

**SIGN POSTS: Being a Hero**  
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**The Regent's Supreme Council met to discuss whether to behead me or banish me from Kamakura and whether to confiscate the estates of my disciples and lay supporters, or to imprison, exile or execute them. Hearing of this, I rejoiced, saying that I had long expected it to come to this. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 175)**

A hero is not a super human being. A hero is someone who, with all his or her human limitations and weaknesses, moves forward in the face of a formidable destiny.

I have been studying *The Iliad*, in which Homer sings of the heroic quality of the Trojan warrior Hector. Burdened with the weighty responsibility of saving the city of Troy from impending doom, he, though limited in strength, single-handedly fights the far greater Greek forces led by Achilles — whose super-human strength is unrivaled by any mortal on earth. Hector says, “Long ago I learned / how to be brave, how to go forward always” (trans. Robert Fitzgerald, Book 6, lines 517–8).

Nichiren in the above passage expresses his determination, with a heroic ring similar to that of Hector's, not to retreat even a single step in his religious conviction. Yet he is keenly aware of the imminent persecution. His sense of responsibility for the lives of his followers is racking his heart. Also, being human, no doubt his own life is dear to him. The possibility of survival for him, his religious order and his teaching seems remote. Facing all the seemingly impossible odds against him he stands his ground.

Every day we face new challenges and make different choices. It is no easy task to remain true to our beliefs — the greater the beliefs we embrace, the more difficult it becomes to uphold them. But being a hero does not mean that we must become super human beings. With all the weaknesses we may have, we just have to learn how to be brave, how, as Homer puts it, “To go forward always.”

**WT**