

**FROM SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA
YOUR NOBLE VOYAGE OF LIFE**

SGI President Ikeda composed the following poem to the members of the men's division on March 26.

—Dedicated to my most respected and esteemed men's division members

He was a nameless elementary school principal;
He was unknown, yet a master geographer;
He was a hero of kosen-rufu,
Who practiced as the Buddha taught.

And he was the founder
Of the Soka Gakkai
With its tradition of shakubuku,
The practice of the Lotus Sutra.

He died a martyr to his beliefs
As a towering practitioner of the Mystic Law,
The ultimate law of life
Revealed by Nichiren Daishonin.

In 1928,
At the age of 57,
Our great predecessor Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
Began his selfless struggle to propagate the Law.
Later speaking of his jubilation, he said to his disciples,
“With an inexpressible sense of joy,
I transformed the way I lived my life for almost 60 years!”

At the age of 59,
Our first president Mr. Makiguchi
Founded the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai —
Society for Value-creating Education.

He stood as firm as a rock,
Defeating countless onslaughts,
In his battle against the treacherous authorities,
And in his struggle against base, evil priests
Who looked down on ordinary people.
He advanced with powerful conviction,
Giving his crimson lifeblood to the struggle.

At times,
His family and followers

Looked at their noble father beseechingly,
Fearful of possible persecution.

At times
His followers paled at the sight
Of their stern father
Clad in the armor of indescribable suffering.

In his path lay the obstructions of autocratic authorities;
In his path loomed persecutions by the military.
Yet he refused to retreat,
Boldly advancing instead as a lion,
Pressing forward, ever forward.

Many of his disciples wandered lost
In a desert wasteland.
But he alone,
The lion championing lofty beliefs,
Crossing valley after valley,
His glinting gaze focused on the future,
Never ceased in his quest.

In prison,
Having kept his fight for justice alive
Until the final moment of his life,
Having faithfully upheld the banner of peace
And left the mark of his struggle forever in history,
Mr. Makiguchi died
At the age of 73,
Giving his life for his beliefs.

The membership of 3,000
That had followed him
Had been crushed and cast asunder
By the unrelenting religious persecution of the military.
But Mr. Makiguchi's peerless disciple, Josei Toda,
Whose heart was at one with his own—
A disciple serving his true and eternal mentor—
Shook with rage and wept bitter tears
In his own dark, cramped prison cell,
The news of his mentor's passing
Sending him almost mad with grief.

Driven by sorrow, pain, anger
And a burning desire for vengeance,
Josei Toda began a spiritual odyssey,
Determined to triumph proudly without fail

Over the evil powers
That had caused his beloved mentor,
A great champion of justice,
To die in prison.

Josei Toda was eventually released from prison,
Carrying within him a monumental state of being.
He began an eternal movement to rectify
The insidious and violent abuses of authoritarian power.
It was the bold, new start
Of a war on falsehood and arrogance.

His tireless efforts
Ignited a flame from heart to heart
And comprised a continuous struggle,
Leaving his disciples with his will and testament
To carry on his work if he should fall.
He lived each moment of this precious existence
As if it were his last,
Continuing to fight with the indomitable force
Of a charging lion.

It is already more than 40 years
Since the great Josei Toda,
Passed from our midst
Like the ebbing tide.
Convinced of life's eternity,
We comrades of like mind who were his disciples
Resolved to carry on his work without fail.
I, as befitting a direct disciple,
Stood in the vanguard amid the gathering storm,
Many disciples in turn following my lead.

Both first president Makiguchi
And my mentor, President Toda,
Would have been members
Of what is today
Our proud men's division.

They had no crown, no fame.
Enduring criticism and abuse,
They pressed on,
From one struggle of the Law to another,
In complete accord with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

My mentor Josei Toda
Often used to say:

“Let cowards depart!
Let deserters leave!
Let critics say what they will!”

The burning entity of our beings
Is directly linked to the Daishonin
And to the spirit of kosen-rufu.

We have tears of compassion
And the strength of the noonday sun.
In dark times of hardship, too,
We have beautiful and noble hearts.
We are embraced in the greatest treasure of the universe,
Faith.

Both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda cried out:
“Come, come and join us, heroic youth!
Youth who will advance intrepidly into the storm!
Disciples who will not weep at approaching persecution,
But who will fight on with composure!
Youth who will continue the glorious advance
To the infinite ends of the earth!”

No one can help but be awed by
The solemn life-to-life bond
Of mentor and disciple,
The highest of all human bonds.
Traitors will suffer inevitable defeat and disappear;
Cowards will unquestionably incur negative effects.

Celebrating with magnificent music,
The heavenly deities throughout three existences
Will protect this noble march of mentor and disciple.
Those who are jealous of, and who criticize and attack,
Our procession of kosen-rufu, of mentor and disciple,
Are of zero significance.

Joyous is our song of glory!
Exuberant is the music that fills our life!
We walk in this garden of our eternal destiny —
How admirable is our way of life!

The hearts of all who do so
Enjoy the heavens’ eternal felicitations
Which encompass all things—
Stars, moon, forests and clouds.
This path is true!

It is the path of the self's true mission—
A path without regrets!

Poet and fighter Victor Hugo sang,
“Life is a voyage!”
Proclaiming himself an invincible lion,
He kept moving forward vigorously, without ceasing,
Pushing back the angry, surging waves
That threatened to engulf him!

He lived a regal drama,
Surmounting all persecutions
And plots of exile.
He cried:
“Thunder, roar as you will!
For I'll roar back even louder!”

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai,
Who dedicated his life to revolution
And to the construction of a new China,
Maintained,
“Victory cannot be achieved
By sitting and waiting for it to happen;
It must be won through struggle.”
His heart remained ever youthful
Regardless of his advancing years;
He always stood at the head of the struggle,
Becoming the driving force for victory.

We who are advancing kosen-rufu,
The noblest of all humanity's endeavors,
Must never be afraid!
Must never be defeated!

If we cease in our efforts,
The Daishonin would sorrow
And humankind would be destroyed by barbarism.
We would fall under the pall of eternal darkness,
Set adrift amid interminable suffering
And an unending cycle of misery.

Nichiren Daishonin writes:
“Now Nichiren and his followers
Who invoke Nam-myoho-renge-kyo
Are like a great wind blowing.”
“Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion.”
What supremely confident words these are!

The fainthearted may despair;
The weak-willed may flee.

But we will write a noble history of life,
Day after day, year after year,
Our hearts—yours and mine—burning ever brightly,
As we pursue the journey of life across eternity,
Laughing aloud at the world's frenzied criticisms,
Seeing, appreciating and extolling
All that is most beautiful in this world,
In this age of the Latter Day of the Law,
Which is ruled by a dark destiny.

Sharing heart-to-heart ties
With so many precious, treasured friends,
How joyful and boisterous will be our lives,
Even after death, and across the three existences!
What an exquisite and indestructible
Achievement of honor it is
To share this voyage of life with comrades,
Together celebrating our victory,
Bathed in the moon's beautiful light!

How sad and vain are the lives
Of those left behind!
The Daishonin writes,
"The thoughtless are no more than animals."
Do not become alienated from the harmonious community
Of believers dedicated to kosen-rufu
And fall into the hell of loneliness!
Solitude may seem free of constraints,
But it is like a shattered spirit
That has lost its center.

The Goshu states,
"Buddhism primarily concerns itself
With victory or defeat."
The Daishonin's great persecutions
For the sake of Buddhism
All arose as a result of false accusations!
The human heart can be frightening, sinister and dark.
The persecution of followers like Shijo Kingo
Was also the work of treacherous colleagues.
Why did the priesthood decline?
Because of its arrogance and envy!
Because of its laziness and negligence!

Because of its idleness and chatter!
Because of its smugness and conceit!
Because of its greed and ignorance!
Because of its slander and lies!
Because of its destroying the harmonious unity of believers!

Why did the Gakkai develop?
Because of our selfless dedication! Because of our unceasing devotion!
Because of our treasuring the Law more highly than our own lives!
Because of our brave and diligent exertion!
Because of our perseverance and fortitude!
Because of our spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple!
Because of our unity of itai doshin — many in body, one in mind!

My friends in the men's division,
It is vital that you win in society
And in the workplace,
That you form bonds of trust and friendship with many others,
That you be a citadel that provides a happy haven for your family,
And that, with vigorous good health,
You triumph in the arduous struggles of daily life!

Your life, your being,
Is yours for all time—past, present and future.
Thus everything depends on
How you forge yourself,
How you improve yourself,
How you live a happy life—
This is the aim of human revolution.

Buddhism expounds the law of cause and effect,
Enabling us to transform our lives throughout eternity.
Buddhism keenly elucidates
The essence of this causal law of life.
This law is strict, it says,
Operating across the three thousand realms
In a single life-moment.
Buddhism surpasses all other philosophies
In clarifying the fundamental reality of life.

The Law does not exist outside our own lives.
The law of cause and effect
Is the reality of all phenomena in the universe.
Cause and effect exist simultaneously!
We are swept along by the inexorable flow of time
That comprises causes and effects in each moment.

We must know
That there is a profound connection
Between good and evil,
Happiness and unhappiness,
Hell and Buddhahood.

My dear friends, my comrades!
May you strive for good health and longevity!
For that is the first step to happiness and victory.

Be big-hearted!
Be deep-hearted!
Be warm-hearted!
Be strong-hearted!
There you will find the banner of victory
Of Buddhist practice.

Wherever you go,
Be a pillar of strength who brings peace of mind to all!
Be a person of magnanimous character who inspires hope!

Become a champion of humanism,
Who makes the place where you are now
Shine as the Treasure Tower!

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Daisaku Ikeda
World Poet Laureate