

EDITORIAL: Fields of Fortune

The benefit in making Buddhist offerings — our homes for meetings, our time for activities, our money to cover expenses — is greater than we can measure.

But as with so many other aspects of our Buddhist practice, the why of offering is most important. We may sometimes make financial contributions out of formality, not really putting our hearts into it. Sometimes we may contribute because we feel pressured to. In these cases, the significance of the offering and the benefit we receive — just as with gongyo or daimoku done out of habit — will be less than they could be. As many people pointed out in this month's "Question of the Month" (April 4), the primary purpose of offerings is to express appreciation. Sincerity is the key.

In what has become a tradition, SGI-USA members can celebrate April 28, the day Nichiren Daishonin first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, this year through commemorative financial contributions. These can be made through the local organizations April 28–June 6.

Supporting our activities in every city, these contributions will help pay for, among many other things, the opening of two new community centers this year.

In vol. 4 of *The New Human Revolution*, SGI President Ikeda explains how in 1961 he went through an intense inner struggle over whether to expand the number of financially contributing members. To build new temples and community centers more donations were required, but President Ikeda was of two minds over what to do.

On the one hand, he did not want to burden the members; on the other hand he wanted them to have the opportunity to contribute and receive benefit from doing so.

So President Ikeda opened the Goshu and began studying many passages on Buddhist offerings. One of the letters that helped him come to his decision was "The Bodies and Minds of Ordinary Beings," in which the Daishonin praises a follower who has sent offerings to him at Mount Minobu: "Surely you are sowing good seeds in a field of fortune. My tears flow when I think of it" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 282).

Picturing how the Daishonin shed tears of joy because his followers made offerings, the young Soka Gakkai president decided to allow all members to participate that year in a contribution campaign for the Grand Reception Hall at Nichiren Shoshu's head temple, Taiseki-ji.

The campaign was announced on May 3 to great applause.

This tradition of members making financial contributions actually began with the members themselves. Throughout the 1930s, the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, bore full responsibility for the Soka Gakkai's finances. During the organization's postwar reconstruction, Toda again covered all expenses, never asking for anyone's help. But after his inauguration as president, many members insisted they be allowed to offer financial support.

What made President Toda hesitate to take this step was his conviction that the Soka Gakkai's finances should come only from sincere donations. He thus initially chose only 78 persons to contribute in this way.

Now this group of 78 has been opened to include all of us. It's great to have this chance to cultivate "fields of fortune"—in our own lives and in the life of the organization—each year.

With the same sincerity that President Toda supported the Soka Gakkai in the early years, we can express our appreciation through our donations to the SGI-USA.

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