clear and confident words can also be likened to a fresh breeze that dispels the clouds of illusion. Therefore, our noble Buddhist dialogues are the catalysts for changing people's lives for the better.

This July also marks the 760th year since Nichiren Daishonin wrote the important treatise, "On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land" on July 16, 1260. Ikeda Sensei writes in *The New Human Revolution* Volume 4, "Rissho Ankoku" chapter, as follows:

"The message of 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land', simply put, is that each of us should accomplish a personal human revolution based on the principle of humanism and thus become key players in realising social prosperity and world peace."

As such, let us all enact this great personal human revolution based on the principle of Buddhist humanism, and participate in the "Together We Dialogue" movement. Based on the heart of altruism, the heart of challenge, and the heart of compassion, every dialogue that we conduct should arise from genuine empathy. Let's strive to always give hope, courage, assurance, or a vision for the future to those who are suffering. Let's pray and struggle to find ways to help others overcome their misery through unyielding faith and conviction.

In closing, let us extend our appreciation to the SSA Publication Division for their great efforts in publishing this Complimentary Booklet No. 3. I am very sure this booklet will be another great source of inspiration for our practice of faith. Let us make the best use of this booklet to learn and share with others, as much as we can!

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Ng Che Yee Vicky
Henderson Chapter
Women Division Member

I am working as an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Specialist. I first had an inkling that the Wuhan pneumonia (as it was then called) may be a lot more trouble than expected when the first case in Taiwan was reported.

In February, the hospital, including my department, began making preparations for the potential surge in cases in Singapore. Every day, and sometimes within a span of a few hours, there would be new changes that we needed to adapt to. We had to undergo training to familiarise ourselves with the various

Personal Protective Equipment available so that we could use them safely.

As I took on more responsibilities in planning manpower for the department, I had to reorganise how we allocated our staff, as well as consider their personal circumstances and to accept that something I had planned just two hours ago might be completely scrapped as the situation evolved.

I was getting frustrated with the multiple revisions that I had to make to the roster due to the fluid situation, on top of the many new processes that I had to

familiarise myself with at work. However, a Gosho passage came to mind, “Tell them to be prepared for the worst, and not to expect good times, but take the bad times for granted.” (WND-1, p. 998)

I felt that the Gosho passage was a reminder of what I had learnt previously in my Young Women Division days and I would just need to strengthen my resolve to take on these challenges.

I chanted to manifest wisdom and compassion in every task entrusted to me at work, and to be considerate of every person’s personal circumstances when preparing the roster.

As the ICU in the National Centre for Infectious Disease (NCID) took in more patients, ICU Specialists from various medical institutions would have to work there in shifts.

At the back of my mind was the fear that I could bring the virus back to my family members, especially my son who

was only 10 months old, if I were to go over to the NCID. The patients who were admitted might have complex medical conditions that I have not come across before, hence requiring a lot of reading up on my part and learning from other colleagues from other disciplines.

However, upon chanting, I was reminded of why I have chosen this career and my mission as a healthcare practitioner. I also realised that this is the time that I must not succumb to fear. There is no room for defeat in this battle with Covid-19.

Whenever I think about the struggles of the Covid-19 patients, my personal challenges pale in comparison. Also, this crisis has made me realise the importance of kosen-rufu. Our Buddhist practice enables us to bring forth courage and hope in times of despair. This is indeed what humanity needs now at this important juncture.

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Au Yong Wai Mun Louis (Left)
Tiong Bahru Chapter
Young Men Division Member

I am working in the community sector. The company I was working for asked for volunteers to support Singapore's Covid-19 operations. I decided to contribute as a Singaporean and immediately volunteered myself. I was dispatched to the Ministry of Health at the end of May.

I was posted to a department that mainly deals with supply chain, logistics and procurement. I have never been trained in any of these fields. Yet, I was expected to perform the duties of a full-time operational staff in a span of a few days. To make things worse, we could not have face-to-face training during this period. I could only learn via video call and the email thread I was given.

Going back to my Buddhist faith, I chanted earnestly an hour a day for

the wisdom needed to quickly pick up the skills required and fully function as an operational staff. Through steadfast daimoku, I manifested the wisdom to familiarise myself with all the operations in about two weeks. This was a tremendous breakthrough that had been unimaginable to me previously. I witnessed once again how situations could be transformed and problems overcome through earnest daimoku.

On top of challenging a new work scope, during the Circuit Breaker period, both my wife, who is also working in healthcare as a nurse, and I had to struggle with work and taking care of our children. Besides attending daily morning meetings, I had to guide my daughter who is in Primary 3 to explore and get used to the HBL (home-based learning)

programme. I believe it was the good fortune accumulated throughout the years from contributing to kosen-rufu that my daughter was able to catch up with HBL within a few days and got into the momentum. Now, she is able to log in and do all the online and offline work by herself without supervision. Juggling work from home, HBL and taking care of the kids was a really tough challenge, so I had a hard time keeping up with the job requirements expected of me.

However, I continued to strive on based on faith, just as what the Goshō teaches: “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life, and continue chanting Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō, no matter what happens. How could this be anything other than the boundless joy

of the Law?” (WND-1, p. 681) And Ikeda Sensei says: “Both suffering and joy are a part of life; this is life’s reality. That is why, whether experiencing suffering or joy, we should keep chanting Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō, just as we are, says Nichiren Daishōnin. If we do that, we will attain a state of supreme happiness through the wisdom and power of the Mystic Law. We can lead a life in which nothing will defeat us.”

I am grateful that with Nichiren Buddhism and Ikeda Sensei’s guidance, I have seen my transformation as I move on with a positive attitude despite the challenges along the way. I am determined that no matter what lies ahead on the road of kosen-rufu, I will strive courageously and report more victories to Sensei.

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Lai Chuan Swee
Kent Ridge Chapter
Men Division District Leader

In April, I was informed that I had been selected to be part of the Forward Assurance Support Team (FAST) in the statutory board where I work. FAST is a joint task force deployed by the Singapore government to help foreign workers staying in dormitories affected by the Covid-19 outbreak.

As the daily number of Covid-19 patients reported was high, I was initially worried about the risk of contracting Covid-19, but my family encouraged me to take it as my mission to be on the frontline taking care of migrant workers as a disciple of Ikeda Sensei. My boss and colleagues were also very supportive in covering my work. Hence,



I was determined to do my best as a representative of my organisation.

As the FAST team was new, we had a steep learning curve to contend with and the first few days of operations were challenging. However, we were strongly committed to working together quickly to do what we could to take care of the workers' well-being. We were their points of contact for any problems they might have, including meals, dormitory cleanliness, employment and salary related issues.

The workers' living conditions are less than ideal. After interacting with them, I realise that it is not easy for them to work long hours in Singapore, away from family. Naturally, they also worry about losing their jobs and catching the virus. I am reminded of the importance of the values we learnt in SSA, such as always treating everyone with respect and manifesting compassion.

Ikeda Sensei encourages us to be active global citizens and to contribute to society. He says: "Each of us exists as we are today, thanks to the help and support of a great many people. Therefore, it is natural for us to have appreciation and gratitude not only for our parents but for all people."

My reporting time at the dormitory was 7am and during Ramadan, my shift started at 3am to support the pre-dawn

meals. Sometimes my shift could stretch to 14 hours. At certain times, we had to wear Personal Protection Equipment as a precautionary measure. However, I believe my own protection gear was to chant abundant daimoku in the morning before I reported for work and to read Ikeda Sensei's guidance daily.

I chanted to have the strong life force, high life condition and wisdom to stay safe every day. I cherished each moment of what I was doing and am grateful for the opportunity to be in the frontline, though my deployment has officially ended on June 30. I have come to realise that a lot of efforts have been put in behind the scenes to stabilise the situation. It takes a whole nation to unite and overcome this crisis together. Nevertheless, I believe we will definitely overcome Covid-19 and emerge stronger!

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Phang Chu Ting April (First from left)
Telok Blangah Chapter
Young Women District Leader

After Covid-19 broke out, the aviation sector was one of the first to be badly hit by the pandemic. As soon as countries started to close their borders, flights were cancelled as a result of low demand and fear of cross-border transmission of the virus.

I knew then that my job would be impacted. My last flight was in March and I have been grounded ever since. In the beginning, it felt great to have a rest after flying for so long. However, after a month's break, I began to worry about

keeping my job and whether I would be able to sustain on my savings.

Fortunately, the company and the government decided to redeploy us to various roles in other sectors, one of which is the role of a care ambassador in a government hospital. I signed up without much hesitation since I had been trained in nursing and I thought this is meaningful work.

As a care ambassador, I am tasked to look after the basic needs of patients and to show them care and concern.

Although we were given training for our role to help out in the wards, I soon came to realise that a lot of on-the-job training is required as we deal with different patients' needs and conditions.

On occasion, the job can be really challenging and exhausting. In the process, I truly respect all the healthcare workers for their selfless dedication and compassion towards complete strangers, despite their highly demanding shift work and duties.

During this period, I have been chanting to be able to manifest more courage and compassion for others,

especially the patients that I am taking care of. I am glad we can bring joy to the patients. My three months' stint will be over soon and I hope I will be able to fly again before long. As the Gosho states, "winter always turns to spring". I believe that the aviation industry will eventually emerge victorious over this crisis!

As a Future Division zone leader and district leader, I have also been trying my best to contact and encourage my members. The most important thing for me now is to contribute and create maximum value amid the challenges of these extraordinary times.

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Kwok Jing Kai (Second from right)
Kent Ridge Chapter
Young Men Division Member

I am currently serving National Service as an Army Medic. In the third week of my training in February, there was an emergency meeting. Due to the escalating Covid-19 situation in Singapore, we were told that we had to be on standby to assist the frontline healthcare workers in caring for the Covid-19 patients.

I had mixed feelings because I wanted and was happy to help, but at the same time was worried that I might catch the virus.

Being on standby was difficult. I could not plan my day and had to have my phone with me all the time, not knowing if I would be deployed the next moment. This left me feeling anxious.

I turned back to faith, chanting for clarity in the situation so that I could plan my day better.

I also chanted for the early resolution of the Covid-19 situation and a direction in my life after National Service. In 2017, I had

taken a nursing course when I was studying in the Institute of Technical Education, without knowing what to expect and filled with doubts. After graduating, I ended up as an Army Medic to provide medical assistance to fellow servicemen.

On the last few weeks of my training to be a medic, we were informed that we would not be deployed after all because our unit was already lacking in medics.

Although I was not deployed, the news I saw on TV during this period reinforced in me the importance of healthcare workers and my ambition to be a nurse in the future. I am touched by the courage and compassion of the healthcare workers and the enormous sacrifices they have made during this crisis.

Through this experience, I have come to the conclusion that I have a mission to save lives and to further hone my skills in this area. I am determined to further my studies in nursing and become a

humanistic nurse in the future after completing my National Service.

I have also been carrying out the Courageous 1-2-3 actions diligently. As a medic, I have been involved in many parades and operations. Due to the heavy involvement, I noticed how tired and restless some of my friends became under the hot sun for long hours on site. I tried my best to lift everyone's spirits by encouraging them and giving them water to make sure they stay hydrated.

I believe I was able to bring forth strong life force and high life condition at such times because of my daimoku. I have been striving to chant and read in camp no matter how challenging things get so that I can strengthen myself and be a beacon of hope to others. Moving forward, I will continue in my efforts as a lionhearted disciple of Sensei and do my best to lead a most fulfilling life!

Voices of Lionhearted Disciples



Low Kia Hui Monica (Right)
Paya Lebar South Chapter
Women Division District Leader

Iresigned from my previous job in February and was looking forward to joining a new company in April after serving my two months' garden leave. However, when the Covid-19 situation in Singapore worsened, I received a call from my new boss that the commencement of my work would have to be deferred till the first week of May.

I agreed to the arrangement then since it was only a two-week delay. However, the daily stream of negative news on the

pandemic left my life condition fluctuating like a roller-coaster ride. Thankfully, through reading our publications, SGI Instagram posts and websites, I was always reminded of the importance of daimoku. I pulled myself together and continued to chant fervent daimoku.

One morning, I received a message from a working partner from an established real estate company with whom I had worked together in the past. She told me about a job vacancy in her company

and asked if I would be interested. I was very grateful to the Gohonzon for this unexpected opportunity, and chanted even more daimoku for the best arrangement to be made.

Two days after the Circuit Breaker was introduced, the company that I was supposed to start work with informed me again that they would have to defer my commencement till July and there would be a 10% cut to the previously agreed-upon salary. I accepted the new agreement again, albeit unwillingly. I was filled with anxiety given the looming global recession.

At my lowest point, I stumbled upon an entry made by President Ikeda in "A Youthful Diary". I was reminded that May 3 this year, which marks the 60th anniversary of Ikeda Sensei's inauguration as third president of the Soka Gakkai, is just around the corner. I made a determination to commemorate this day with my victory and to share my actual proof at the discussion meeting in May.

Through prayers and more prayers, I had a successful interview and secured a job at the real estate company. Indeed, I managed to adorn May 3 with my victory! I have started working at this company since June 8.

The closure of schools, home-based learning and work from home arrangement during the Circuit Breaker had indeed changed our lives abruptly. Though my daughter, Xi Tong, is only 5 years old, she experienced a few episodes of sleepless nights. On some days, she worried about whether she could sleep well at night. I encouraged her to chant five minutes of daimoku before she went to bed and we chanted together. She has since been able to sleep soundly throughout the night. I am so grateful that she is able to see actual proof at a young age and we have changed poison into medicine.

Moving forward, I am determined to respond to our mentor's call to rise up with courage, transform all challenges and shine like an invincible treasure tower amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

A SAFE SINGAPORE

Phase
1

Safe Re-opening
Gradual re-opening
of some activities

Phase
2

Safe Transition
Broader re-opening of
social and economic activities

Phase
3

Safe Nation

Phase 2 - Safe Transition



Economy

More businesses will re-open, starting with F&B dine-in, retail outlets, gyms and fitness studios, tuition and enrichment centres. All must have safe management measures.



School

All students will return to school. Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) will increase the number of students back on campus at any one time for face-to-face learning.



Community

Sports, recreation and outdoor facilities will re-open, with safe management practices.

Phase 3 - Safe Nation



Social, cultural, religious and business gatherings or events would have resumed, with limited crowd sizes to prevent large clusters from arising.



Wear a mask when outside home
Check in and out with SafeEntry when required



Do not spread rumours

Get the latest on COVID-19 by signing up for the Gov.sg WhatsApp channel (www.go.gov.sg/whatsapp). The service is available in English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil.

gov
.sg

Updated: 19 May 2020

On Influenza

(Adapted from the book On Health and Long Life, where SGI President Ikeda held conversations with doctors and nurses from Japan, United States and Malaysia.)

President Ikeda: What precisely is influenza? How is it different from an ordinary cold? People talk about influenza, but I wonder how many really know what it is... How is influenza different from a cold?

Nishiyama: The viruses that cause them are different, and the symptoms of influenza are more serious. In many cases, influenza causes a sudden fever of over 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), headaches, and aching joints and muscles.

Narumi: Another characteristic of influenza, or the flu as it is commonly called, is that it is highly contagious. It can spread through an entire family and its outbreak in schools can result in the cancellation of classes.

Fresh Air and Sufficient Humidity

President Ikeda: Are there any steps you suggest to prevent catching the flu?

Hirasawa: In schools, we suggest opening the classroom windows during break time to bring in fresh air. The virus is also inhibited by humidity, so it's good to have a humidifier running in places where people tend to gather... We also encourage students to get

sufficient rest, nutrition, and sleep, and to wash their hands and gargle regularly.

Nishiyama: Everyone should make it a practice to wash their hands thoroughly with soap when they come in from outdoors.

President Ikeda: In spite of how simple and fundamental these preventative steps are, it's surprising how few of us employ them. We should also make them a part of our strategy in the prevention of ordinary colds.

Painstaking Care and Prompt Encouragement

Narumi: I have heard that Shakyamuni also advised his followers about matters of hygiene such as washing their hands and rinsing their mouths.

President Ikeda: That's correct. The Buddhist scriptures go into considerable detail about such matters, indicating how important they were regarded.

A mentor prays and thinks sincerely about how to ensure that his disciples stay well and can carry out their Buddhist practice in sound health.

Nishiyama: Buddhist compassion is manifested in concrete behaviour.

President Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin also concerned himself deeply with the health of each of his disciples and whenever one fell ill, he was quick to write a letter or send a message of encouragement. In one letter, he writes:

Someone reported to me that you had fallen ill. Day and night, dawn and dusk I prayed for your recovery to the Lotus Sutra (the Gohonzon); dawn and dusk, I prayed to the heavens. Today I learned that you have recovered, and my joy knows no bounds. (GZ, p. 1298)

True leaders go to great lengths to enable others to advance along the pathway towards happiness and experience a life of fulfilment. They also respond immediately to the reports they receive. Prompt action imparts courage and hope to others.

Hirasawa: You have taken the lead in demonstrating the essence of such humanism in Soka education, President Ikeda.

Always Take Precautions

President Ikeda: In far too many instances, accidents arise out of the arrogance or carelessness of thinking somehow we'll be okay and that misfortune only befalls others. That's why it's important to always be alert and be firmly resolved to take precautions against illness or injury.

Narumi: During the time of the Spanish flu epidemic, there was apparently a village in

the US that, despite being located in an area infected by the virus, managed to escape a major outbreak.

President Ikeda: That's an important fact. What happened?

Narumi: Learning of the flu outbreak in the surrounding area, the village school teacher took prompt action. He employed all his knowledge, persistently advocating to the residents methods for treating and preventing the spread of the disease, and came up with a unique quarantine system for the village. As a result of these valiant efforts, the epidemic was kept at bay some 30 kilometres (18.6 miles) outside the village's borders.

President Ikeda: It was a victory derived from the teacher's unyielding determination and strong sense of responsibility to protect the village and the children. One person of solid commitment is stronger than ten thousand. The important thing is to have a constant sense of how to respond in a crisis and to prepare thoroughly in advance. If we casually presume that somehow things will work out, we're already doomed.

Such precautions as gargling and washing one's hands may seem like little things, but it's just those little things that are important. It's a mistake to minimise or overlook them. They can be the first step in preventing a widespread outbreak, and as such, they need to be taken seriously.

So, what should you do if you catch the flu? I suppose rest is very important.

Nishiyama: That's correct. You need to drink plenty of fluids, eat nourishing foods, and rest...

Hirasawa: Another important thing is to avoid infecting others in your environment. If you have the flu, you should stay home from work and meetings.

Narumi: That's right. Even when you start feeling a little better, you should continue to avoid attending meetings for a while, because the virus is still just as contagious. We strongly recommend that you stay in bed for two or three days after your fever has gone down.

Sympathy is the Foundation for a Healthy Society

President Ikeda: I hope everyone will observe this as the proper consideration we should show others. Earlier I noted that Shakyamuni had encouraged his disciples to take certain sanitary precautions such as washing their hands and gargling. At the time, Shakyamuni lived in a communal situation with his disciples. The illness of a single individual could easily have spread

to the entire group. No doubt that concern was partially behind Shakyamuni's focus on hygiene.

In many cases, people are highly sensitive to their own sufferings while being oblivious to those of others. But influenza has the potential to become a global threat. Unless we take responsibility to protect not only ourselves but our families, neighbours, and friends, we can contribute to a tragedy of universal proportions. I am by no means exaggerating. A spiritual transformation in each individual – in other words, an elevation of their life-state – is the most important preventative measure.

The Daishonin says: "The varied sufferings that all living beings undergo – all these are Nichiren's own sufferings." (OTT, p. 138) The Buddhist spirit of sympathy, of placing yourself in another person's shoes, is the foundation for creating a century of health and life. It is the spirit most needed by humanity today.

Buddhist Compassion — Relieving Suffering and Imparting Joy

SGI President Ikeda wrote, “What exactly is the Buddha’s compassion? Nagarjuna’s *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* discusses the term generally used in Buddhism for compassion — *jihi* in Japanese — explaining that the Chinese character for *ji*, or pity, means imparting joy to people, while *hi*, or mercy, means relieving them of their sufferings. Opening the way for relieving suffering and imparting joy so that all people may attain enlightenment is an expression of the Buddha’s compassion.

Empathising with others’ pain and suffering is different from merely feeling pity. Ultimately, the only way for someone to truly overcome their problems is for that person to summon the power from within the depths of their life to stand up strongly on their own to challenge those problems.”

In the following excerpts from *The New Human Revolution* (NHR), SGI President Ikeda shows us what Buddhist compassion is and how to bring it to shine in today’s society.

Becoming an Outstanding Physician of Faith

Shin’ichi, not surprisingly, was feeling physically exhausted, and asked Dr Eiji Kawasaki, who was accompanying them, to give him a vitamin shot.

The last time Shin’ichi had made such a request — when they were in Copenhagen, Denmark — Kawasaki hadn’t had any medical equipment or intravenous vitamins with him. After that, however, he had made

a point of purchasing the necessary items in the event that Shin’ichi might request them again.

Lying face up on the bed, Shin’ichi cried out in pain as Kawasaki gave him the injection in his left arm. “Ouch! That shot really hurt...”

“It hurt that much? That’s strange...” Kawasaki said, looking puzzled and apparently wondering what he could have done wrong. Shin’ichi burst out laughing.

“Some doctor you are! There are a good

many nurses far better at giving injections than you. Granted, Mr Kawasaki, your medical knowledge is vast, but I'm not sure if you really know the first thing about people's feelings."

"Ah, well yes, you see, my speciality is more in the line of research than in clinical medicine..."

Shin'ichi continued to gently chide Eiji Kawasaki: "For example, when giving someone an injection, it's customary to say something like: 'This may hurt a little. Just relax and it'll be over soon.' Or 'Please brace yourself for a moment.' Doing so reassures people and allows them to ready themselves for a bit of pain.

"Since you've acquired the mission to be a leader of kosen-rufu in Europe, from now on, Mr Kawasaki, you'll need to become an outstanding physician of faith as well as an excellent doctor of life, committed to curing people's suffering. To achieve this, it's important to become an expert on human beings and show the greatest sensitivity on people's feelings and emotions. In the world of faith, you have to be a clinician rather than a researcher."

"An outstanding physician of faith? That's going to be a lot harder than curing people's physical illness," Kawasaki murmured, looking serious.

His endearing earnestness made Shin'ichi smile.

"There's no need to worry. Since both medicine and Buddhism are founded on compassion – that is, the spirit to relieve people's suffering and impart peace of mind

– I have full confidence in Dr Kawasaki," Shin'ichi said with special emphasis on the word *doctor*, "will come through with flying colours. As long as you have firm determination and make practical efforts, you'll become a superb doctor of faith."

Kawasaki was now smiling, too.

(From NHR Vol 5, "Trailblazing" chapter)

The Determination to Shine the Compassionate Light of Buddhism into the Darkness of Suffering in People's Lives

The room was filled with the sound of members voicing their disbelief.

A young woman who had been silent until then suddenly cried out: "You say we can visit Japan whenever we want some day, but I can't wait that long. Please take me back with you! I can't stand it anymore!" She burst into tears.

The leaders accompanying Shin'ichi stared at the woman with stunned expressions. Shin'ichi's eyes, however, were bright and penetrating. He was now pushing the limits of physical exhaustion, and the leaders accompanying him were well aware of this. Removing his jacket, Shin'ichi began speaking in a quiet, yet powerful tone.

"You have all truly suffered. You have endured in silence. There must have been times when you felt like giving up. There must have been times when you felt that death would bring a welcome release. I can deeply appreciate how much pain and sadness you must feel. However, this

Buddhism has the power to transform your suffering into happiness, to change the tears you have shed into glittering jewels of good fortune. Those who have wept the most bitterly have the right to become the happiest people of all. My purpose in coming to the United States is to help you turn that into a reality.”

Shin’ichi burned with a determination to shine the compassionate light of Buddhism into the darkness of suffering in people’s lives. Passion and energy issued forth from his entire being and his powerful words deeply shook the lives of all in attendance.

The atmosphere of the meeting was now completely different. Driven by an earnest determination to encourage the members, Shin’ichi continued: “I’m sure you’re all wondering whether you can really become happy through this practice. Am I right?”

The women all nodded in agreement.

He continued with powerful conviction: “There’s nothing to worry about. So long as you persevere in your practice, each of you, without exception, can become happy. In Japan, there are actually more than a million of our fellow members who have become happy. Isn’t that the greatest possible proof?...”

The eyes of the participants were shining. Smiling, Shin’ichi continued:

“A few moments ago, Miss Kiyohara said that you could attain a regal state of life. Nichiren Daishonin has declared unequivocally that we are all children of the Buddha. From the perspective of Buddhism, it is clear that each of you is a human treasure, possessing supreme

good fortune and the highest mission. Your status surpasses even that of kings or queens. In light of this, there is no way you will remain mired in unhappiness.”

Shin’ichi then introduced each of the leaders accompanying him, asking them to share their experiences and to explain why benefit can be realized through the practice of faith.

In sharp contrast to the situation of a few moments earlier, the expressions of the participants were now filled with the energy of an awakened seeking spirit.

When the leaders from Japan had finished speaking, Shin’ichi asked, “Now do you understand why this practice is important?”

With bright faces, the participants nodded in affirmation.

With an embracing smile, Shin’ichi continued speaking: “All of you are still young, your husbands are in good health and your children are small. It is not unusual, however, for women to outlive their husbands and to be left to fend for themselves. This is a critical time in a woman’s life. This Buddhism enables you to create a palace within your hearts, to establish a condition of absolute happiness that cannot be destroyed under any circumstances. That is why it is vital to practise faith throughout your entire life. I look forward to meeting you again, this time in Japan.”...

Another guest, Mitsuo Sugihara, the young trading company employee Shin’ichi had met earlier, had also been paying close attention to the proceedings.

He had already heard about this Buddhism from Nagayasu Masaki and Susumu Aota on many occasions. At the time, he was facing a personal crisis at work, having been forced to take responsibility for a management blunder. Nevertheless, he had steadfastly refused to join the Soka Gakkai because he felt that to do would be an admission of defeat.

At first, he had watched the proceedings as an observer, curious to see how Shin'ichi would respond to the women's outbursts of discontent. But he gradually felt himself being moved by the force of Shin'ichi's guidance, by the sincerity and passion with which he strove to encourage the members. Sugihara thought: "This person is working desperately for the happiness of complete strangers! I never thought there could be a world of such warmth!"

Having experienced the coldness and indifference of people in society, Sugihara was astounded by what he was witnessing. One month later, Sugihara began practising. He became the first Young Men Division member in New York.

At the discussion meeting, Shin'ichi had not made any explicit attempt to urge Sugihara to take faith. He had simply given his all to communicating the way to realise a life of victory and human glory. This was done out of his deep desire for the happiness of his fellow members who had gathered at the meeting.

As in Aesop's fable "The Sun and the Wind", it is not the bitter chill of the north wind that causes people to remove the cloaks from their hearts. Rather, this is

only achieved by the warm, compassionate light of the sun, caring and all embracing. For it is such warmth that gives rise to the melodies of true human empathy.

(From NHR Vol 1, "Light of Compassion" chapter)

Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging's Way of Life is a Source of Genuine Encouragement

The following day, May 15, a meeting was held at the Paris community centre in part to celebrate the upcoming 15th anniversary of Eiji Kawasaki's arrival in Europe in September 1961. Shin'ichi had proposed the event as a way of thanking Kawasaki for leading the effort to open up a path for kosen-rufu in Europe. The meeting was attended by 300 representatives from 11 countries, who had all come to Paris to participate in the Soka Gakkai European Friendship Festival. It was an occasion to celebrate the advances of European kosen-rufu over the last 15 years.

Shin'ichi was always trying to think of ways to inspire everyone to practise faith with joy and courage and to do their best in a spirit of optimism and good cheer. His strong desire to encourage the members pervaded his day-to-day actions and attitude.

To give encouragement is to impart assurance, hope, and courage. It is a task of spiritual inspiration, of drawing out a person's passion and indomitable spirit. The basic principle behind encouragement is an earnest wish for the other person's

happiness. Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging in the Lotus Sutra always sincerely reveres and respects everyone he meets: “I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you are all practising the bodhisattva way and are certain to attain Buddhahood.” (LS20, pp. 266–67) In other words, Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging wished to see each individual become an invincible champion exhibiting the highest character and living with a sense of purpose to support others.

But people reacted to Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging by beating him with sticks and staves and pelting him with broken roof tiles and stones. In spite of that, the bodhisattva continued to insist that each person possesses infinite potential. Bodhisattva Never-Disparaging’s way of life is a source of genuine encouragement.

The Soka Gakkai is dedicated to achieving kosen-rufu, an objective that, from a certain perspective, could be described as the process of creating a society grounded in mutual encouragement.

As Nichiren Daishonin writes: “The extremity of greed, anger, and foolishness in people’s hearts in the impure world of the latter age makes it difficult for any worthy or sage to control.” (WND-1, p. 1121) Society today is characterised by cutthroat competition and mutual undermining, where envy, malice, and harassment are rife. It is no exaggeration to say that selfishness prevails in our world and people are alienated and closed off from each other.

The Soka Gakkai promotes a movement

aimed at opening those closed hearts and illuminating them with hope and courage through furthering dialogue, thereby building a human network of goodness.

(From NHR Vol 21, “Resonance” chapter)

Action Constitutes Humanity’s Greatness

Shin’ichi Yamamoto was the last to speak at the opening ceremony for the Paris Headquarters. After praising the strenuous efforts of the members to advance global kosen-rufu, he shared his personal feelings with them: “I don’t often have the opportunity to see you, but I consider you all to be my brothers and sisters. I chant daimoku earnestly every day, praying that you will be happy and healthy and enjoy harmonious family lives.”

With greater emphasis, he then said: “As people who are dedicated to kosen-rufu, you are all equally the children of Nichiren Daishonin, whatever your ethnic background or nationality. Kosen-rufu is a sacred undertaking to bring happiness to people around the world through the light of Buddhist compassion. I hope each of you will awaken to the solemn fact that advancing this cause is the reason you were born. It is through your efforts in this regard that you will carry out your human revolution and build a life condition of indestructible happiness for yourself and others.

“Why are we here? What is the meaning of life? The failure to answer these questions and experience a genuine sense of purpose

and direction is the fundamental source of the confusion and unhappiness that afflicts contemporary society. Wherever you live and whatever your situation, I hope you will confidently and boldly walk the path of your mission, aware and confident as the children of the Daishonin. The important thing is to have the courage and the will to fulfil your mission.”

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote: “Thought constitutes man’s greatness.” It takes action, however, to realise that greatness, which is why Shin’ichi’s credo was “Action constitutes humanity’s greatness.”

Shin’ichi then said: “Let’s set a 10-year goal for kosen-rufu that we can strive towards in each country and community. When we look back 10 years from now, having given our all to our practice in the interval based on strong daimoku, we will exclaim in surprise at what a wonderful, rewarding decade it has been. Faith is what enables us to walk such a joyous path. Let’s advance on that path together!”

The members applauded vigorously in response.

(From NHR Vol 16, “Dialogue” chapter)

Awakening to One’s Mission as a Noble Emissary of the Buddha

Hisayuki Imura, a Dokan resident who would later become the area’s district chief... took residence in Dokan in the new year of 1954, when he was 37. He had formerly worked as an accountant for a coal mining company, seeming to have

a promising future there. But the asthma that had not troubled him for many years suddenly returned with a vengeance, making it increasingly difficult to work. His attacks grew more frequent; he missed work more often, until, after a prolonged period of absence, he was finally laid off.

He had a wife and three small boys to feed, ages 8, 5, and 2. Out of kindness, his employer allowed him and his family to continue to live in company housing for a while. But there was a limit to how long they could stay, and they were soon behind on rent. At the end of the year, they fled in the middle of the night...

His wanderings eventually led him to Dokan. Standing in the cold wind blowing off the sea, gazing at the untidy rows of ramshackle lean-tos before him, for a moment he felt utterly lost and defeated. Gradually, however, he thought, he and his family might try living there for a while...

He had to find work to feed his family, but his asthma prevented him from holding down an office job or taking on any physical labour. In the end, Imura decided to open a food stand near the entrance of a motorboat race course located near to Dokan...

Imura and his wife made a small, portable stand. They assembled a low table from an old sliding door set atop wooden fruit boxes as legs. Then they offered customers *oden*, an inexpensive hot Japanese hodgepodge, as well as *inarizushi*, rice wrapped in thin envelopes of deep-fried tofu. But their daily earnings were meagre; they couldn’t even afford to buy white rice for their children or

proper bedding for them. Even in the dead of winter, all they could do to keep warm was wrap themselves in a blanket. In the summer, a foul smell pervaded the slum, while mosquitoes bred at a remarkable rate in the sewage drainage ditches under the shanties' floors.

Imura's asthma grew steadily worse. He came to feel it was only a matter of time before one of his attacks finished him off. He became completely spiritless, losing his last ounce of hope. All that issued from his mouth were a persistent cough and weary sighs.

Around this time, Imura first heard Buddhism from one of his customers. At first, he listened with a sardonic smile, but the customer kept on enthusiastically about the greatness of Buddhism.

"You, too, can definitely become happy through this practice," the customer assured him.

Happiness – that was a word Imura had almost forgotten. Just thinking about it made him feel bitter. But gradually the person's confidence touched something inside him. Around the same time, his older brother, who lived in Fukuoka suburb and had recently joined the Soka Gakkai, came to talk to him about Buddhism. Imura was sceptical, but he told himself that he had nothing to lose. Things could not possibly get any worse. He decided to join the Gakkai and give the practice a try. That was November 1955, almost two years after the Imura family had moved to Dokan.

After joining the Gakkai and doing gongyo and chanting daimoku consistently

for a while, Imura's spirits lifted. His enthusiasm for life was rekindled. From the depths of his being, he resolved to become happy. He applied himself earnestly to Gakkai activities and, at the suggestion of seniors in faith, began actively introducing others in Dokan to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

As Imura threw himself heart and soul into his work and Buddhist practice, he noticed two curious things. First, the chronic asthma that had caused him so much suffering completely disappeared. In the past, his attacks had been particularly severe at the change of the seasons – from winter to spring and summer to autumn – but the spring after beginning his practice, and that autumn as well, the usual attacks failed to occur.

The second thing he noticed was an unbelievable increase in sales at his small food stand. In practically no time, sales had jumped to many times their original level. Although several other food vendors had set up stands in the area, Imura's seemed to attract people like magnet.

He had changed his menu to specialise in *udon*, thick Japanese wheat noodles served in a clear broth, and *tempura*. He also employed various innovations to speed up service and looked into improving the dishes' flavour. Through these efforts, his stand gained a reputation for being "fast and delicious". Eventually, he purchased a small hand-drawn trailer and the business he had begun with some fruit boxes and an old sliding door at last looked like a real food stand.

“One day, I will open my own restaurant,” Imura declared to his family. “I’ll accumulate loads of good fortune. I’ll do it without fail.” He dreamed of the future again, something he had almost forgotten how to do.

He put even greater energy into his Gakkai activities and undertook the challenge of studying Buddhism, too. As he read more about the principle of changing one’s karma, he felt even more inspired to share the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism with as many people as he possibly could.

Many around him had completely lost hope. Some spent all their daily wages on alcohol, drinking themselves senseless, collapsing from drunkenness and sleeping it off in the streets day after day. Others sold their blood for money to gamble with, while scrounging for leftovers.

Imura could not ignore their suffering. “If a Gakkai member doesn’t help them, who will?” he thought.

So he continued to exert himself, visiting people and telling them about the Daishonin’s teaching. Some showered him with angry abuse: “Get out and don’t come back!” But he never flinched. He had already awakened to his mission as a noble emissary of the Buddha. Imura’s earnest insistence that they could rebuild their lives through faith was greeted coldly by the people of Dokan, whose hearts were numb. They had given up on life. One

murmured sadly, “No matter what we do, there’s no way we’ll ever get out of here. It’s hopeless...”

Conducting propagation activities in Dokan was in many ways a battle against the apathy and hopelessness of people who had lost the will or energy to go on living...

When it came to propagation, Imura would gladly go anywhere. He travelled all around Kyushu and even ventured to the Chugoku region, located across the water on the main island of Honshu. Even before his appointment as district chief in 1962, he had brought more than 100 families to the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The enthusiasm for propagation among his district members burned ever more brightly, until the Dokan area was alive with the benefits of faith.

In 1966, Imura finally left Dokan to open his longed-for restaurant, a rented facility with living quarters attached, into which he moved with his family. He retained the menu of his outdoor stall – *udon* and *tempura* – but his business did so well that he eventually also opened a fish shop and a more elaborate restaurant serving traditional Japanese cuisine. In time, he purchased a brand-new home and later served as president of his neighbourhood association for many years, contributing actively to the local community.

(From NHR Vol 6, “Acceleration” chapter)