

# SGI-USA ORGANIZATION MEMO

DATE: MARCH 17, 2021

MEMO: 2021-DEV-001



**DISTRIBUTE TO:** District through Territory Leaders, Zone and Territory Offices  
**FROM:** SGI-USA Development Office  
**SUBJECT:** May Contribution Focus and Interview Guidelines for 2021



## 2021 MAY COMMEMORATIVE CONTRIBUTION DATES:

SATURDAY, APRIL 24 – SUNDAY, JUNE 6

*Creating a Groundswell of Hope and Victory with the “Vast Heart” of Soka!*

### INDIVIDUAL CARE AND FAITH ENCOURAGEMENT (VIA PHONE OR VIDEO):

As the SGI-USA community, we'd like to reach out to the member, by voice or video, from Saturday, April 24, to Sunday, June 6, to impart courage and hope through encouragement in faith.

Through our sincere efforts to encourage each person, we want to emphasize the importance of accumulating indestructible treasures of the heart in this auspicious time. From there, please share your own rich experiences of contributing based on a sense of appreciation and vow, with the confidence that members will contribute as appropriate.

### CHAPTER THROUGH TERRITORY LEADERS MEETING:

A nationwide encouragement kick-off will be held on April 17, 2021 at 11am PT, 1pm CT, 2pm ET (approximately 1 hour). Details forthcoming through your territory office.

### NEW MEMBER CONTRIBUTION INTERVIEW PROCESS:

Please interview eligible contributors who joined between January 1, 2019 and April 24, 2020.

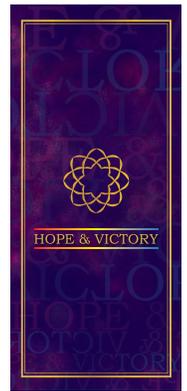
### APPRECIATION GIFT:

Each member who participates in May Contribution will receive a commemorative note pad gift by US mail at the end of June.

### WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE:

Contributions can be made by credit or debit card, check, money order or cashier's check. **Cash will not be accepted.**

- Via the Membership Portal: [portal.sgi-usa.org/portal/contribution](http://portal.sgi-usa.org/portal/contribution)
- Scan this QR code with your smartphone.
- Call Member Services at 855-744-2030 Mon-Fri 7am-5pm PT
- Via US Mail - contribution envelopes will be mailed to each subscriber in April and May with their *World Tribune*.



### RESOURCES FOR ENCOURAGEMENT:

Encouragement and messages from national leaders will be available via SGI-USA's social media platforms throughout the May Contribution focus.

Faith experiences and study materials will be published in the April and May issues of the *World Tribune*, and the April and May *Living Buddhism*.

### TIMELINE:

**APRIL 17:** Chapter through Territory Leaders Meeting.

**APRIL 24:** May Contribution begins.

**APRIL 24 OR APRIL 25:** Group through Region Leaders Kick-off to be held by Region.

**MAY 29 – JUNE 5:** Group through Region Leaders Encouragement Meeting to be held by Region.

**JUNE 6:** May Contribution concludes.

**NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT SCHEDULE WEEKLY ENCOURAGEMENT OR PROMOTION CALLS.**





# SGI-USA FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Thank you for your support with our new interview process, aimed at conveying the spirit of Buddhist offerings to eligible new members before they begin participating in financial contributions.

*Please use the following outline to share the history of Buddhist offerings, which is based on the shared commitment of mentor and disciple. (Reference materials: p. 2)*

## SECTION 1: THE HISTORY OF BUDDHIST OFFERINGS

Please share how the Buddhist spirit of offerings has been carried out by the path of mentor and disciple:

- During Shakyamuni's time;
- During Nichiren Daishonin's time; and
- In the history of the Soka Gakkai.

### **Experience:**

Buddhist offerings are opportunities to express our appreciation and commitment to advance kosen-rufu. Please share your own experience on how you started participating in contribution activities.

### **Highlights:**

Please convey key points from the "Highlights" section to conclude this section.

*Please use the following outline to convey the spirit of Buddhist offerings. (Reference materials: p. 3)*

## SECTION 2: THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST OFFERINGS

Please share the following points from *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* and Ikeda Sensei's lecture on "Reply to Lady Onichi-nyo":

- Purpose and intent behind making a Buddhist offering;
- How the process propels human revolution; and
- Spirit of making offerings.

### **Experience:**

Please share the spirit of making a Buddhist offering based on your own personal experience.

### **Q&A:**

Please convey how the sincerity behind making a Buddhist offering manifests in our daily life based on the Q&A section.

### **Highlights:**

Please convey key points from the "Highlights" section to conclude this section.

*Please use the following outline to explain how one can participate in SGI-USA contribution activities. (Reference materials: p. 4)*

## SECTION 3: FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN SGI-USA

Please explain how financial contributions to the Soka Gakkai must be based on faith.

### **Q&A:**

Please explain the difference between May, Sustaining and General Contribution from the Q&A section.

### **Ways to Contribute:**

Please share how to participate in SGI-USA contribution activities.

### **Experience:**

Please share what it means to make a Buddhist offering based on faith by sharing your own personal experience.

### **Encouragement from Ikeda Sensei:**

Please share quotes from Ikeda Sensei as a source of encouragement to conclude the interview process.

# THE HISTORY OF BUDDHIST OFFERINGS

The Buddhist tradition of almsgiving began during Shakyamuni Buddha's time when believers gave alms to him out of genuine appreciation and the desire to support the spread of his teachings. This spirit continued in Nichiren Daishonin's time with his disciples providing offerings based on their commitment to propagate his teachings for the peace of the land. The Soka Gakkai, too, has been carrying out the spirit of Buddhist offerings based on the shared commitment of mentor and disciple to advance kosen-rufu.

## DURING SHAKYAMUNI'S TIME

The Story of Wealthy Man, Sudatta

In India there was a wealthy man called Sudatta. Seven times he became poor, and seven times he became a wealthy man. During his last period of poverty, when all the people had fled or perished and only he and his wife remained, they had five measures of rice that would nourish them for five days. At that time, five people—Mahākāshyapa, Shāriputra, Ānanda, Rāhula, and Shakyamuni Buddha—came one after another to beg for the five measures of rice, which Sudatta gave them. From that day on, Sudatta was the wealthiest man in all India, and he built Jetavana Monastery. (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1086)

## DURING NICHIREN DAISHONIN'S TIME

Example from Nanjo Tokimitsu and Otozuru

[Nanjo Tokimitsu] began practicing Nichiren's teachings quite early in life. During what came to be known as the Atsuhara Persecution, Tokimitsu used his influence to protect other believers, sheltering some in his home. In retaliation for Tokimitsu's support of Nichiren and his followers, the shogunate levied exorbitant taxes upon him. Official pressure continued for several years, and the Nanjo family was forced to live in extreme poverty. Even under these circumstances, and while struggling to raise their nine sons and four daughters, Tokimitsu and his wife, Otozuru (also known as Myōren), consistently made offerings to Nichiren. (*The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*)

## IN THE HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI

At the beginning of the Gakkai's postwar reconstruction, Toda again used his own money to cover organizational expenses, so as not to put a financial burden on the members.

But shortly after Toda's inauguration as second president, several members insisted that they be allowed to bear a portion of the [Soka] Gakkai's expenses.

Faced with members' growing insistence that they be allowed to help finance the organization, Toda sensed that the time had finally come to open the door to such a development.

Still, Toda remained extremely cautious. He felt it imperative that finances for kosen-rufu derive from donations made with the utmost sincerity and purity of intention. . . . He initially chose seventy-eight persons whom he deemed to be both strong in faith and financially secure, and appointed them members of the Soka Gakkai's finance group.

The members selected to belong to the group were filled with pride, joy and appreciation at being able to make offerings for kosen-rufu.

Toda wished he could give more members this opportunity, but the thought of calling for donations from members still struggling with financial difficulties pained him. Yet, in the eyes of Buddhism, to deprive them completely of a chance to support the organization in this way would be lacking in compassion.

Shin'ichi understood Toda's spirit. He felt exactly the same. Still, the benefit of making offerings for Buddhism is immeasurable. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, pp. 107–08)

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- Throughout the history of Buddhism, mentors and disciples have worked tirelessly together to spread the Mystic Law, which is the spirit we proudly carry on in the SGI today.
- Every action we make for kosen-rufu is a cause for others' happiness, and for our own as well.

# THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHIST OFFERINGS

The forms of offerings in Buddhism may change according to time and circumstance. What remains unchanged is the spirit behind Buddhist offerings; it is one's earnest resolve and sincerity to seek and spread the truth of Buddhism.

## PURPOSE OF OFFERING

Making an offering for the sake of Buddhism is an act of expressing one's devotion to Buddhism. In other words, making offerings without the sincere intent to help propagate Buddhist teachings for the sake of people's happiness can be an empty formality. . . . Devoting ourselves to Buddhism is not an act of self-sacrifice. It is an act that enables us to discard our lesser self and reveal our greater self. When our lives are deeply connected with the Mystic Law, we can reveal ourselves as Buddhas. (Lecture on "Reply to Lady Onichi-nyo," *Seikyo Times*, March 1996)

Put another way, it means to see ourselves not as perfect transcendental beings but as Buddhas who strive to reveal their greatest potential while recognizing and challenging their weaknesses. The Daishonin explains that what is essential to such self-knowledge and self-realization is our "earnest resolve." When sincerity is a key ingredient in all our efforts . . . we begin to see our essential self, that is, Buddhahood. (March 2002 *Living Buddhism*, Lecture on "The Gift of Rice")

## FROM THE WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

I had already received the three hundred coins that you sent by the hand of the priest Ben-bo, and now you have again sent me two hundred coins. The Buddha, being truly worthy of respect, never judges by the size of one's offerings. In the past, the boy Virtue Victorious [Tokusho Doji] offered a mud pie to the Buddha, and was reborn as King Ashoka and ruled over all of Jambudvipa. A poor woman cut off her hair and sold it to buy oil [for the Buddha], and not even the winds sweeping down from Mount Sumeru could extinguish the flame of the lamp fed by this oil. Accordingly, your offerings of two and three strings of coins are far greater even than those of the ruler of Japan, who may offer the nation and build a pagoda adorned with the seven kinds of treasures that reaches to the heaven of the thirty-three gods. (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1089)

## IKEDA SENSEI'S LECTURE ON THIS PASSAGE

Here Nichiren Daishonin indicates the spirit of making offerings. He explains that what counts most in making offerings is our sincerity behind them. . . . The Daishonin was always concerned with the sincerity in the act of offering rather than by the size of them. Rather, he perceived his followers' faith and sincerity in their offerings. . . . Citing the stories of Tokusho Doji [Virtue Victorious] and the poor woman's lamp, the Daishonin further illustrates one's attitude in making offerings. . . . Although their offerings were modest, what lay behind their offerings was their genuine sincerity to support Shakyamuni, who was spreading the Buddhist teaching for the sake of people's happiness. As the Daishonin states, "More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all." [WND-1, 851] (March 1996 *Seikyo Times*, Lecture on "Reply to Lady Onichi-nyo")

**Q:** How does gratitude lead to happiness?

**A:** People who can express their gratitude are truly happy. A life that is always filled with appreciation is a bright and cheerful one—be it when you are meeting with people, when someone gives you a lift in his or her car, or when you are at home with your family. Sincerely offering thanks is a sign of living truly happy lives. Where people embody such a sense of appreciation, they send out waves of happiness that envelop both themselves and others. (*The Hope-filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 224)

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- What's important is the intent behind Buddhist offerings, which is to help Buddhism spread for people's happiness.
- Buddhist offerings are also an expression of our appreciation.
- Spirit of joyful offering elevates our life state and allows us to create a foundation of happiness in our lives.

# FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN SGI-USA

**Financial Contributions** to the Soka Gakkai were not the same as donations to other organizations, because it was essential that offerings for kosen-rufu be based on faith. As long as the contributors possessed such sincere and ardent faith, they would not fail to receive immeasurable benefit and be praised by Nichiren Daishonin. (*NHR-4*, 108)

**Q:** What is the difference between May Contribution, Sustaining Contribution and General Contribution?

**A:** All types of contribution provide vital funds to expand the SGI-USA's movement for peace by supporting new and existing buildings, projects, special events and activities.

The difference lies in how the funds are contributed and their timing or scheduling.

**May Contribution**  
April 24, 2021 - June 6, 2021

Many members choose to take the opportunity in May to challenge themselves in honor of May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, in addition to sustaining contributions or general contributions.

**Sustaining Contribution**  
On a Monthly or Quarterly basis throughout the year

Members create a Sustaining Contribution Plan to make consistent, scheduled payments throughout the year by automatic credit or debit card deduction. This helps members and the SGI-USA to plan and budget ahead.

**General Contribution**  
There is no specified time period

Members may also decide to participate in contributions aside from May Contribution or Sustaining Contribution.

## WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE



Via Membership Portal at  
<https://portal.sgi-usa.org/portal/contribution>



Scan this QR code with your phone



(855) SGI-2030 | (855) 744-2030  
Monday – Friday 7AM – 5PM PT



Via US Mail with SGI-USA Contribution  
Envelope (*for May and General Contribution*)

## FROM IKEDA SENSEI:

Our spirit changes our being... Having a strong spirit for kosen-rufu enables us to develop diamond-like lives...

In activities for kosen-rufu, absolutely no effort is wasted. Everything is engraved in our lives and enables us to establish a diamond-like and totally free state of life...

The good fortune and benefit we create by exerting ourselves in faith will definitely manifest in the lives of our children, grandchildren and all our family members.

(Lecture on "Letter to the Mother of Oto Gozen" (2), from *Learning from the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 132–35)