

Faith, and Faith Alone

This is part 2 of the speech that SGI President Ikeda gave at the 22nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in conjunction with the 3rd Kansai Youth Division General Meeting, at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Osaka, Japan, May 26. Part 1 appears in the July 31 issue.

The SGI bases itself first and foremost on the Daishonin's writings. That is why the pure, undefiled lifeblood of faith, that directly connected to the Daishonin, is always flowing vitally, strongly in the SGI. All of the Daishonin's writings are extremely important, but of special significance are the 10 major writings.

I turn now to one of these, "Letter to Shimoyama." Several years ago, incidentally, the Ehime Prefecture youth division researched and published several volumes of study material on this letter under my supervision.

The Daishonin writes: "Then, I, Nichiren, appeared in this world. Fearing no one, I have given my life to calling attention to [the grave slander of the Law being committed in this land]. Were the nation's rulers wise, they would be compelled to ask for further details. Yet they do not and fail to heed my warnings. While this alone is astonishing, how outrageous it is that they should try to behead me!" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 357).

The Daishonin is a great sage and philosopher. As he details at length in his treatise "Rissho Ankoku Ron," the people of his day suffered intense misery and hardship. By rights it should be the job of the country's rulers to find and implement means to relieve the people's suffering.

Yet when the Daishonin tried to advise them on the best course to pursue, they refused to heed his words. They turned a deaf ear to the counsel of a great sage. They ignored the plaintive cries of the people.

Not only that, they tried to behead the Daishonin — this treatment he describes as "outrageous." He is quite right in feeling the way he did.

The Height of Perversity

The Daishonin continues: "Thus the two evils have now appeared in the land side by side — the grave offense of supporting a person of great evil and the grave offense of disgracing a person of great good, who upholds the correct teaching. This situation is like venerating an *ashura* and shooting at the god of the sun. It has therefore given rise to an occurrence of unprecedented gravity [the calamity of the Mongol invasions] befalling this land" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 357).

Ashuras are contentious demons who symbolize the world of Anger, a life-condition characterized by jealousy, perversion and a desire to appear superior to others. To esteem such ignoble beings and try to shoot down the sun giving light to all living things is the height of perversity. It is only natural, then, that the grave offense and error of persecuting a Buddha should give rise to national disaster.

The Daishonin's words are guiding principles that have universal, eternal relevance. It is important to study his writings. And it is especially crucial that the members of the youth division gain a solid grounding in Buddhist study. The two ways of practice and study are important. A halfhearted attitude will not allow you to complete these two paths. That would be a truly sad thing.

The Daishonin fearlessly declared the truth for the security of the land, the happiness of

the people and the benefit of future generations. But the rulers of the day ignored his admonitions. Deceived by ill-intentioned individuals, they denigrated the Daishonin and even attempted to take his life. These two grave offenses — conspiring with evildoers and persecuting a person of great good — were the causes for the disorder and confusion that beset the country. This fundamental formula is the same in any age.

Citing some historical examples of secular authorities persecuting loyal retainers or people of lofty virtue, the Daishonin continues: “This is not without precedent. King Chieh of the Hsia dynasty beheaded Lung-feng. King Chou of the Yin dynasty had Pi Kan’s chest torn open. The second emperor had Li Ssu executed. King Udayana insulted the Venerable Pindolabharadvaja. King Dammira cut off the head of Aryasimha. Emperor Wu argued with the Dharma Teacher Hui-yüan. Emperor Hsien-tsung exiled Po Chü-i. Emperor Hui-tsung branded the Tripitaka Master Fa-tao on the face. These are all examples of people who not only failed to heed remonstrations, but harbored grudges over them. In their lifetime in this world, these individuals brought about the ruin of their countries, lost their lives and fell into the evil paths in their future existences. This is solely because they looked down upon people, gave credence to false accusations and acted against reason” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 357).

It is the way of the world that people of justice are attacked out of others’ unwarranted anger and resentment. I think the point the Daishonin wishes to make here is: “As you can see from these examples, many upright and correct individuals have been beheaded throughout history. It is the same in any age. It is vital, therefore, that you have the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong, to know the difference between good and evil. Simply because I was exiled to a remote island, many people mistakenly believed that I committed some crime. But that is not true. Only the just are persecuted.”

The pages of history are filled with untold people of justice and integrity who were accused and condemned by the cruel forces of authority for crimes that they never committed. I know what this is like from personal experience.

But all tyrants and authoritarian leaders who dare to betray justice and truth ultimately come to a terrible end.

You, my young friends, are the leaders of the 21st century. For that reason, it is important that you have an understanding of history, that you can see through to the heart of things. A penetrating view of history is essential. A superficial one won’t suffice.

The renowned Japanese author Eiji Yoshikawa writes at the end of his novel *Miyamoto Musashi*, the story of a 17th-century master swordsman: “The sound of crashing waves is a part of nature. Swimming skillfully with the flow of the waves, small fry sing, small fry dance. But who knows the heart of the ocean, the depth of the ocean, a hundred feet down?”

A Senseless Mobocracy?

Because of their integrity, people of goodness are attacked by the ill-intentioned — this historical lesson applies directly to the present as well. And it will continue to do so in the future.

Recently I met Dr. Choue Young Seek, founder and chancellor of South Korea’s Kyung Hee University, who said with keen discernment, “Though we speak of democracy, in a country where the level of the citizens is low, it can be the worst of systems.”

Having the external machinery of democracy in place does not automatically make for a democracy. Substance and content are important. A democratic society can easily turn into a senseless mobocracy — into a deplorable society that ignores human rights — if its citizens are lacking in sense and good judgment.

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Quite simply, there can be no true democracy unless the citizens of a country realize that they are sovereign, that they are the main protagonists, and then, with wisdom and a strong sense of responsibility, take action based on that realization. Democracy cannot be successful in its mission unless the people rouse themselves to become more informed and involved, unless they unite, unless they establish an unshakable force for justice and keep a strict eye on the activities of the powerful. In Japan, the Soka Gakkai is trying to do just that.

The destiny of humankind will never change unless people take action to keep a close watch over those in positions of power and authority. The Daishonin taught us how we could change our destiny. He called on the people to exercise their wisdom and stand up for what is right. Presidents Makiguchi and Toda, along with many other outstanding people of conscience, past and present, have made this their rallying point.

A Life Crammed Full of Memories

In my youth, I launched a momentous new wave in our people's movement from here, Kansai. I was about the same age as many of you today. I will never forget those days when I gave my all alongside my Kansai friends. Youth is a truly wonderful thing.

Unfortunately, though, this is often something that's hard to appreciate when we're young. Life passes by quickly. Before we know it, we are old. That's why in our youth, we should be as active as we possibly can.

Rather than a life of blank pages, live a life crammed full of memories — of battles well fought and wonderfully diverse experiences. Not to leave behind any history, to just grow old and die, is a sad way to live.

All of you are exerting yourselves in SGI activities. You are studying the Daishonin's writings, discussing Buddhist philosophy, striving to support and encourage your fellow members.

There is no more fulfilling and satisfying youth than this. It is an incredible youth — a youth of unsurpassed value.

There's Nothing To Stop You

The campaign we waged in Osaka in 1956 heralded the dawn of the people's victory. The newspaper headlines shouted, "The Impossible Has Been Achieved." I fought with all my might in that campaign. I traveled all over Kansai. I have fond memories of each town and city. And I have many friends here.

In July 1956, a candidate sponsored by the Soka Gakkai in the Osaka electorate ran for the first time in the Upper House election and was elected despite all predictions to the contrary. President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, oversaw the campaign in Osaka. The Soka Gakkai-backed candidate's surprise victory stunned Japan's established power structure and marked the start of the Soka Gakkai's political movement, which later gave way to the formation of the Clean Government (Komei) Party.

I hope that you, too, will create history. You are young. There is nothing to stop you. Those who fail to take action when they can will only have regrets later in life. It is to your benefit to challenge yourself and fight hard. It is crucial that you strive to the end, that you live courageously through all obstacles and write this indestructible history. I entrust the future of our movement to you.

It was also here in Kansai that I suffered persecution by the authorities, just like the Daishonin describes. I bore the full brunt of the schemes of the three powerful enemies of

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Buddhism in the Osaka Incident in 1957.

President Ikeda was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in an Upper House by-election in Osaka in 1957. At the end of the court case, which dragged on for almost five years, he was exonerated of all charges (January 1962).

I protected my mentor, Mr. Toda, and the Soka Gakkai — the downfall of both being the true aim of the authorities' insidious design. I was 29 then.

The entry in my "Youthful Diary" for July 17, 1957, the day of my release from prison [after being detained for questioning for two weeks], reads: "I was released from prison today, July 17, at 10 minutes past noon. Several hundred Kansai members came to greet me. Overjoyed. The Gakkai is strong. It is in the right. The Gakkai is the most beautiful of organizations."

Those who came to greet me that day are your seniors in faith. Thank you, Kansai!

That same evening, more than 20,000 members gathered at Osaka's Nakanoshima Civic Hall. Many crowded outside the venue in the pouring rain as well.

I was innocent of any crime. The charges against me were the authorities' fabrications. At the meeting that night, I declared: "Those who have faith will definitely win in the end!" These words sprang from my deepest, innermost conviction.

I now entrust this immortal history to my esteemed, most precious youth division members of Kansai and the world, those who will shoulder responsibility for the future. Please open the way to a magnificent 21st century in which justice and truth prevail.

Seize the Moment!

Thoreau, another renowned American Renaissance thinker, wrote in his journal: "Nothing must be postponed. Take time by the forelock. Now or never! You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment." We shouldn't put anything off, but seize the moment, living with all our being in the present. If we do that, he says, each moment will become eternity.

The British poet Milton wrote in *Paradise Lost*: "With good / Still overcoming evil, and by and small / Accomplishing great things, by things deem'd weak / Subverting worldly strong...." These words have profound meaning.

"With good still overcoming evil" — yes, good must triumph over evil. Standing by idly does not amount to doing good. This is only done by fighting evil.

"By things deem'd weak" — this can be interpreted as referring to people's faith, to their religious convictions. Authoritarians view people who cherish religious faith as weak, looking down on them with contempt. They think to themselves: "You practice your religion because you're weak. Look at you. You don't have power or wealth. Your faith is but a crutch to lean on."

"Worldly strong" — this is the repressive force of the powers that be, the arrogant people in authority. Such strength as they wield, however, is not true strength from the standpoint of eternity or the depths of life.

Faith, which at first glance may appear weak, is actually the most powerful force in the world. Many people put on a show of being strong, but true strength has nothing to do with appearances. On the contrary, we usually find that the weaker the individual, the greater their bravado or outward display of strength.

People have disparaged the Soka Gakkai and supposed us to be weak, but we have made it this far on faith and faith alone. Without the patronage of state authority, without using economic clout, without putting on a false front, we have advanced as an organization of

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plain, ordinary citizens. That is why we are strong. That is why we have succeeded in our endeavors.

To “subvert worldly strong” through faith — the highest expression of our humanity — is the most correct approach we can take in vanquishing the abuses of authority. This is the heart of Buddhism. This is what the Daishonin taught. It is the royal road upon which the Soka Gakkai will eternally advance.

I close today with the hope that all of you in Kansai will become a boundless source of inspiration and strength for our esteemed fellow members and friends throughout the world.

Thank you!

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