

An Earnest Person Is Never Forgotten

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda gave the following speech at the 8th Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 8.

Members of the chorus and ensemble, thank you for your wonderful performances! Friends from overseas, thank you for traveling so far!

The Headquarters leaders meeting is a gathering for those who have been striving earnestly for kosen-rufu. Its purpose is to refresh and invigorate such hardworking individuals, imparting joy, peace of mind and inspiration. Therefore, please just relax and enjoy yourselves today.

Everything Depends on People

The 2nd Young Men's Division Leaders Meeting was held on Feb. 5 at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium. Congratulations! The 2nd Young Women's Division Leaders Meeting will be held on the 10th, and I am praying that it too will be a great success. The time has arrived for the youth division to stand up in earnest.

The SGI is the only body in the world dedicated to accomplishing kosen-rufu. In that respect, there is no more noble or respectable organization.

The SGI will always forge ahead in the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law by fostering capable men and women. Our success hinges on the presence of outstanding people, on actively raising individuals to create a magnificent mountain range of capable people. This will lead in and of itself to kosen-rufu.

No matter how superlative the Law may be, it will be of no value to society if there is nobody to spread it. Everything depends on able individuals. Therefore, I am determined to channel even greater energy into nurturing the growth of young people and illuminating the path ahead. Only by fostering the youth can we realize victory in the 21st century.

I propose that from now on the student division — the shining hope of kosen-rufu — hold leaders meetings semiannually, in the spring and fall, making them events brimming with intellect and passion.

The members of the youth and student divisions, every one, will be the leaders of the kosen-rufu movement in the 21st century. It is their mission to lead the new century in all spheres of endeavor as Buddhist philosophers and as SGI leaders.

In life, the season of youth comes but once. What seeds are you planting during this precious period? What are you engraving? To what are you devoting your youthful passion? All of these things will have a critical impact on your whole future.

A Beautiful Person

Twenty-eight years ago, at a summer training course, a group of students performed in front of several thousand of their fellow members. Looking resplendent in traditional Japanese outfits, they sang a song with all their youthful energy and exuberance accompanied by the dynamic rhythm of Japanese drums. That scene remains vividly etched in my mind. I will never forget it as long as I live.

A person who makes all-out efforts is beautiful. An earnest person inspires admiration and is a pleasure to behold. The memory of such people stays with me forever.

Just the other day, I asked someone to look into what had become of the singers at that

training course. Those members, who were around 20 then, are now in their 40s. Today, as core members of the women's division, they are devoting themselves energetically in their activities, joyfully sharing the Daishonin's Buddhism with others. They are living vibrant and satisfying lives, making significant contributions to their communities and bringing sunshine to their families and loved ones. I was truly delighted to hear this.

For women, especially, happiness is determined from their 40s onward, rather than in their 20s or 30s. That was the conclusion of the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda. British historian Arnold Toynbee also voiced this opinion during one of our dialogues. That's why developing a strong foundation of faith in youth is so important: It is so that you can be victorious in middle age and enjoy true happiness in the closing chapter of your lives. How to live such a wonderful youth is what the SGI teaches.

The Most Just Are Most Persecuted

The song that those young student division members sang 28 years ago was titled "Rosas of *Shakubuku*," in a reference to Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919), a revolutionary of global renown who was active in Germany in the early decades of this century. She was also an economist and an educator. Incidentally, we have a number of SGI members from Germany with us today.

I have frequently spoken about Rosa Luxemburg because in many respects she exemplifies the essential way of life for a human being and for a woman. Her courageous life has much in common with the path of Buddhism.

Luxemburg was jailed a number of times [five occasions are documented]. Even so, she continued to live true to her belief in the importance of peace and human liberation. In all, she spent nearly four years in prison. What a grim experience that must have been! Spending just a day in prison is a harrowing ordeal.

In March 1906, Luxemburg, then in her mid-30s, was imprisoned again; this time in Warsaw. She spent her birthday in prison, crammed in a tiny cell with more than a dozen people. The cruelty of the authorities knew no bounds. She was even subjected to a mock execution, where she was blindfolded and taken outside to the execution grounds. Under the intense physical and psychological strain of the ruthless torture inflicted upon her, she fell ill and her hair turned white. Nevertheless, her spirit continued to blaze brightly.

By comparison, the circumstances we face in our struggle for kosen-rufu are all too fortunate. And yet, there are those who grumble and complain or are swayed by the trifling attempts of others to discredit and malign us. This is utterly pitiful.

In the end, Luxemburg was killed in a massacre by antirevolutionary troops in Germany.

All too often, as history testifies, people of the greatest justice and integrity are persecuted most harshly by those with evil aims. This, too, is a common theme in Buddhism. In the Goshō, Nichiren Daishonin writes, "This world is the province of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 135). Human society, in other words, is dominated by the corrupting nature of power. Throughout his life, the Daishonin waged an unremitting struggle against authoritarianism. He says, "Minor persecutions and annoyances are too numerous even to be counted, but the major persecutions number four" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 96).

Since the day I resolved to devote my life to kosen-rufu, I, too, have been fully prepared to meet with persecution. When my wife, Kaneko, and I were married, we confirmed our shared determination to work together for kosen-rufu, come what may.

One Person Can Inspire Everyone

While in prison, Rosa Luxemburg received a report that the revolutionary organization

in which she was a pivotal figure was in disarray and people's courage and resolution were fading. In response, Luxemburg cried out: "There, that's where I'd like to go as soon as possible! ... I'd shake them all awake...."1 In other words, it was the resolve: "If I go there, we will prevail in any struggle! I will personally generate the momentum for victory!" What determination!

Everything depends on one person standing up. As long as you foist responsibility on others, lamenting, "That local organization is weak," or "That person doesn't do anything," nothing will change. A leader has to resolve, "I will do it!" When you do so, the passionate flame in your heart will then spread quite naturally to others. That is why Luxemburg declared, "Disappointment in the masses is always the most disgraceful attitude a political leader could have."2

Even in prison, she continued to encourage her friends outside. To one person, she wrote, "Calm down, I shall always remain your compass, because your straightforward nature tells you that I have the most imperturbable judgment."3 Rather than being the one to receive encouragement from those outside, Luxemburg encouraged others from her prison cell. She was tremendously strong. She also wrote: "You must be calm and serene despite everything. This is life, and that is how we must take it, bravely, undauntedly and smilingly despite everything."4

What composure! What fortitude! Under such circumstances, a person might be forgiven for not sparing a thought for others. But Luxemburg possessed great inner strength.

Strict With Yourself, Gentle Toward Others

A genuine leader is not stuck-up or arrogant. Leaders in the realm of Buddhism must always remember to be strict with themselves but gentle toward their fellow members; to wage an earnest win-or-lose struggle, while taking the pressure off others; to act first themselves, while warmly encouraging everyone; to set an example of hard work, while relieving others of their fatigue; and to fight and cry out against evil, while putting everyone's minds at ease.

You can't expect others to take action if you don't do so yourself. SGI leaders must never sit back on their laurels and order members around highhandedly. We are all members of the SGI family. No one is superior or inferior. We are all equal before the Gohonzon. Truly worthy of respect, therefore, are those who are in reality working hard for kosen-rufu.

As a leader, you yourself should burn with hope and enjoy your life with great zest and enthusiasm. I hope that at meetings, as at other times, you will welcome people with such warmth and good cheer that they'll be delightfully surprised. Please strive to relieve people of their worries and put a spring back into their steps.

Today's gathering is the 8th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, the 21st Kyushu General Meeting and the 8th Saitama General Meeting. Congratulations to you all! You have won! You have all worked hard.

With us today, we also have SGI members from 21 countries and territories, representatives of Aomori and Yamagata prefectures, and prefecture chiefs from throughout Japan. Thank you all for joining us. In addition, representatives of various specialist divisions and groups, including educators, nurses and *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper deliverers are gathered here in high spirits.

I want to introduce a wonderful pioneering member of Tokyo No. 2 Territory, where this Makiguchi Memorial Hall is located.

Her name is Hanako Anraku of Ome Ward. Born in central Tokyo in 1909, Mrs. Anraku will turn 88 this year. Even now, she continues to devote herself cheerfully to activities for

kosen-rufu.

Anraku — what a beautiful name! Meaning “peace and tranquillity,” it is written with the same Chinese characters as the first part of title of the “Peaceful Practices” chapter (Jpn *Anrakugyo-bon*) of the Lotus Sutra. Also, the name of the place where she lives, Ome (literally, “green plums”), is very poetic.

Mrs. Anraku’s late husband, an attorney, came from a prominent samurai family of the Shimazu domain of Kagoshima in Kyushu. A fine gentleman, he died while quite young. Mrs. Anraku carried on alone after his death with dauntless resolve.

She joined the Soka Gakkai in March 1958, just nine days before President Toda died. This spring, she will begin her 40th year of faith. To date, more than 60 families have received the Gohonzon as a result of her personal efforts to introduce others to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. She has practiced steadily and tirelessly. “I don’t need a position in the organization or benefit for myself,” she exclaims. “I would like to present all my benefit to the people I have introduced to this practice.” She is hailed by all as a champion of *shakubuku*. She is always bright and cheerful, and never complains. “I have been practicing this Buddhism for 40 years, and I don’t have a single regret or doubt,” she says.

Social status or one’s position in the organization is irrelevant. It is sincere, dedicated people like Mrs. Anraku who are the mainstay of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI.

Not infrequently, people who attain high standing forget their debts of gratitude and, as a result, bring about their own downfall.

Open the ‘Eye of the Heart’

Mrs. Anraku’s prayer is truly beautiful. Every day she pledges: “I will exert myself as the ‘women’s division chief of kosen-rufu.’ Therefore, Gohonzon, please make my faith strong and indestructible.”

As I mentioned, this year Mrs. Anraku will be 88 — an age for great celebration in Japan. More than 10 years ago, her sight became impaired. Refusing to let this be a hindrance, she continues to this day to enthusiastically share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with close friends and acquaintances.

No matter how dark the skies become, high above the clouds the sun and the moon continue to shine. In the same way, the “eye of the heart” definitely glows brightly in Mrs. Anraku’s life.

I am reminded of the venerable Aniruddha, one of Shakyamuni’s 10 major disciples renowned as foremost in divine insight, who went blind because of his severe practice.

But according to the Buddhist scriptures, even though he lost the physical ability to see, he developed divine sight with which he could observe the entire universe. In the Lotus Sutra, Aniruddha receives a prediction that he will become a Buddha called Universal Brightness Thus Come One — a Buddha who will illuminate the entire universe with the light of the Mystic Law.

Mrs. Anraku is the same. She has single-mindedly devoted her life to kosen-rufu and exerted herself to the utmost with noble sincerity to support and protect the Soka Gakkai. She is a person of the greatest merit and achievement.

She has written a number of *waka* poems, one of which reads:

*Together with my mentor
I struggle ahead
to the very end
along the path I have chosen
in the garden of kosen-rufu*

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By “to the very end,” Mrs. Anraku most assuredly means to the very end of her life. This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. This is the heart of a true bodhisattva.

I highly praise, encourage and eternally protect people of such earnest and wholehearted faith. And I am determined that their names will be recorded without fail in the annals of our movement for the sake of future generations.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “A woman who takes this efficacious medicine will be surrounded and protected by these four great bodhisattvas [the leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth] at all times. When she rises to her feet, so will the bodhisattvas, and when she walks along the road, they will also do the same” (MW-3, 58).

He promises, in other words, that the protective functions of the universe will rigorously safeguard a woman who embraces the Mystic Law at all times. She will be eternally embraced in a golden state of life imbued with the four noble virtues of eternity, happiness, true self and purity. There are countless such people in the SGI.

To Mrs. Anraku, as a representative of all the noble members of the Many Treasures Group and the women’s division members who will follow in their footsteps, I say: “Please stay in good health and high spirits! And may you enjoy the greatest happiness!”

Life’s Guiding Principle

In April 1942, during World War II, when the air raids on Tokyo began, the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, received a letter from a teacher living in the Kansai area who was worried about the damage inflicted on the capital by the bombing. This person, who incidentally was a native of Kagoshima in Kyushu, had once studied under Mr. Makiguchi. And although at the time he was not practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, he held his former teacher in the highest regard.

In response to the heartfelt inquiry of concern about his safety and well-being, Mr. Makiguchi lost no time in penning a courteous reply. He always treated people with the utmost sincerity — whether they were members or non-members, friends or strangers.

After humbly thanking his former student for the letter, Mr. Makiguchi then frankly reported the situation:

Our home, though in the path of the air raid, luckily was not damaged. Among our comrades in faith, there was one person whose home was unscathed even though the surrounding houses on all four sides — in front, behind and on either side — were all hit by incendiary bombs. There were many such instances of actual proof that could not be put down to coincidence. I am confident that we will be safe and protected without fail. My hope is that all people will embrace the Mystic Law as their guiding principle in life.⁵

“No matter what happens, as long as we have faith in the Mystic Law, we will be free from harm” — this was President Makiguchi’s conviction. His belief did not waver in the least. In the midst of the destruction all around him caused by the air raids, he calmly continued work on the construction of kosen-rufu for the sake of peace.

The teacher who wrote the letter to Mr. Makiguchi later took faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Cherish Youth

In 1938, Mr. Makiguchi traveled all the way to Kagoshima to visit someone and talk about Buddhism. He also stopped by the family home of several students from Kagoshima who had joined the Soka Gakkai in Tokyo, to pay his respects to the students’ parents and try to give them a better understanding of faith.

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With its roots nourished by such meticulous concern and courtesy, by such profound sincerity, the Soka Gakkai has grown into the great organization it is today.

Following the example of Mr. Makiguchi, we must treasure, respect and foster each young person. This is the way of a true leader. The warmth of human friendship must always pervade the SGI — not cold bureaucracy.

Leaders must strictly refrain from angrily berating the members of the youth division; the youth are our organization's future. Let us respect young people with the determination to make them even more capable than we are ourselves. We should never be condescending or patronizing toward them. It is also wrong for leaders to order the youth division members about as if they were their personal underlings.

I received very strict training from President Toda, but never once did he shout at me out of emotionalism. He always treated me with respect. Because of that I respected him, too, and did my utmost to live up to his expectations.

Please respect and encourage the youth. Develop a relationship where you can talk with them about anything and teach them everything you can. Strive to open a path for them so they can display their potential to the fullest. This is the way of a senior in life and of a true leader of Buddhism.

No Road Too Long, No Destination Too Distant

Despite his advanced age, President Makiguchi made the long journey to Kyushu a number of times for the sake of just one person. Each time, he would travel in a third-class railway compartment, sitting on a hard wooden seat with no upholstery to cushion the jolts of the ride. How noble was his spirit!

President Makiguchi would surely be delighted that so many victorious members from Kyushu have come all the way to Tokyo today to joyfully gather in this great hall that was built in his memory. On Mr. Makiguchi's behalf, I extend a hearty greeting to all of you who have traveled from Kyushu, welcoming you as I would so many Buddhas. It is my wish to bestow upon each of you a great medal of honor of the heart.

Earlier this month [on Feb. 5], René Huyghe, one of Europe's leading intellectuals and a member of the Institute de France, died. He was 90 years old. Dr. Huyghe is famous for protecting many of the greatest treasures of the Louvre, including the *Mona Lisa*, preventing them from falling into the hands of the Nazis during World War II. I met Dr. Huyghe many times; he was a truly cultured gentleman. His face radiated dignity and intellect.

SGI President Ikeda and Dr. Huyghe published a dialogue together, Dawn After Dark.

A friend in France delivered my deepest condolences to his wife and family. Mrs. Huyghe graciously conveyed the message that her husband had often spoken about our meetings and that to the very last he had been thinking of me. I was most touched and humbled to hear this. Dr. Huyghe was truly a comrade-in-arms in the spiritual struggle to transform humanity.

Dr. Huyghe had great expectations for the SGI, which he characterized as a force that will prevent the deterioration of human society. During one of our dialogues 10 years ago [in June 1986], he told me emphatically that, in light of the laws of history, "soulless materialist civilization" was bound to collapse. The greatest need of the present, he asserted, was to forge a link between "rationalism" and "spirituality," and commence again from the prime value on life itself.

Life — this is the very essence of the profound awakening that my mentor, Josei Toda,

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experienced while in prison. He realized that life itself is the “brilliant light that can dispel the darkness of humankind.”

The year 2000 will mark the 100th anniversary of Josei Toda’s birth, and the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding.

In fall 1999, the Saitama Youth Peace Culture Festival will be held with the participation of 100,000 young people. With this brilliant event, please usher in the dawn of a “century of life.”

I hope you will take care not to catch a cold in this chilly weather. You are all infinitely precious. I am praying for your excellent health, happiness and longevity. Thank you!

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1. Paul Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Ideas in Action*, trans. Joanna Hoornweg (London: Pluto Press and Bookmarks, 1994), p. 128.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1987), vol. 10, p. 271.

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