

Not Dependent on Anyone

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 11th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, the 3rd Nationwide Women's Division Leaders Meeting and the 2nd Kansai Youth Division General Meeting, held at the Kansai Toda Memorial Hall in Osaka, Japan, May 19.

Congratulations on this lively meeting! I join you in proclaiming, “Long live ‘Ever-victorious Kansai’!”

While in Shanghai recently, I was interviewed [on May 14] for a TV program on Zhou Enlai that will air next year to commemorate the centennial of the late Chinese premier's birth. With the welfare of the people his primary and constant concern, Zhou Enlai wrestled tirelessly with the challenge of constructing a new China, literally putting his life on the line. Directing this effort, a kind of grand historic experiment, he faced an unending succession of difficulties.

While of an entirely different nature and dimension, the SGI's movement for kosen-rufu is a global experiment — one aimed at positively transforming humankind's future. It is an attempt to create eternal value that will endure throughout the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. Achieving this is Nichiren Daishonin's decree. Right now, probably few people are aware of the tremendous significance of our efforts.

The Spirit of Self-Reliance

In the past, Japan, along with a number of other countries, blindly warned against the birth of the new Chinese “people's republic.” The Eastern and Western blocs joined to contain and isolate China. As a result, the new republic faced continuing difficulties.

Sometime after Premier Zhou's death, his wife, Deng Yingchao, told my wife and me: “We had enemies in front of us. And we had enemies behind us, too.” When my wife commented on how harrowing this must have been, Madam Deng continued: “That was the situation every day — every single day. It was like that for years, for decades. We really fought hard.”

I will never forget those words.

What did Premier Zhou stress to the people during these difficult times? It was self-reliance. This is well known. It implies a life of proud and dignified independence. In other words, the strength not to rely or depend on anyone or anything.

Don't be dependent on anyone — this is my sentiment, too. We each have to strengthen and develop ourselves through our own efforts. We must never surrender to any foe or difficulty. We must be fearless. This is the true spirit of self-reliance. And this was the strength that enabled the Chinese people to accomplish their great revolution.

This self-reliance arose from the Chinese people's struggle against Japanese aggression. What Japan did during the war was truly abominable. The Japanese army occupied China's main ports in an attempt to cut it off from the outside world and close the routes by which allies were sending supplies. But with *self-reliance* as their watchword, the Chinese dauntlessly surmounted the atrocities and oppression that the Japanese military perpetrated against them.

‘Strengthen Oneself in Battles’

Premier Zhou once said, “One must strengthen oneself in battles, and temper oneself in the raging wind and rain.”¹ Struggling in the midst of a storm — this aptly describes

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members' admirable efforts in our movement's early days. Everyone fought with vigor and dedication. Leaders today who fail to wage such earnest efforts are lazy and shiftless.

When we exert ourselves earnestly for kosen-rufu, we are certain to encounter the three obstacles and four devils, as well as the three powerful enemies.² Therefore, a person who undergoes persecution for the sake of the Law, and those who fight alongside such a person, are on the true path of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Zhou Enlai called to the people of other countries, as well, to advance along the path of self-reliance. He believed in the power of the people.

We, too, place our trust in people.

Having survived oppression, abuse, humiliation and foreign invasion, the Chinese stood up with the determination to create their country and cause it to prosper through their own efforts and resources. Their strength was truly admirable. Zhou Enlai was determined that the Chinese would indeed prevail and their victory would go down history. He had no doubt that this would be done.

In the SGI, we believe in the Gohonzon and place our trust in the SGI members. The members are important, not the top leaders. That is why I continue to endure all attacks and fight tirelessly, for the members' sake.

Those who have experienced great suffering must win in life and become happy. If you're always losing and miserable, then you are not practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism correctly. You are not following life's true path. Buddhism teaches the means by which the sad become happy and the happy become happier still. That is the reason for our practice. And isn't becoming happy one of life's most important goals?

Since my youth, I have yearned to support China in some way. That's because I had heard from my elder brothers about the brutality of the invading Japanese army in China. Now, at long last, I am in a position to actualize the ideal that I have cherished of someday exerting myself on China's behalf.

I am overjoyed to see China's confident advance. The development I saw in Shanghai on my recent visit was most impressive. Those who knew Shanghai in former times tell me that the city today is like a completely different place. That's how dynamically China is moving ahead. The determination and vision of Zhou Enlai, who firmly believed in the power of the people, were right on the mark.

Victory Depends on the People

In Shanghai, where I received an honorary professorship from Shanghai University, I had a number of chances to speak with that distinguished institution's chancellor, Dr. Qian Weichang, and his wife, Kong Xiangying. Dr. Qian, an internationally renowned physicist, once conducted research with Dr. Linus Pauling in the United States. He also enjoyed the confidence of Zhou Enlai. He currently holds the important post of vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Madam Kong, by the way, is a 75th generation descendant of Confucius.

I said to Dr. Qian: "In the past, China was wracked by civil war and the war against Japan. The Chinese Communist Party was thought to be at a serious disadvantage in various respects, including lack of munitions and supplies. Many people felt certain the communist forces would lose, but in fact they won. There must have been many factors, but what do you think was the most important cause of their victory?"

Dr. Qian replied simply: "It was the power of the people. The communists had the people on their side." He added, "There was no corruption in their army and they treated the people well." In other words, the people felt that they had a true ally, and gladly provided cooperation and support. The communist forces won because they made an ally of

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the people. Victory, in short, hinges on whether one has made an ally or an enemy of the people.

Never Let Cowardice Defeat You

The Chinese revolutionary Qiu Jin (c. 1877–1907), whom I mentioned in a speech earlier this year, also called out for independence, especially for women. In her youth, she founded a progressive women’s magazine, *China Women’s Journal*, in Shanghai, and declared, “As a human being, to be spineless is truly a dreadful thing.”³ Her words, like flames, roused people from their complacency.

Whenever I think of Qiu Jin, I am reminded of our young women’s division members. Moved by the blazing spirit of Qiu Jin, flag-bearer of China’s “young women’s division,” China’s “young men’s division” also stood up.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said, “If the Soka Gakkai becomes filled with cowardly, spineless people, that will be the end.” And founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi cried, “Rather a single lion than a thousand sheep!” This is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Qiu Jin’s conviction was that standing on one’s own feet is fundamental to becoming truly human. Zhou Enlai declared that true independence means taking responsibility for people’s happiness and exerting oneself earnestly on everyone’s behalf. This is also a key element of human revolution, of inner reform, and characterizes the lives of those awakened to their mission.

In response to Premier Zhou’s call, China’s youth stood up courageously. Among them was Chancellor Qian. The young Dr. Qian decided to dedicate his life to his country through science. He completely changed his direction, putting aside the studies he had pursued, and set himself to the difficult challenge of becoming a physicist.

This morning, I was talking with my wife about the similarity between the Soka Gakkai spirit — the Kansai spirit, in particular — and modern China’s spirit of self-reliance. “That’s exactly right,” a number present with us exclaimed. “That’s why Kansai is so strong,” they agreed.

The Kansai members aren’t bothered in the least by others’ petty jealousy or contempt. No matter what, they simply continue fighting on courageously. They exert themselves wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu. I loudly proclaim that the Kansai spirit is the model for all SGI members around the globe.

Entrusting the Future to Youth

Seven years ago, in May 1990, I visited Madam Deng at home in Beijing. We had met many times, but that turned out to be the last time we spoke. [She passed away in July 1992.] Madam Deng confided that she treasured our exchanges. For me, too, they will always remain unforgettable memories.

In October 1990, a group of schoolchildren visited Madam Deng. This “mother of the people” said to her young guests: “I want you to surpass us. Our country’s future depends on the efforts you make and the new paths you open.”⁴ She addressed the children with the same earnestness and sincerity she showed adults.

Zhou Enlai believed that “with the spirit of self-reliance, we can definitely outdo our predecessors and surpass their achievements.”⁵ Similarly, I hope that the youth division members, who will shoulder the SGI’s future, will far surpass their seniors and the achievements of all who have come before. Please realize the still greater advance of the SGI movement in the 21st century. Youth division members in Kansai and throughout world — I entrust you with this mission!

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Madam Deng also told the children: “Although I am old, my ideals still possess the revolutionary spirit of my youth. This 85-year-old granny is ready to advance with all of you!”⁶

My heart is that of a youth dedicated to the revolution! — this spirit shows Madam Deng’s greatness. I hope that SGI members getting along in years will similarly continue to engage themselves in kosen-rufu activities with a youthful passion and sense of purpose.

I also want to charge Kansai members with the task of creating and constructing a new, 21st century Soka Gakkai that may serve as an example for the entire world.

‘Stop the Fighting!’

When Japan was waging a war of aggression in China, there was a Japanese woman named Teru Hasegawa (1912–47), who daringly moved to China and fought against Japanese militarism alongside the Chinese.

In every age, women are strong; they are courageous. The same was true in the Soka Gakkai’s early days. In every respect, the women’s division has opened the way. And the Kansai women’s division is especially solid and trustworthy.

Hasegawa is famous in China. She published articles in a newspaper that was under the supervision of Zhou Enlai. And Deng Xiaoping praised her.

Witnessing the Japanese army’s assault on Shanghai, Hasegawa exclaimed: “Cannon fire and smoke shroud this cosmopolitan city, and there are rising screams of panic and fear.... My heart cries out, ‘For the sake of both our countries’ people, stop the war!’”⁷ She felt that the “giant cloud of gray smoke” pressing upon China would suffocate not only the Chinese but the Japanese as well. “I can hear the tearful cries of the old farmers and the women [of Japan] robbed of their sons and husbands by war,” she wrote. “I hate with all my being our two countries’ slaughter of each other’s people.... I call out at the top of my lungs to my Japanese brothers: ‘Stop needlessly shedding blood! Your enemy is not across the sea in China.’” The “enemy” of the Japanese people, as Hasegawa correctly perceived, was not China but Japanese militarism itself. She was a most discerning, intelligent woman.

Hasegawa spent her youth here in Kansai, attending the Nara Women’s Higher Teachers School. She met and fell in love with a young Chinese man, Liu Ren, and they married. This fostered in her a broad international perspective, and when war broke out she could clearly recognize that Japan was wrong. She wrote: “Anyone with the least amount of decency and clear common sense would definitely sympathize with China. I am not a dumb beast; I have learned something about justice.”⁸ That was an age when to oppose the government’s policies meant to be branded as a traitor and un-Japanese.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who later became the second president, were also condemned as traitors for failing to follow the militarists and support the war effort.

Hasegawa didn’t care what other people said about her. She was never intimidated. “If it pleases you, then go right ahead and call me a traitor,” she said. “I am not frightened in the least.”⁹ She was unshakable. “Rather, I regard it as a source of deep shame to consider myself as the same nationality as those who not only invade other people’s lands...but who think nothing of creating hell on earth,” she exclaimed. “That is not patriotism, it is jingoism.”¹⁰ She denounced the Japanese authorities’ refusal to tolerate anyone who didn’t toe the line.

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Fighting for Humankind's Future

Surmounting great difficulties, Hasegawa joined China's anti-Japanese forces. On the radio, she tirelessly appealed to the Japanese soldiers for justice. Her parents in Japan were persecuted and threatened by those around them — some even demanded that they commit suicide for having a traitorous daughter. Hasegawa not only became the target of the Japanese, but was treated with coldness and suspicion by the Chinese simply because of her nationality.

Nonetheless, she continued to cry out, "China's victory will be the key to the future of all Asia and all humankind."¹¹ She was extremely shrewd and saw right to the essence.

Hasegawa died before the age of 35 from an infection. She left behind a 5-year-old son and a 1-year-old daughter. There may be instances where SGI members, too, succumb to illness in the course of their kosen-rufu endeavors. Please remember, however, that our entire existence — both in life and death — is embraced by the Mystic Law.

The "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says, "Let us live out our lives!" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 228). This means that through our Buddhist practice, we increase our vitality and extend our lives. We also find the lines "sagacious beams shine without measure" and "this life span of countless kalpas" (LS, 231), which mean that the Buddha's life is eternal and that there is no place the light of the Buddha's wisdom cannot reach.

From the standpoint of the eternity of our lives, because we embrace the Mystic Law everything is moving in a positive direction. Everything is contributing to our happiness and attainment of Buddhahood.

We need to have confidence in the Mystic Law. We mustn't be swayed by immediate circumstances or allow them to cloud our faith.

Although during her short life Hasegawa was called a traitor, her name now shines with an undying brilliance in Asia. Her two children have grown into fine Chinese citizens. I heartily applaud this courageous woman.

History repeats itself. Japan is now drifting dangerously toward renewed nationalism. Therefore, authoritarian powers are persecuting us for standing up for pacifism and internationalism. Let's continue the struggle! We must never allow past tragedies to be repeated. Let us advance joyfully and confidently!

In Good Faith

A prominent Japanese journalist, whom I know well, recently said: "Japan has not yet honestly faced or made amends for its wartime past — especially not in a way that can be regarded as truly sincere or in genuine good faith. China treasures sincerity and good faith above all. If Japan were simply to make an effort to address this issue in an honest, sincere manner, then all other issues between the two could easily be resolved."

As long as the Japanese blithely pretend they have come to terms with the war legacy — while failing to take an honest look at the past, for example recognizing certain historical facts and Japan's role as an aggressor in the war — there can be no true friendship between the two. Japan can pursue talks with China on trade and commerce as it might, but as long as it avoids or tries to gloss over these important issues of the heart, any relationship will be as shaky as a house of cards. This is why Soka Gakkai activities to promote friendship on a grass-roots level are so important.

A poll conducted by China's largest youth newspaper, the China Youth News, showed serious concern over glimmerings of a revival of Japanese militarism. In Japan, a recent survey of Japanese youth found that for the first time more than half the respondents felt

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that China could not be trusted. Taken together, this data suggests growing mutual mistrust.

Defeating Obstacles

It's the first time in quite a while that we've held a Headquarters Leaders Meeting here at the Kansai Toda Memorial Hall. Congratulations! And thank you for making it such a bright, lively gathering!

I am reminded of the times President Toda visited Kansai. Here, as elsewhere around the country, he spoke at members' gatherings, giving guidance based on the Goshō. He also lectured on Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall in Osaka.

In 1956 — the year when a Gakkai-backed candidate from the Osaka district for the first time won a House of Councilors seat and the newspaper headlines screamed, "The Impossible Has Been Achieved" — President Toda lectured in Osaka on the Goshō "Letter to Misawa." Through his discussion of the Daishonin's teachings, he deeply engraved in the members' hearts what we today know as the Kansai spirit.

"Letter to Misawa" reads:

Even though one may encounter a good teacher and the sutra of the true teaching and thereby learn the True Law, inevitably, at the time when he resolves to free himself from the sufferings of birth and death and attain Buddhahood, he will encounter the three obstacles and four devils, just as surely as a shadow follows the body and rain is accompanied by clouds. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 252)

Just as one cannot graduate from school without passing a test, one cannot become a Buddha without defeating devilish functions. To the extent that we struggle against and defeat such obstacles, we approach Buddhahood.

Of the three obstacles and four devils, the most difficult to overcome is Devil of the Sixth Heaven, and his machinations. By defeating this devil — in other words, by triumphing in the battle against the devilish nature of authority, we can attain Buddhahood. I want you to have a clear understanding of this point today.

Creating a Pure Land Entails Obstruction

In the Goshō, the Daishonin explains as follows:

When a common mortal of the Latter Day of the Law is ready to attain Buddhahood, having realized the true meaning of all the Buddha's teachings and understood the profound teaching of the *Maka Shikan*,¹² this devil [of the Sixth Heaven] is greatly surprised. He says to himself: "This is most vexing. If I allow this person to remain in my domain, he will not only free himself from the sufferings of birth and death but lead others to enlightenment as well. Moreover, he will take over my realm and change it into a pure land. What shall I do?" The devil then summons all his underlings from the threefold world of desire, form and formlessness and tells them: "Each of you now go and harass that votary, according to your respective skills. If you should fail to make him abandon his Buddhist practice, then enter into the minds of his disciples, patrons and the people of his land and thus try to persuade or threaten him. If these attempts are also unsuccessful, I myself will go down and enter the mind and body of his sovereign to persecute that votary. Together, how can we fail to prevent him from attaining Buddhahood?" (MW-3, 252)

This world is the domain of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, who can be compared to a feudal lord. It distresses him greatly to see his realm turned into a Buddha land and all his retainers and tenants abandon him. This is what he fears most.

Paralleling the above Goshō passage, there have been a number of instances when

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devilish forces have tried to seize control of the Soka Gakkai and the SGI. However, all such attempts have failed — I have been firmly resolved never to let that happen. This incenses the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. And this is why the attacks upon us continue.

In light of the Gosho, there is surely no greater proof that one is correctly practicing Nichiren Daishonin's teachings than incurring the envy, hatred and persecution of devilish forces. This underscores that the first, second and third presidents have been following the correct path of mentor and disciple. And this is where the eternal and fundamental path of the Soka Gakkai is found.

The strong, resolute spirit not to be intimidated or deceived by those in power is the driving force that propels us toward Buddhahood. We must not forget this spirit — the essential point of President Toda's lectures.

Here in Kansai, as President Toda's disciple, I underwent persecution at the hands of the authorities, just like that described by the Daishonin. I was thrown in jail. And, with my comrades in Kansai, I surmounted every obstacle and achieved victory. Kansai called forth the forces of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven and soundly defeated them. Kansai is the stronghold of our movement, the Castle of Soka that will tower eternally.

I will continue fighting together with the Kansai members for as long as I live! Together, let's continue our advance!

Nurture Outstanding Individuals — Build a Great Organization!

Youth division representatives, heirs to our movement's future, are gathered here today. I would like the Kansai youth division to press forward joyfully, unflaggingly, to forge a network of youth — friends who share our commitment to justice and truth — 1 million strong, and thereby create a legacy that will shine brilliantly in the annals of world history.

The time to put the finishing touches on this century is now at hand. This will begin from Kansai. And Kansai also will lead the way as we make our departure into the 21st century. I place my wholehearted trust in the valiant Kansai members.

Kansai is the force that propels our advance steadily toward the 21st century, toward kosen-rufu. In this place of your mission, please raise many outstanding capable people and build a great organization! Please show the world that the Kansai spirit is one of indomitable struggle!

Thank you! See you again soon!

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1. Translated from Chinese. *Zhou Enlai Xuanji* (Selected Writings of Zhou Enlai) (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), vol. 2, p. 54.

2. Three powerful enemies: three groups of people who persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the evil age after Shakyamuni's passing. They are: 1) lay people ignorant of Buddhism; 2) arrogant and cunning priests; and 3) false saints in league with corrupt secular authorities.

3. From her editorial carried in the first issue of *China Women's Journal*, published in 1907.

4. Translated from Chinese. Jin Feng, *Deng Yingchao Zhuan* (Biography of Deng Yingchao), ed. Wang Naizhuang (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1993), p. 971.

5. *Zhou Enlai Xuanji*, p. 414.

6. *Deng Yingchao Zhuan*, p. 971.

7. Quotes here and below are from Ichiro Takasugi, *Chugoku no Midori no Hoshi: Hasegawa Teru Hansen no Shogai* (Green Star of China: Teru Hasegawa's Antiwar Struggle) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1980), pp. 89–92.

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8. Teru Hasegawa, *Arashi no Naka no Sasayaki* (Whisper in a Storm) trans. Ichiro Takasugi (Tokyo: Shinhyoron, 1980), p. 153.
9. Ibid., pp. 154–55.
10. Ibid., p. 155.
11. Ibid., p. 157.
12. Here, “the true meaning of all the Buddha’s teachings” and “the profound teaching of the *Maka Shikan*” refer to the faith and practice of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws.

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