

The Sun Is Rising

Thanks to SGI members' steady efforts, the Daishonin's 'Buddhism of the sun' is bringing happiness to the people of the world. 'Patience is the key to victory,' SGI President Ikeda says.

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 20th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in conjunction with the 9th Saitama Prefecture General Meeting and the Arts Division General Meeting, Tokyo, March 8.

Despite the cold weather in February — the Soka Gakkai's proud traditional month of propagation — we again took great strides. I would like to thank you all wholeheartedly for your tireless efforts.

Because of our kosen-rufu activities' dynamic momentum throughout Japan, it is inevitable that the three obstacles and four devils and the three powerful enemies of Buddhism will appear to try to hinder our progress. This accords with the words of the Lotus Sutra. If anything, the intensity of the onslaught of these destructive forces is yet rather mild.

The Soka Gakkai has now begun to blaze brightly with a new energy and strength. The handing over of leadership to the younger generation is also progressing steadily. The Gakkai's inherent strength is immortal. The future is assured.

To the members of the Brass Band, thank you for your wonderful performance earlier. I remember a young men's division member exclaiming many decades ago: "The young men's division may have a hard time with Buddhist study or gongyo, but our Brass Band is something else! The band's performances never fail to uplift and energize. I'm always left feeling, 'What a wonderful organization the Soka Gakkai is! I'm going to give my all for kosen-rufu!'"

In all struggles, music is a force for progress. You, the members of the Brass Band, have marched in the vanguard in our movement, leading the way for your comrades.

Another youth who wasn't a member once said: "The Soka Gakkai's Brass Band moves people's hearts and inspires courage. No other religious organization produces such lively and stirring music. You can always count me a Soka Gakkai supporter!"

Allow me to reiterate my deep appreciation to all Brass Band members for their wonderful efforts.

Asia — 'Where the Sun Rises'

In February, I visited the Philippines, Hong Kong and Okinawa. Everywhere I went, the members were bright and high-spirited. They radiated an incredible energy. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is the Buddhism of the sun. There is nothing that compares to the sun's brilliance. And the Buddhism of the sun is shining brightly in Asia.

Do you know, incidentally, what the name Asia originally means? Well, it means "place where the sun rises," and has the connotations of "eastern direction" as well as "sunrise," "daybreak" or "dawn." The name Asia is said to derive either from the ancient Assyrian word assu or the ancient Akkadian word asu, both meaning "sunrise." Aptly, today the sun of the Daishonin's great Buddhism of peace is rising high over Asia.

In the Goshō "Remonstrations with Bodhisattva Hachiman," the Daishonin writes:

The moon moves eastward in the sky, a sign of how the Buddhism of India spread in an

easterly direction. The sun rises in the east [and moves westward], an auspicious sign of how the Buddhism of Japan [the ultimate teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] is destined to return to the land of India. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 588)

The moon that first appears in the western sky (the crescent moon) is seen a little more eastward with each passing night until, by the time of the full moon, it is due east. The moon's gradual movement eastward symbolizes the way [Shakyamuni's Buddhism,] the Buddhism of India — also known as the Land of the Moon — spread eastward [to China, Korea and Japan]. The sun, meanwhile, rises in the east. This symbolizes [the Daishonin's Buddhism,] the Buddhism of Japan — also known as the Land of the Sun — traveling westward, or returning to India. That is the meaning of this famous Gosho passage.

In accord with these words, the Buddhism of Shakyamuni in India spread to China over 500 years, and it took another 500 years to reach Japan.

However, 700 years went by after the Daishonin's death without any sign of his prediction being realized. Far from spreading widely throughout Asia as the Daishonin had hoped, hardly anyone even in Japan had heard of his correct teaching. Had this situation continued, the Daishonin would have been branded a false prophet. But a Buddha cannot possibly be a liar, for a lie would contradict everything it means to be a Buddha. It would be a serious thing indeed if that were to happen.

Nevertheless, if no one had emerged with a firm resolve to realize the Daishonin's prophecy, the Daishonin's identity as the original Buddha would have remained buried in oblivion forever. That would have been disastrous in terms of Buddhism.

Fulfilling the Original Buddha's Prophecy

Allow me to share the Daishonin's well-known words: "The Law does not spread by itself: Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856). It is impossible for the Law to spread by itself. The Law will not spread unless there are people who selflessly devote themselves to that purpose. This only stands to reason. And those individuals, moreover, are supremely respectable, along with the Mystic Law.

Today, the Buddhism of the sun has spread not only throughout Japan but to South Korea, India and now — with Hong Kong's return — even to China. I have especially devoted my energies to ensure the development and prosperity of Hong Kong. Many Hong Kong members are now playing leading roles in society. The SGI of Taiwan, too, has been publicly recognized by Taiwan's government, winning the Internal Affairs Ministry's Social Organization of Excellence Award six years in a row. The SGI of South Korea has also received many public awards and commendations.

The Buddhism of the sun is today bringing the bright light of happiness to people in these and other countries in Asia and throughout the world. Who could have imagined it? Who would have thought it possible? No one believed that it could be done. But we of the Soka Gakkai have gone ahead and achieved this great feat. The Soka Gakkai — each and every one of you — has made the words of the original Buddha a reality. We, the members of the Soka Gakkai, alone are genuine disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, having actualized our mentor's great aspiration. This honor will shine eternally and infuse our lives with boundless benefit and good fortune. Of this there is absolutely no doubt.

Earlier this century, Asia endured the sufferings of hell at the hands of Japanese nationalism and militarism. Mocking its Asian neighbors and trampling on their rights and freedom, Japan was the epitome of evil, arrogance and folly. One would assume, therefore, that a religion from Japan would be regarded with great suspicion by Asian people. However, the Soka Gakkai enjoys exceptional trust throughout this region. We are trusted

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implicitly.

On my recent trip to the Philippines, I met with President Fidel Ramos. He came specially to attend the ceremony at which I received the First Rizal International Peace Award from the Order of the Knights of Rizal. I also visited him at the presidential offices at the Malacañang Palace in Manila, where we had a very meaningful discourse. That was my third visit to the presidential offices.

In addition to President Ramos, I have met and spoken with many heads of state and leaders of various Asian countries. Recently, Soka University was privileged to have Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana of Thailand attend its Pacific Basin Symposium in Bangkok [March 4–6] as an honored guest.

Throughout Asia, the trust for us and our organization is firmly established. Why? Because the Soka Gakkai, since the time of our first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, has fought and continues to fight against Japanese nationalism and fascism. This fact is keenly perceived by our Asian neighbors. And it is well known throughout the world. I hope you will all be proud of this distinction.

Longing for the Supreme Teaching

Incidentally, the Daishonin was not being arbitrary when he declared that Buddhism would return westward from the east. Chinese Buddhists also perceived it to be inevitable. This is important. In the Goshō “On the Buddha’s Prophecy,” the Daishonin cites Tsunshih (964–1032), a Sung-dynasty priest of the Chinese T’ien-t’ai school, who wrote: “Buddhism was first transmitted from the west, just as the moon first appears in the west. Now Buddhism returns from the east like the sun rising in the east” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 115).

In the same Goshō, the Daishonin also quotes the Great Teacher Miao-lo along with Tsunshih to corroborate his assertion that Buddhism was lost in India and China (MW-1, 115).

Based on such documentary proof, the Daishonin declares, “Without fail, Buddhism shall rise and flow forth from the east, from the land of Japan” (MW-1, 115). In other words, the Buddhism of the sun will rise from Japan to shed its light on the entire world. Even the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai himself and many other Buddhists in China clearly recognized that one day there would definitely appear a supreme Buddhist teaching capable of illuminating the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. And it is the Soka Gakkai that has realized the Daishonin’s prophecy to the letter.

The good fortune of all of you who are part of the Soka Gakkai is immeasurable and everlasting. You will ultimately savor immense benefit without fail. The Daishonin declares unequivocally that “both the people and the Law are respectable” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 856). Therefore, each of you is worthy of the greatest possible respect. There is no higher honor or status than this. Worldly fame, wealth, position or titles are all ephemeral. Our lives shine with eternally indestructible brilliance just like the Mystic Law. This is Buddhism. This is the greatest glory for a Buddhist.

Congratulations on Arts Division Day [March 8], marking the 36th anniversary of the division’s founding. On behalf of fellow members around the world, I extend my best wishes on this happy occasion to all of the arts division members who are making wonderful contributions in diverse artistic fields.

The acclaimed capital of the arts is Milan. What is the world treasure that this Italian city is home to? The renowned opera house, La Scala. I visited La Scala for the first time in 1965 and have been there many times since. Those visits are still fresh in my memory.

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In 1981, [as founder of the Min-On Concert Association,] I invited La Scala to bring a performance to Japan for the first time. It was a mammoth undertaking transporting the entire show — sets, props and some 500 cast and crew — from Italy to Japan for a lavish production of a scale rarely seen in this country.

The Italian opera house opened its Japan tour with a performance of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. The great composer Giuseppe Verdi was born in 1813 and died in 1901. Among his most well-known operatic works are *La Traviata* (The Fallen Woman), *Don Carlos* and *Aida*. I spoke about Verdi in a speech I made in Italy some years ago [July 1992].

In the first half of the 19th century, the great composer's beloved homeland, Italy, was controlled by a foreign power. The people suffered under its oppressive rule. It was at this time that Verdi's famous opera *Nabucco* ignited the spirit of independence in people's hearts. *Nabucco* portrayed the story of an oppressed people standing up to the abuses of despotic rulers and authoritarian clergy and winning freedom. It was first performed at the La Scala in Milan on March 9, 1842. The cries for liberty it inspired in the Italian people spread from heart to heart like wildfire.

Kosen-rufu follows the same formula. It is always about one person standing up and everything beginning from there.

"Fly, thought, on wings of gold!" [From the lyrics of *Nabucco*] — this powerful line from Verdi's opera spurred everyone to action. Filled with pride, they all began singing Verdi's songs.

The Soka Gakkai songs, too, are songs of the people. Kosen-rufu moves forward with songs and music. From one perspective, gongyo and daimoku are also lyrics and songs. They are an ode to life. I hope, therefore, that your gongyo and daimoku will be such that even people who are not practicing will be favorably impressed by the sonorous and invigorating sound of your voices. That, too, will contribute to the spread of kosen-rufu.

Art Not for Vanity, But for People

Verdi was 28 when he composed *Nabucco* — the age of many of our youth division members. His youthful artistic spirit gave wings of hope to people's hearts that let them set themselves free and fly on high. After *Nabucco*, Verdi produced a succession of operas to inspire and encourage the people. He composed always and solely for the people. That is where his greatness lies.

Art that is created only in an attempt to achieve fame, art that is superficial and has no substance — such work is nothing but vanity. The focus of everything comes down to this one point: whether it is for the people. The shallowness of modern Japanese art and culture can be traced to a pervasive contempt for this basic point.

The authorities, of course, did not take kindly to Verdi's provocative works. They criticized him harshly. But Verdi called out to his colleagues: "Arm yourself with courage and patience. Particularly with patience." He urged them to be patient in the cause of victory. And with this conviction he fought with courage and dignity.

In all things, patience is the key to victory. Those who cannot endure cannot hope to win. Ultimate triumph belongs to those who can forbear.

Verdi had the total support of the people. A person or an organization that is an ally to the people is strong. The Soka Gakkai is strong precisely because it is a gathering of ordinary people. Nothing and no one can ever destroy it. For that reason, too, it is absolutely vital to treasure the people, to treasure the members.

When he was working late into the night composing, people would gather outside Verdi's window to cheer him on. And after he had finished a performance, they would cry: "Viva Verdi! Viva Verdi!" He and the people were one. This was because he loved the

people, and they loved him in return.

Similarly, if we love the SGI members, they will return our love. One does not gain people's affection because of position in the organization. Leaders in the world of Buddhism must not forget this. Those who abandoned their faith or betrayed the organization overlooked this important point.

“For the sake of the people” — those who devote themselves to this cause will leave behind an immortal history.

In a letter, Verdi gave the following advice to a youth who aspired to a career in the arts:

He shouldn't be made conceited by praise or intimidated by blame.... The artist must look into the future, see new worlds among the chaos, and if, right at the end of his long road, he discerns a tiny light, he should not fear the darkness that surrounds him. Let him go straight on, and if sometimes he stumbles and falls, he must get up, and go straight on.

It is exactly as he says. In life, we must grit our teeth and keep walking bravely toward the light. This is the spirit of a genuine artist. If life goes smoothly all the time, we risk growing arrogant and conceited. Such a shallow individual cannot produce truly outstanding art.

I hope that arts division members will live with bright optimism and steadfast determination. Even though you may be unknown now, you are all artists in our movement to bring peace and happiness to all humanity. You are performing brilliantly on the stage of kosen-rufu. Please never forget that 10 million fellow members are warmly watching your endeavors, that you are superlative artists who are being applauded by such vast numbers of ordinary people. To live strongly and courageously is itself kosen-rufu. My friends in the arts division, may you be the golden wings of infinite hope for our 10 million members!

Appreciation for the Arts and Culture

This month marks the centennial of Chinese premier Zhou Enlai's birth (March 5, 1898). To celebrate this occasion, China's Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble is currently touring Japan under the auspices of the Min-On Concert Association. The ensemble is one that Premier Zhou, a great lover of the arts, poured special effort into fostering.

Premier Zhou had high regard for artists and cultural figures, calling them “technicians of the heart.” He treasured them. A leader cannot be called first-class if he or she lacks appreciation of the arts and culture.

Art is peace. Art captures people's hearts, their minds and imaginations. Art enriches people; it enriches society. Artists have the power to affect an immense number of people in a very profound way. What a great role this power plays in the victory of the people! The radiant presence of a single arts division member can also completely change people's misconceptions about the Soka Gakkai. Similarly, the Chinese song and dance ensemble now visiting Japan has made the Chinese spirit of peace known around the world.

Last month, incidentally, China's Beijing Television aired a documentary commemorating the centennial of Zhou Enlai's birth, and a Chinese publishing company also released a book titled *Zhou Enlai: Recollections of 100 People*.

The documentary was a 12-part series titled “Enlai Centennial.” President Ikeda was among the Chinese and international figures who were interviewed and asked to share their reminiscences of the late premier for the special program. The SGI leader's remarks

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were featured in several installments. President Ikeda's recollections of his meeting with Zhou Enlai were also among those included in the above-mentioned book.

The Zhou Cherry Tree, and also the Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao Cherry Trees, on the grounds of Soka University in Tokyo, will most assuredly bloom in glorious profusion again this spring, adorning the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Chinese leader's birth with their fragrant blossoms.

The other day, my wife and I received a copy of a biography of Madame Deng Yingchao, Premier Zhou's wife, from Zhao Wei, the couple's secretary of more than 30 years. Madame Zhao continues to play an active role in Chinese society. The biography, incidentally, contains several references to my meetings with Madame Deng.

Madame Zhao Wei has held such important posts as deputy secretary general of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The life of Madame Deng Yingchao was an endless struggle, an endless revolution, fought side by side with her husband and comrade, Premier Zhou. At the time of the Long March, though ill with tuberculosis and coughing up bloody phlegm, she endured every hardship alongside her comrades to the very end; she overcame all obstacles and triumphed.

So demanding and all-consuming was their lifelong struggle that Madame Deng and Premier Zhou had no time for a family of their own. Madame Deng suffered a miscarriage early in their marriage. When a Japanese acquaintance asked her rather insensitively in her later years if she wasn't sad that she never had any children, Madame Deng replied calmly, "I have no time to feel sad." Premier Zhou also once declared that all the children of China were his children.

Madame Deng always treated my wife and me with great warmth and affection as if we were a beloved daughter and son.

People of Action Are Always Young

I'd like to share an anecdote about Madame Deng when she was already more than 75 years old. A friend whom she hadn't seen for a long time exclaimed in surprise: "We haven't met for more than 10 years, but you haven't changed at all! You're glowing with health."

Madame Deng replied laughingly: "Oh, yes, I've grown old. That's the law of nature. But my spirit hasn't aged. I want to serve the people more. I wish to do a lot of work, not for myself, but for others. That's why I'm in such good shape."

On another occasion, she said: "People's ideals do not grow old. Even if I retire from office, the revolution isn't over yet. We have to work, learn and devote ourselves to the revolution as long as we live."

Her spirit reverberates strongly with that of our women's division members!

"Lifelong devotion to the revolution" — for us, this means lifelong devotion to the cause of kosen-rufu. There is no retirement age in faith. Sincere faith never ages. Those who exert themselves for the sake of the Law are ever young. Our heart is what matters most. Let us strive to the end of our days for kosen-rufu.

On my visit to the Philippines, I again saw some of the spectacular sunsets for which Manila Bay is world-famous.

Madame Deng wrote these lines of verse: "The sunset is infinitely beautiful. / An incomparably beautiful scene is the twilight." The sunset of our lives should be like this.

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Accordingly, Madame Deng constantly stressed, especially to women, how vital it is to be strong. Her words echo the guidance given in the Soka Gakkai.

Once, she encouraged a woman with the following words:

There is nothing I hate more than seeing a woman cry. What good will crying do? Will crying change your lot? Women have to become self-reliant. Women have to better themselves, grow stronger and take action. Sniveling only incurs contempt. When Comrade Enlai passed away, so deep was my grief that I wept on three occasions. But crying wasn't going to bring him back. I had to firmly set aside my grief and be even stronger.

And at a gathering of women leaders, she once said:

Please treasure and respect yourself and work even harder. Progress is accompanied by hardships. You mustn't grow downhearted. You mustn't cry when you encounter difficulties. From a young age, I have fought against this passive way of life of women.

Strength is the source of happiness. We mustn't shy away from life's challenges. We mustn't be defeated. Refusing to be defeated equals victory. A person who perseveres to the end is a winner. In the course of promoting our movement, the Soka Gakkai has never pulled back in the face of any hindrance. We have kept moving forward. And that is the key to our success. Never to retreat a single step, no matter what — that is the Soka Gakkai spirit. Those who embrace this spirit can achieve unlimited victory.

Waiting for the Time

Congratulations to the Saitama members on their general meeting as well as the opening of the magnificent new Saitama International Women's Center.

I respect and admire Saitama most highly. The women's division members, in particular, who have dedicated their lives wholeheartedly to their Soka Gakkai activities, are princesses and queens of the heart. I have no doubt that Nichiren Daishonin would warmly praise your efforts.

I have received a flood of reports from Saitama women's division members expressing the great pride and joy they felt in being part of the Soka Gakkai when they saw the newly completed women's center. Making this new center — this new treasure palace of kosen-rufu — a base for your activities, I hope you will continue to expand the sphere of eternal good fortune limitlessly.

I have visited Saitama many, many times from the time I was a youth — sometimes to give Goshō lectures, sometimes to attend guidance meetings — and as such it holds many fond memories for me.

Flipping through my diary for 1953, I came across the following entry I had written. I was 25 at the time.

Tuesday, Feb. 10. Clear and Fine.

Physically and mentally exhausted.

Gave a lecture at Kawagoe District in Saitama Prefecture on "Letter from Sado." About 50 gathered.

It seems as if fine and capable people are gradually appearing.

In accord with my prayers, Saitama has today become an invincible citadel of capable

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people.

In that same diary entry, I also wrote:

Troubled by the conflict between the world's two major blocs — the Communist nations and the Free World.

The progress of our movement will serve as a first step in building a bridge between them.

However, we are powerless to do anything as we are right now.

Members, fellow citizens, humankind! We must wait for the time! We must wait for the time!

The Soka Gakkai in those days was still a small organization. We were ridiculed by people in Japanese society as a gathering of the poor and sick. But even then, as President Toda's disciples, the youth division members aspired to towering goals and were driven by a powerful determination.

"We have to bring an end to the tragic cycle of the Cold War at all costs. To do that the Gakkai has to develop, has to become strong, has to succeed in its endeavors. I'll strive steadily and tenaciously, one step at a time, to consolidate our organization at the district level, at the very foundations, to expand our movement so that we can make a difference. I'll create the right time and build bridges of peace and friendship around world." That was the determination I made when I was 25 years old.

And I exerted myself with all my might to fulfill that determination. I built a bridge of friendship between China and Japan. I blazed the trail for grass-roots exchange between Russia (then the Soviet Union) and Japan. As a private citizen, I met and spoke frankly with top Soviet and Chinese leaders toward restoring amicable relations between the two countries. I also consistently advocated the convening of summit meetings between the heads of the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, in various proposals I issued over the years.

I believe that I have advanced resolutely, step by arduous step, toward the goals and vision I vowed to achieve in my youth. Pioneering peace researcher Dr. Johan Galtung lauded the efforts of myself and the Soka Gakkai, saying that we contributed in no small way to the end of the Cold War. As the years go by, our endeavors are garnering increasing support and understanding among thinking people the world over. More and more people are coming to have great expectations for our movement.

Dialogue Is the Only Way

Philippine President Ramos offers the following three imperatives for peace: 1) discussion and dialogue; 2) discussion and dialogue; and 3) discussion and dialogue. It is his conviction, in other words, that discussion and dialogue are the only ways to peace; there is no other option. This same rule applies in our personal relationships, in maintaining and fostering friendship.

During my visit to Hong Kong, I met again with noted painter and calligrapher Madame Fang Zhaoling. She is 84 years old and as bright and vigorous as ever. She said, "How can we get people of different countries to communicate? Through dialogue and artistic exchange — that is the way I believe we can build truly beautiful friendships."

Dialogue is the only way. Society will only change through dialogue. Let us engage in lively, cheerful dialogue wherever we go.

In the Goshō, the Daishōnin writes, "This strife-ridden *saha* world is a realm in which enlightenment is achieved through hearing.... All living beings who hear this [teaching of

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Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] will obtain benefit” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 415). Enlightenment can be attained through hearing. Hearing has an even more profound impact than reading. Telling people about the Daishonin’s teaching, letting them hear about it, is important.

By using your voice to tell others about the Mystic Law, all of you — who have inherited the Buddha’s will and decree — can help countless people forge a connection with Buddhism.

May each of you lead a life filled with boundless benefit and good fortune.

We are walking each day on the great path of hope. We are advancing each day toward the hope-filled 21st century.

I pray with all my heart for your ever-greater good health and successful endeavors.

See you again soon. Thank you for your great efforts.

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