

## IMPRESSIONS OF SGI SPRING TRAINING COURSE IN JAPAN

**Five hundred SGI members from 50 countries attended the recent SGI Training Course in Tokyo, April 22–26. The following are impressions of five of the 55 SGI-USA participants.**

Through participating in the spring training course in Japan, I learned about the kind of person Buddhism can help me become. I encountered hundreds of SGI members who embodied the qualities of just this sort of person. These members greeted the participants wherever we went, always wearing warm smiles, waving colorful SGI flags and oftentimes even bowing to us.

This spirit was crystallized for me by the final words of President Ikeda at the 45th Headquarters Meeting, held at the palatial Makiguchi Hall. At the end of the presentation, President Ikeda bowed deeply to the applauding crowd. He then addressed the gathering by explaining that the reason he had bowed to us is that he knows that each and every one of us is a Buddha. He reiterated that he deeply believes this, and with emphasis declared, “And that is what makes me strong!”

There stood one of the most respected men of this century—a writer, poet, photographer, philosopher and the founder of numerous institutions—an individual who has literally altered the destiny of humanity. And what did he do? He insisted that his strength derived from his ability to bow to the Buddha nature of others.

I am determined to learn how to bow to the Buddha nature of others here in the United States with at least a fraction of the sincerity that my Buddha nature was bowed to by the SGI members of Japan.

—ADAM GAMBLE,  
Cape Cod, Mass.

SGI General Director Eiichi Wada said something in one of the meetings that struck me. He talked about celebrating May 3 with the prime point of mentor and disciple, and that we need to deepen our understanding of and renew our pledge to our mentor. He said that mentor and disciple is not just a phrase but the spirit of President Ikeda to carry out his deep profound pledge to his mentor, Josei Toda.

I realized that all President Ikeda has built until now was based on a pledge deep in his heart to his mentor. Therefore he was willing to go through everything he has in order to build this beautiful, solid organization. I also realized that even though my practice all these 20 years has been sincere and consistent, I have never had such a deep pledge in my life to accomplish my mentor’s dream with my whole life.

I came back totally inspired to chant to gain the wisdom, courage and energy to persevere and make a difference in all aspects of my life. Dedicated action and struggle for kosen-rufu will enable me to understand the heart of my mentor, President Ikeda. For the first time in many years, I wrote and sent to him my May 3 determination toward 2001. This is my pledge that I will give my whole life to accomplish. I feel now that I am on the path to understanding that there is no greater life than one dedicated to kosen-rufu.

—TINA MAY, Collingswood, N.J.

Having grown up in the SGI, I never appreciated the organization. Before leaving for the trip, a men's chapter leader in Phoenix who participated in last year's training course said, "You'll have a great time," but he encouraged me to take great notes to share with the members upon my return.

One of the activities on our agenda was participating in an exchange meeting. As our group approached the community center in Asaka in Saitama Prefecture, we were welcomed by a sea of Japanese members with signs and flags. I had never experienced such a heartfelt welcome in my entire life. I personally felt President Ikeda's presence, and for the first time I understood what it meant when he says, "Please take good care of the members."

I realized what I was feeling was the SGI spirit, and that it wasn't just my words that were going to encourage the members in Phoenix. It was my action to correctly relay that SGI spirit to everyone.

I also learned that it is very easy for me to be happy, but the real essence of this practice is to help others become happy. I know I have it good, and it's because of my faith and the warm encouragement that I receive from President Ikeda, especially in the *World Tribune*. I now really appreciate the organization, and I am so proud to be a member of the SGI-USA.

I'm determined not only to appreciate my good fortune but to share with others the greatness of my mentor, President Ikeda, this wonderful Buddhism, and the SGI organization. Everyone should have it this good.

—JEE MOON, Phoenix

Just before I went to Japan, I felt stuck in my life and in my Buddhist practice. I felt I had reached my limit in terms of what I could achieve in my life. I took it as my mission in going to Japan to embrace President Ikeda's guidance. I saw his vision. I was amazed at how many people of different countries practice this Buddhism. I could see that kosen-rufu could be actualized. Although this conference was about the Soka Spirit issue, the emphasis was on the mentor-and-disciple relationship. Each country that gave a report mentioned the Seattle Incident, and I was moved that they were all using this incident as the stepping stone.

Mr. Wada mentioned how President Toda told young Daisaku Ikeda that one day he would like to see a school established to fulfill Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's philosophy of education. President Ikeda promised that he would establish a university. Two days later, we visited Soka University in Japan, and I saw how big it was and all the awards that President Ikeda has received. I realized that he was able to do that because he carried out President Toda's dream.

I realized my commitment toward kosen-rufu was nothing compared to President Ikeda's. He committed his whole life to actualizing President Toda's dream and realizing the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism worldwide. I then realized the reason why I was suffering and stuck in my life was that I never personalized President Ikeda's dream. I was never committed to propagating Buddhism as he does. It was an incredible turning point for me.

I'm determined to share this spirit and help members open their hearts to President Ikeda and to share his vision. I want to support them to challenge themselves to grow and gain fortune in their lives.

—IRENE WANG,  
Los Angeles

I chanted for three years to go to Japan and see President Ikeda. I really wanted to capture his heart. The first time I saw him was at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo, where he received an honorary professorship from the Inner Mongolia Art Academy. When he entered the hall, the atmosphere totally changed—I felt at home. As part of the program, an orchestra of junior and senior high school students performed. When they finished, President Ikeda asked them if they knew a Japanese song. After they finished their performance, he told them they needed to practice more and invited them to the opening of Soka University, Aliso Viejo, next year. Some of them were crying. I learned from him to challenge the youth by entrusting them with a goal.

I am determined to introduce two people to Buddhism by July 3, prepare the youth to welcome President Ikeda next year and to protect him with my whole heart.

—SONIA ROZO,  
South Miami, Fla.