

Speak Out for the Truth

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 1st session of day two of the All-Japan Representative Leaders Conference, Feb. 1.

The Japanese entertainer and writer Musei Tokugawa (1894–1971) was one of the greatest storytellers of his time. His dramatic reading of the novel *Miyamoto Musashi* during the 1940s on the nationwide radio station NHK captured the imagination of the entire nation.

In August 1957, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, held a frank, lively dialogue with Musei, as he was popularly known to Japanese audiences, which was published in a leading magazine at the time. President Toda's inimitable skill as a conversationalist left even Musei full of admiration.

'Who Are You Calling a Ham?!

Musei wrote a book called *The Art of Speaking* in which he discusses the art of winning people's hearts through speech and conversational skills. In it, he shares an anecdote about a certain Kabuki actor.²

The actor was performing a play in Nagoya, Japan. Suddenly, the audience bombarded him with derisive cries of "Ham! Ham!" A faint-hearted actor would easily have lost his nerve at such merciless heckling. However, this actor splendidly incorporated a retort into the part he was playing, demanding with a haughty flourish, "Who is it that you call a ham?" then striking a magnificent Kabuki pose.

Unimpressed, the audience shot back, "It is you!" Not missing a beat, the actor then cried out powerfully — with just the right touch of humorous pathos — "Oh no, it is me...?!" Once more he struck a majestic pose. At this amusing response, the theater rocked with tumultuous applause.

Through quick wit and skillful speech, the actor turned a malicious audience into fans.

The Power To Express Oneself

Whatever the situation, you can win people's hearts and change their minds through the power of speech.

Musei Tokugawa declared, "The silence of being unable to express oneself effectively is like a stone, whereas the eloquence of being able to express oneself admirably is like a diamond."³ That was his credo.

To remain silent means defeat. The Soka Gakkai and the SGI's strength lies in the diamond-like eloquence of ordinary people, forged and tempered by telling others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

As leaders, it is vital that you always remember why you speak at meetings. It is not for the sake of merely saying something, but so that all can achieve victory. It is to energize everyone toward victory in their daily pursuits, their lives and their activities for kosen-rufu. It is to inspire in everyone the determination to win. Please avoid rambling on without a clear purpose.

We are living in the defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law. There are few who immediately embrace the Mystic Law on first hearing. But by telling others about Buddhism, we sow the seeds of the Mystic Law — plant the seeds of happiness — in their lives. At the same time, the greater the abuse and criticism we suffer as a result of

embracing the Law, the more we wash away the karmic stains of our past offenses and the more our Buddhahood shines through.

'Be As Fearless As Nichiren!'

Nichiren Daishonin asserts, "It is important to speak with even greater conviction to those who slander [the Mystic Law]" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1123). The Daishonin was as dauntless as a lion king when it came to speaking out for truth and justice. He urges his followers, "Be as fearless as Nichiren when he faced Hei no Saemon [the most powerful official of the day]" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 140).

I have fought with that same spirit through all kinds of persecution, including the Osaka Incident trial (1957–62).⁴ I spoke out fearlessly to defeat the corrupt authorities who until the very end of his life caused problems for President Toda. I stood up to prevent the injustice of arrest on trumped-up charges being perpetrated against countless innocent people like myself.

During the trial, like a true young lion of the Soka Gakkai, I spoke the truth and appealed for justice. In January 1962, the court returned a verdict of not guilty and complete victory was achieved that February [when it was confirmed that the prosecution would not appeal the decision]. I will never forget my Kansai friends, who stood by me through it all.

I wish to pass on to the youth division the jeweled sword of mission, the struggle for truth and human rights through the power of words.

The Selfless Spirit of a Leader

Before I conclude, I will share a story handed down from Shakyamuni's time about a leader who sacrificed himself to buy time to save people's lives.

In Shakyamuni's later years, the tiny kingdom of the Shakyas, which is said to have been located in present-day Nepal, was attacked and conquered by the great kingdom Kosala. This was one of the nine great ordeals suffered by Shakyamuni, who was a prince of the Shakya royal family before renouncing the world.

One day, a leader of the Shakya clan said to the ruthless King Virudhaka of Kosala, who had attacked them: "King, I want you to listen to just one request. I will dive into the pond. While I am submerged, I want you to open the doors of the castle and let my people out."

The king thought he could safely grant this, as the man could only be submerged for a few minutes. It is also possible that the king conceded because the man was a relative. However, once the man was submerged, he remained there for a long time. In the interval, more and more people were set free.

Finally, thinking it strange that the man did not resurface, the king ordered a subordinate to check the pond. What did he find? The man had undone the topknot on his head, tied his hair to a tree root at the bottom of the pond and drowned himself, sacrificing his life to buy time for his people's lives.

According to some historical sources, the members of the Shakya clan who escaped that time later built a new kingdom elsewhere.

This selfless spirit is found in a comrade's loyalty to another, in a parent's love for a child. Altruistic devotion is intrinsic to humanity. It is the inner cry: "I will fight to the last moment. I will offer my life to give you more time. So I ask that each of you strive wholeheartedly to develop yourselves, to advance and, most of all, to carry on my vision."

This is the spirit with which I devote myself to the growth of the youth division.

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1. *Miyamoto Musashi*, a well-known novel by Eiji Yoshikawa about the 17th-century master swordsman Miyamoto Musashi.
2. Musei Tokugawa, *Wajutsu* (The Art of Speaking) (Tokyo: Hakuyosha, 1962), pp. 198–99.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
4. Osaka Incident: SGI President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in a House of Councilors by-election in Osaka, 1957. At the end of the court case — which dragged on for almost five years — he was fully exonerated of all charges.

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