

**SOKA SPIRIT**  
**DAISAKU LESLIE, SGI-USA STUDENT DIVISION LEADER**

**We stood up resolutely.**  
**We fought resolutely.**  
**We were ready to die for our cause**  
**As we pushed onward in our struggle.**  
**What regrets could we have?**  
**What hesitation?**

**Let persecutions come!**  
**Let trials befall me!**  
**I have the means to generate**  
**Powerful and lofty hope.**

— *The Victorious Future of Mentor and Disciple*,  
(Dec. 1, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 6)

In December, I attended a Korean language members meeting in Los Angeles together with Myeong Chung, fellow SGI-USA Student Division Leader, and met with Ms. Yoon Taehee, SGI Korea Women's Leader. I learned so much from Ms. Taehee regarding Soka Spirit. She was so full of conviction and courage based upon her experiences in reaching out to temple members that I could not help but be enthused myself.

She shared how when she sincerely chanted for the happiness of the people associated with the Nikken sect, she was able to respect them and truly care for each person. As a result of her painstaking, step-by-step efforts to improve her relationships with her temple friends, she was able to witness amazing changes in their attitudes. A feeling of mutual respect and friendship developed, and she was able to encourage many of them to make a fresh new departure to practice with the SGI.

That same night Ms. Taehee shared the following letter from Nichiren Daishonin that caused a lightbulb to go off in my head:

“However great the good causes one may make, or even if one reads and copies the entirety of the Lotus Sutra a thousand or ten thousand times, or attains the way of perceiving three thousand realms in a single moment of life, if one fails to denounce the enemies of the Lotus Sutra, it will be impossible to attain the way” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 78).

The Daishonin sounds so strict in this passage, but I realized that this passion to stand up for the sake of Law was something that I must reflect upon. Entering this year, I thought about how 10 years have passed since our spiritual independence was declared. This being the year 2001, I strongly determined that through my prayer I must never forget the injustice that occurred and take action in the Soka Spirit movement.

I hear from many youth, “How can I take action?” Contemplating this question,

I thought of the following suggestions that we, as youth, can take as one of the main focuses of our kosen-rufu movement. These suggestions are just the tip of the iceberg in comparison to all of the ideas that you may have.

**We can chant.** This is the one thing all of us can do—and the most powerful. With focused and united prayer, we can express our care and our righteous indignation. We can pray for the happiness of the temple members—pray for them to have the courage to recognize the truth.

**We can study.** Through study of the Goshō, we can deepen our understanding of Soka Spirit by deepening our understanding of the Daishōnin’s spirit. I have a strong determination to study the Goshō more than ever this year.

**We can do shakubuku.** When we make genuine efforts to share our philosophy with others, we are creating fortune and learning to express our hearts and how this practice has helped our lives. Through the practice of sharing this Buddhism, we can construct a solid foundation for the correct understanding of our movement; when people think of the Daishōnin’s Buddhism, they will understand that he taught a philosophy of the universal equality of all life.

And based upon this compassionate spirit, we can befriend temple members, support the Courageous Hearts Group members and learn first-hand the dedication, courage and heart required in the endeavor to fight for the happiness of others.

In his message to the 50th Central Executive Conference, SGI General Director Eiichi Wada stated that he is counting on the SGI-USA to take full responsibility for the Soka Spirit movement and encouraged us to always involve ourselves with it. Mr. Wada said, “Please do not think that anyone else is going to take care of this most important matter.”

This battle is crucial for the future of the United States. If we do not challenge Soka Spirit now, this issue will come back to haunt us in the future with even greater strength. I feel if we do not fight against evil now while this obstacle is right in front of us, we will regret it later. There are six temples throughout the United States where temple members need our help and our prayers.

I am determined to make history in this year of total victory with all youth members in the SGI-USA as a disciple of SGI President Ikeda.