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‘The Flower of Culture’
By HO GOKU

A life-moment encompasses 3,000 realms — Shin’ichi Yamamoto believes this Buddhist principle is the key to new creativity and a new kind of art.

In addition to dialogue with the world’s leaders, Shin’ichi Yamamoto also believed that cultural exchange would be important in promoting understanding among people of different countries at the grass-roots level. Violence and barbarism were the essence of war; culture and civilization their opposites. While war equaled destruction and the oppression of people by military force, culture equaled creation, an exquisite flower nurtured by the inner power of the human spirit.

Culture was also the most effective way to understand a people and a nation. While each culture was distinct, each also possessed universal traits that aroused a response in others. Culture acted as a magnet, drawing people together, transcending ethnic, national and ideological differences. Shin’ichi thus made it his mission to bring to bloom the flower of a truly humanistic culture.

The September Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting was held at the Tokyo Gymnasium on Sept. 27. Separate academic and arts departments were established within the Culture Bureau at that meeting. A single, combined academic and arts department with two sections had been formed in December the previous year, the first section of university professors and others involved in the academic world and the second of those in the arts. Now, the sections were upgraded and made into independent departments.

Hiroshi Yamagiwa, a Soka Gakkai director who had been a researcher in instrumentation engineering and had taught for a time at Tokyo Metropolitan University, was appointed Academic Department leader. Director Kunio Shiroya, a former Sendai Chapter leader and the first student division leader, was appointed Arts Department leader. All the members of these two departments had fine reputations in their fields.

There was a special excitement and expectation about the Arts Department. With its diverse membership of painters, dancers, calligraphers, composers, pianists, singers, actors and other artists, it was highly regarded as a pacesetter for cultural creativity.

Shin’ichi had great hopes for it. He fervently prayed that the Arts Department members would become cultural pioneers and inspire the blossoming of grand, brilliant flowers of culture from amid the rich soil of the people.

That autumn, following on the heels of each area’s sports meet, music festivals were held throughout Japan. Then, as an initial test of the concept, a culture festival was held for the first time by members in the Tokyo area.

The 1st Kansai Music Festival was held Oct. 6, with Shin’ichi in attendance. Music festivals were also conducted with great success in Hokkaido and the Chubu region, Oct. 7, and in Kyushu, Oct. 14. The first-ever youth division culture festival was slated for Oct. 14 and 15. The idea for holding these musical and cultural events had come from Shin’ichi.

Art is an irrepressible, natural expression of humanity. And it is inextricably linked to religion. For example, many of the great masterpieces of Western painting housed in the Louvre represent an exquisite flowering from the spiritual soil of Christianity. Though these works adopt many different forms of expression and though each shines with its own genius, they express the Christian view of the universe and the world with powerful emotion.

The life and essence of art — whether it be painting, music or dance — lies in expressing, through a wellspring of emotion, the universal realm of the human spirit. It is a melding of the individual and the universal. That is why great art reaches out beyond ethnic and national barriers to move people the world over.

There's the Buddhist principle of a life-moment encompassing 3,000 realms — in other words, that all universal phenomena are contained within a moment of an individual's life. Likewise, that one moment of an individual's life pervades the universe. That is the highest, most universal truth, a truth that permeates and includes all humanity and the cosmos.

Shin'ichi was certain that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism would serve as a basis for magnificent new art.

The Daishonin wrote: "Although you are not the Venerable Mahakashyapa, you should leap for joy! Although you are not Shariputra, you should rise and dance! When Bodhisattva Jogyo [Bodhisattva Superior Practices] emerged from the earth, he leapt forth joyfully" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 161). When Shakyamuni's most venerable disciples Mahakashyapa and Shariputra (who was foremost in wisdom) heard Shakyamuni preach the Lotus Sutra, the supreme teaching for attaining enlightenment, they leapt to their feet, their hearts dancing with joy.

And when, during his preaching, Shakyamuni called forth the great legions of bodhisattvas from the earth, entrusting them with the mission of propagating the Lotus Sutra after his death, in the Latter Day of the Law, Bodhisattva Superior Practices, their leader, sprang forth joyfully.

The tremendous joy they experienced when they learned the supreme truth of the universe and decided to spread that truth, to bring happiness to all living things, caused them to leap exuberantly to their feet.

In such a deep, spontaneous expression of joy, this expression from the essence of our being, we find the flowering of art.

The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of ordinary people who have awakened to their mission of working for human happiness and a peaceful world. They are joyfully dedicated to sharing the Daishonin's teaching with many others. Shin'ichi firmly believed their presence would give birth to new creativity. He had suggested holding music and culture festivals convinced that the spread of kosen-rufu would eventually give rise to a "third civilization," one marked by an unsurpassed blossoming of the arts that would enrich and deepen people's lives.

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