

**PERSPECTIVE: Butterfly Muscles**  
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Reflecting on the history of our kosen-rufu movement in the United States, the images of those pioneers who dedicated their entire lives to realizing SGI President Ikeda's vision for the future come into sharp focus. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the history of the SGI-USA is one of courageous personal struggle.

Apart from President Ikeda's guidance, there were no models of how to introduce this Buddhism into the American society and culture. Yet our SGI-USA pioneers engaged in an unprecedented day-to-day struggle aimed at changing the destiny of our nation at one of its most troubled times. It should also be understood that they accepted this challenge in the face of great personal difficulty. Many had only recently adopted the United States as their new home. It is difficult to imagine the tremendous obstacles that confronted those who made President Ikeda's vision for kosen-rufu of America their own.

In his novel *The New Human Revolution*, President Ikeda expresses his conviction that the Daishonin's teachings must be introduced internationally in a manner that accords with the culture and customs of each country. Throughout his travels to the United States and other countries, President Ikeda laid the groundwork for kosen-rufu to unfold free from rigid formality or cultural dissonance. In this regard, he fully understood the importance of each country developing its unique movement for kosen-rufu.

Having practiced this Buddhism for nearly 30 years, I have had an opportunity to observe our SGI-USA pioneers' struggle to establish the Daishonin's teachings on the American continent. In this regard, a story by Henry Miller, "Why the Butterfly Was Killed," may serve to illustrate the importance of their remarkable legacy to future generations:

A boy in India encountered a wise man who was sitting and looking at something he held in his hand. The boy did not recognize what the wise man was holding, and he asked, "What is that?"

"It is a cocoon," said the wise man. "Inside the cocoon is a butterfly. Soon the cocoon is going to split, and the butterfly will come out."

"Could I have it?" the boy asked.

"Yes," answered the wise man, "but you must promise me that, when the cocoon splits and the butterfly starts to come out and he is beating his wings to get out of the cocoon, you will not help him. Do not help the butterfly by breaking the cocoon apart. Let him do it by himself."

The boy promised and took the cocoon home with him. After watching it closely for some time, the cocoon began to vibrate and quiver. Finally, it opened and inside was a beautiful butterfly. It frantically beat its wings against the cocoon trying to get out.

However, the butterfly seemed unable to free itself. The boy desperately wanted to help. Finally, he gave in and disobeyed the wise man's direction. He pushed the two halves of the cocoon apart, and the butterfly sprang out. But, as soon as it flew into the sky, it fell to the ground and was killed. The boy picked up the dead butterfly and, in tears, went back to the wise man.

"You see, little boy," the wise man said, "you pushed open the cocoon, didn't you?"

"Yes," said the boy, "I did."

And the wise man said: "You did not see what you were doing. When the butterfly comes out of the cocoon, the only way he can strengthen his wings is by beating them against the cocoon. It beats against the cocoon so its muscles will grow. When you helped

it the way you did, you prevented it from getting strong. That is why the butterfly fell to the ground and was killed.”

This simple story has profound implications regarding the future development of our organization. In making President Ikeda’s vision for worldwide kosen-rufu their own, our SGI-USA pioneers struggled tirelessly to establish an organization that was uniquely suited to the American society and culture. It might be argued that the dynamic growth of our organization from its earliest days was a direct result of its creative energy and unique fusion with American culture and values.

Although our organization may at times resemble a butterfly struggling to emerge from its cocoon, the future of both our organization and American society is dependent on this transformation process. In a very real sense, the struggle entailed in developing the organization was, and continues to be, absolutely necessary to its critical mission. The golden history of courageous personal struggle created by our SGI-USA pioneers should serve to guide future generations.

There is a saying that the past is prologue. If we hope to construct an organization that has the capacity to realize President Ikeda’s vision for American kosen-rufu, we must build on the extraordinary legacy of our SGI-USA pioneers. As the story of the butterfly instructs, the only sure path toward our future development is the one that we ourselves struggle courageously to create.

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