

## STILL HIGHER STILL FURTHER

*We shouldn't run away from our mission, SGI President Ikeda says in this speech — we should advance higher and further. 'Don't you agree', he asks, 'that it's far more satisfying and exhilarating to walk out intrepidly onto that stage, fired with the resolve to do our best, to achieve something of value, to touch and inspire our audience?'*

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 26th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Sept. 22.*

I have a proposal: Fellow members from 50 countries outside Japan have made the long journey to be with us today; I propose that we erect a bronze plaque engraved with their names and their respective countries as an eternal tribute to them in a suitable spot in the soon-to-be-completed Main Building of Soka University's Tokyo campus.

### **That Day Is Past**

Dr. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Argentine human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has said to me: "The next millennium will definitely be an age of women. We will see a decisive change in the times."

He also said: "In the future, we will see an age of people who possess spirituality. The world cries for such an age."

He asserted that the day is past when society's direction could be dictated by arrogant men, despots, the famous or authoritarian academics. He is clearly of the opinion that unless we usher in an age of women, an age of the people, we and our planet will find ourselves at a serious impasse. I fully agree with him.

*President Ikeda then asked SGI Women's Division Leader Eiko Akiyama, as a representative of the women present, to lead the audience in three cheers for the women's and young women's divisions. This was followed by award presentations, the Gloria Brass Band's performance of a medley of Soka Gakkai songs and some 250 visiting SGI members' resounding chorus of "March Toward the 21st Century."*

Thank you! Thank you very much! Is there any realm as high-spirited and lively as this? The SGI is an amazing organization. That's because it is an organization of the people. It is an organization of ordinary people of tremendous perception and wisdom.

### **With Marvelous Speed**

I recently received a heartwarming report from Dr. Katsu-hito Yamazaki, the Soka Gakkai doctors division leader for Hyogo Prefecture in the Kansai region. He related an episode that took place on Sept. 15, as Kansai doctors division members were making their journey home by Bullet Train after attending the division's general meeting in Tokyo.

It seems that a little girl had injured herself while playing on board. She was bleeding profusely and her condition appeared serious. The conductor made an appeal over the P.A. system for any doctor on the train to come immediately to Car 10, where an injured child was in urgent need of medical assistance.

The doctors division members were all seated in different parts of the train, but within one or two minutes, eight Kansai doctors division members, including division leader Dr. Akihiko Nakaizumi, rushed to the child's side. Using the expertise of their respective fields, surgeon Dr. Hiroji Nakagawa, pediatrician Dr. Kimiko Tahira and orthopedic surgeon Dr. Keisuke Inoue swiftly treated the patient. Their teamwork is said to have been magnificent.

At first, the child's mother was terribly upset and beside herself with worry, but gradually her expression relaxed as she saw their competent efforts. She was astonished by the large numbers of doctors who rushed to the scene to assist. I can imagine that such an event must be quite rare.

When the doctors division members had taken care of the wound and returned to their seats, the conductor came on the P.A. system again and announced that the child's injuries had been successfully treated by doctors on board, and that she would continue on her journey to Kyoto. He thanked the doctors and the other travelers for their concern.

I was deeply moved by this. I thought: "What marvelous speed! What superb teamwork! How like Kansai! How like the doctors division!"

## **Servant Leadership**

Dr. Yamazaki's wonderful report stated: "The conductor's lavish thanks to the doctors were a bit disconcerting. The reason we could actually respond so swiftly to the emergency and have each doctor do his part was because of our Gakkai training. We Kansai doctors division members have received a lot of diverse, practical training by offering medical support at Gakkai culture festivals and participating in Gakkai-coordinated relief efforts after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of January 1995. This is what enabled us to be of service in this instance."

Training is important. People who have received training are strong. They are reliable, never crumbling under pressure. Dr. Yamazaki agrees that nothing can surpass the training we receive in the course of our Soka Gakkai activities.

The times we live in are what Buddhism describes as an evil age defiled by the five impurities. These are deplorable times. The Lotus Sutra assures us that in such times, the Bodhi-sattvas of the Earth will outshine all others and work for the welfare and prosperity of the people and the country. This teaching forms the core of Nichiren Daishonin's writings.

Who, then, is fulfilling the role of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth today? It is none other than you and I, the SGI members, devoting ourselves to realizing kosen-rufu. There is nothing more admirable.

Just as the Daishonin states, you are noble, respectable individuals. It is a grave offense to look down on or despise such people. Arrogant individuals who do so will unquestionably receive strict retribution in accord with the workings of cause and effect. This is the Lotus Sutra's teaching.

The world-renowned futurist and activist Dr. Hazel Henderson expresses great joy at walking the path of servant leadership — that is, leadership dedicated to serving the people — together with the SGI members. The expression *servant leadership* is most apt.

Up until now, history has been for the most part dominated by leadership intent on making the people its servants. This is where the fundamental flaw of today's Japan lies. Efforts and initiatives that serve the people must be the main thrust of 21st century leaders. I proclaim that the SGI is promoting and conducting just such activities.

## **To Start**

Let's go back now and take a look at what happened on this day, Sept. 22, in 1945. It was about a month after the end of World War II and two-and-a-half months after Josei Toda's release from prison. Mr. Toda's mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was dead. The Soka Gakkai organization was in tatters. Mr. Toda's businesses were heavily in debt.

Tokyo and many parts of the country were reduced to charred rubble. Confusion and desperation reigned. People lacked both physical and spiritual sustenance, bereft of ways to make a living and without a spiritual foundation to base their lives on. They were chaotic, desolate times.

Against this harsh backdrop, Mr. Toda wrote serenely in his journal on Sept. 22, 53 years ago: "Faith in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means advance. Unlimited advance. In the morning, I think of the growth I will achieve in the day ahead, and I thoroughly throw myself into enjoying it. In this way, I advance limitlessly.... The Law enables us to advance still higher, still further."

He was filled with invincible conviction: "Today I will achieve tremendous growth. I will live vibrantly. I will live with joy. Faith — Nam-myoho-renge-kyo — enables us to advance without end." This was his spirit.

At a time when everyone was filled with despair and could find no glimmer of hope for the future, Mr. Toda began his lone struggle. His spirit was "I have no money. I have nothing of worldly value at all. But I have the Mystic Law. I shall give people the Mystic Law that is infinite hope, the Mystic Law that is the treasure of the universe. For there is no greater treasure than this. I will summon my courage and get to work on this effort right away."

To start is important in life. If we just spend our time demurring from our mission, if we hesitate and run back into the wings, our lives will be lackluster, unfulfilling. Don't you agree that it's far more satisfying and exhilarating to walk out intrepidly onto that stage, fired with the resolve to do our best, to achieve something of value, to touch and inspire our audience?

## **One Person at a Time**

Mr. Toda pondered how to best go about his task of propagating the Daishonin's teaching. He had no meeting place, no money. So he decided to begin with one-on-one dialogue.

This evidences his wisdom and compassion. He focused his energies on talking to one person at a time. People would tell him about their problems and sufferings, and he would speak to them ardently about the Mystic Law, concentrating his entire being on helping each person become happy.

He would often declare: "Numbers are not important. Cherishing each person is what matters."

Mr. Toda once encouraged someone suffering financially, humorously telling him: "You will definitely become happy before you know it. You don't have to worry. I guarantee it. The benefit of doing the Buddha's work is great. That benefit will come spilling out when you need it. It's like a water faucet. You normally turn the tap off when you're not using it so as not to waste money. Benefit is like that. When the need arises, you just turn on the tap. Rest assured that you'll attain a state of life endowed with such a vast reservoir of benefit."

To another person, Mr. Toda said: "This Buddhism guarantees that, no matter what you may go through, in the end you will attain a state of life where you'll be so happy that you

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won't know what to do! If everything were to improve and reach such a high point right away, then you would as well figure that your time on earth was just about up! It's far better to experience many hardships when you're young. In the end, you will definitely attain a life of unimaginable happiness and joy. The Mystic Law enables us to adorn our lives in this way. It is the benefit of our Gakkai activities."

It is just as he says. I have seen countless people's experiences of this in my 51 years of Buddhist practice. You will definitely attain a state of life "where you'll be so happy that you won't know what to do." If you're still undergoing problems and obstacles, Mr. Toda says humorously, there's no fear of you dying any time soon. But when you want for nothing and savor complete freedom and fulfillment — that's when you've slowly got to start worrying. As long as you've got problems, you can rest at ease; you're going to be around a while longer.

Because we experience various hardships, we can savor great joy when we overcome them. And because we surmount them through faith, we solidify our good fortune and grow as human beings.

### **Especially When We Are Young**

While it may seem ideal to have any and all prayers answered automatically — without any hard work or effort on our part — that would be similar to eating nothing but sweets day in and day out. Without some kind of challenge, some real nourishment, we cannot hope to develop and forge ourselves nor gain a profound understanding and appreciation of faith. It's far better to undergo hardships — especially when we are young.

The Japanese author Eiji Yoshikawa once said to a well-to-do young man: "You are most unfortunate. From a young age, you have tasted too much fine food, seen too many beautiful things. There is no greater misfortune than this. It is truly regrettable for a youth to gradually lose the faculty to savor real joy."

Those ex-members who have betrayed the Soka Gakkai and their fellow members — after gaining power and prestige thanks to the sincere support of the very members they betrayed — were all individuals who avoided any strenuous exertion for the sake of kosen-rufu and instead sought only personal comfort and luxury. Ultimately, the causes they have made will bring them only misery. Mr. Toda warned that those who betray the Soka Gakkai cannot hope to die peaceful deaths — they will unfailingly receive strict karmic retribution for their deeds, he said.

By contrast, our hard work and efforts for the sake of kosen-rufu will shine all the more brightly as time goes by, becoming precious treasures for our lives. At the same time, they will lead to lasting happiness not only for ourselves but our entire families.

*To be continued next week.*