

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NOV. 20 SPEECH
IF THE MENTOR IS A LION,
SO MUST BE THE DISCIPLE**

SGI President Ikeda explains: ‘Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were true mentor and disciple. Mr. Toda and I were also true mentor and disciple. If the mentor is a lion, then the disciple must be a lion, too.’

SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 39th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Nov. 20.

Congratulations on Chubu's brilliant general meeting! And friends from Hokkaido, congratulations on your triumphant Hokkaido Glory General Meeting!

We are joined today by priests genuinely committed to the cause of kosen-rufu. We have with us representatives of the Association for the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu, the Association of Priests Concerned for Nichiren Shoshu and the Protection of the Law, and the Association of Youthful Priests Dedicated to the Reformation of Nichiren Shoshu.

Also present are SGI members from 16 countries and territories. Welcome, and thank you for traveling such long distances to be here with us!

My deepest appreciation also to members of the Makiguchi and Toda families who have come all this way to attend today's gathering.

In addition, I extend my congratulations in advance to the Kansai members, who will tomorrow hold their Grand Kansai General Meeting. The event will take place at the Osaka Castle Hall, and representatives from all 12,000 districts in the Kansai area will attend. It will be a kickoff for a new century of continuous victory. I have the highest expectations for the Kansai members. I will be there with you in spirit, and I am praying for your meeting's great success.

People of truth and justice are often persecuted.

I am today reminded of two courageous individuals in the pages of history who were persecuted on this date, Nov. 20.

The first was on Nov. 20, 1823. This was the day that José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, the great “patriarch of Brazilian independence” to whom the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education looks upon as a model, was driven into exile by an authoritarian government. It is an unchanging reality of human society — past, present, East and West: People who champion truth and ceaselessly pursue justice are often cruelly persecuted.

However, José Bonifácio, a leading advocate of Brazil's independence from Portugal, was willing to lay down his life for his cause if need be. He advanced calmly on his chosen course, never being swayed by the fickle winds of praise or blame.

The second story was 120 years later, in 1943. It unfolded in Japan. It was on Nov. 20 that year that our eternal mentor, Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, then already in prison, was unjustly prosecuted by the militarist police authorities. One of the charges against him was that he had held discussion meetings around the country — the motivation for which had simply been his desire to enable all people to become happy.

The prosecution's indictment against Mr. Makiguchi stated, "From around May 15, 1941, to June 30, 1943, the accused held more than 240 discussion meetings...."

At a time when Japan's journalistic and literary circles — and the large majority of religious groups — were actively supporting the war, President Makiguchi's adherence to his convictions remained as steadfast as Mt. Fuji.

The teaching of mentor and disciple is very strict.

Mr. Makiguchi died in prison a year later, on Nov. 18, 1944. And his funeral, strangely enough, was also held Nov. 20. It was a small, forlorn funeral conducted with only a few people present.

Mr. Toda was still in jail. Yet unaware of his mentor's death, he prayed fervently that all the charges might be placed against him, Toda, alone — and that the elderly Mr. Makiguchi might be released as soon as possible. This is how a true disciple behaves. This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. If this spirit were to be lost, the Soka Gakkai would no longer be the Soka Gakkai.

Later, whenever Mr. Toda recalled the sad nature of Mr. Makiguchi's funeral, he wept bitter tears of rage and grief. His voice thundering with fury, he railed against "those despicable priests who were alarmed by Mr. Makiguchi's persecution for the sake of the Law and spoke ill of him, those cowards who discarded Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and deserted Mr. Makiguchi!"

It has been the deep, passionate wish of both President Toda and myself to someday, without fail, gain international recognition for the true greatness of Mr. Makiguchi, a philosopher of rare stature whom the authorities of the day labeled a traitor and tried to consign to oblivion.

Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda were true mentor and disciple. Mr. Toda and I were also true mentor and disciple. If the mentor is a lion, then the disciple must be a lion, too.

Where today, I ask, are the true disciples to follow in my footsteps? The SGI has no need for cowards who just stand by and watch while their mentor is persecuted, who try to cleverly sidestep criticism and attack.

Mr. Makiguchi died for his beliefs. Today marks the 55th anniversary of his funeral. On this highly significant day, distinguished guests from Brazil, a country celebrating spring on the other side of the world, have come to conduct a solemn, deeply meaningful ceremony. [At this meeting, President and Mrs. Ikeda were conferred the Grand Cross of Civic and Cultural Merit and the titles of Dom (Sir) and Dama (Madam) by the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education.] My wife and I humbly accept the honors that have been bestowed upon us today together with our fellow SGI members in 128 countries and territories around the globe who share our sufferings and joys. As a disciple who embraces his mentors' vision as his own, I dedicate my medal to Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda.

The teaching of mentor and disciple is very strict in the Daishonin's Buddhism. The Daishonin writes: "If a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell. If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 909).

Let us therefore proudly report to Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda the honors we have

received today, these laurels of victory of the SGI's path of mentor–disciple crowning the 20th century!

My deep appreciation to President Galdino Cuchiaro of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, his wife, Mrs. Mercia Maria Cuchiaro, and other members of their delegation here today. Thank you all very much.

Dogged determination is needed to change the times.

José Bonifácio, whom I mentioned earlier, waged a head-on struggle against arrogant, high-handed despots. “Tyrants!” he cried. “Monsters that threaten to bring down humanity! Beasts!” He fought relentlessly against evil, never retreating a single step, never letting up in his attack on injustice. He was a person of outstanding humanity, always taking a strong stand against arrogant villains while showing infinite gentleness and compassion to decent, upright ordinary citizens. This is also the spirit of Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai.

José Bonifácio called out, in the moving poem “O Brasil”:

*Enlighten your people; give them succor,
Swiftly and surely, to the Indios, to the Negros,
To the poor abandoned — Then wealth
Will fill your treasure-house.*

We of the SGI have also been ever ready to extend a hand, to reach out to those who are suffering. It was with this spirit that José Bonifácio, a great pioneer of Brazil, battled tirelessly against “base enslavement” by tyrants who sought to deprive the people for generations to come. He also condemned the schemes of those whom he described as “hypocritical tricksters who assert that black is white and white is black.”

José Bonifácio's selfless, indomitable spiritual struggle is directly inherited by the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, and by President Cuchiaro himself. From his student days, Mr. Cuchiaro was active as a journalist who championed the cause of the people. When his homeland was under military rule, he fought energetically for democracy. His activities during this time are well known in Brazil.

Mr. Cuchiaro has experienced unjust imprisonment at the hands of the authorities. I was put in prison, too. It is impossible to change the times unless one fights against authoritarian power with such dogged determination that one might even land in prison. While the authorities were holding him, Mr. Cuchiaro was subjected to cruel torture to get him to reveal the names of his colleagues. But he endured all that was inflicted upon him and did not betray his friends. That is the kind of noble, courageous person Mr. Cuchiaro is.

Earlier, he gave an animated speech, his voice and gestures communicating a sparkling vitality. Mr. Cuchiaro, together with his wonderful wife and comrade Mrs. Cuchiaro, is a leading bastion of conscience, one who has rigorously defended the path of peace and justice for humanity. He has honored the work of individuals who have dedicated their lives to good. A Buddhist writing cites the just meting out reward and punishment as a requisite of leaders in society.

Tireless activists, Mr. and Mrs. Cuchiaro have made valuable contributions to causes such as environmental protection, disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons. Let us give them a hearty round of applause as an expression of our sincere appreciation and praise!

Understanding, friendship and trust constitute kosen-rufu.

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All human beings, irrespective of who they are, possess inherent dignity. What is most important for us to let this dignity shine forth fully? It comes down to this: the philosophy we embrace, the principles we follow and the way we behave and conduct ourselves.

Brazil is a great nation of hope that has taken the lead in creating a humanistic culture of peace. As President Cuchiari has so generously acknowledged, SGI-Brazil has been making admirable contributions to local communities as a cultural and educational organization. SGI-Brazil has won such overwhelming trust and applause for its activities that people throughout the South American country are heard saying: "If you have a problem, go talk to SGI-Brazil!" "If you want to bring joy and happiness to people, consult SGI-Brazil!"

The honors my wife and I have received today are also in recognition of the tremendous efforts of our fellow members in Brazil. This morning, I offered special prayers for the health, happiness, good fortune and safety of all our SGI-Brazil members.

In any event, it is crucial that we bring an end to the war and conflict that have resulted from religious and ideological differences and that until now have been reenacted again and again in the pages of human history. The true purpose of religion is to enhance education and culture, and to enable society to prosper in a more peaceful way. This will be the golden rule of the 21st century.

I therefore reaffirm that making sincere, steady efforts to spread understanding, friendship and trust in our local communities—to expand person-to-person links and heart-to-heart bonds—constitutes *kosen-rufu*.

With us today we also have a number of SGI-Singapore representatives, who are visiting Japan on a special training course.

The young Chinese-Singaporean resistance leader Lim Bo Seng, who during World War II fought the cruel invasion of Malaya and Singapore by the Japanese army and died a heroic death in prison at age 35, said, "Life is happier and more meaningful when one can be of service to society." What wise words these are!

While in prison, Lim also wrote, "My duty and my honor would not permit me to look back." In other words: "I will look ahead! I will not regret what's past, nor will I complain! That is how a person of true courage should live!" This was his spirit.

As the curtain rises on the coming year, in which we—along with friends throughout Asia and the world—will celebrate the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary, let us, too, keep advancing with "Forward, ever forward!" our motto! Our true challenge begins now. It's time for us to make a fresh departure.

Science is approaching the vast Buddhist view.

The new age of spiritual discovery that will commence in the 21st century will be a stage opening onto a vast universe.

Just a few days ago, American astronomers for the first time confirmed the existence of a planet outside the solar system, attracting worldwide attention. Scientists from the University of California at Berkeley, which I visited in 1993, contributed to the planet's discovery.

Buddhism expounds that throughout the universe there are countless ideal worlds, which it calls Buddha lands, where the Mystic Law has spread. We can perhaps say of this latest discovery that science has yet again approached the vast Buddhist view of the universe and life itself.

The existence of planets outside the solar system has been indirectly detected in the past,

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but scientists have now succeeded in capturing direct photographic images of a planet around another star. From astronomical data collected, there is little likelihood that life exists on this particular planet, but clear proof of the existence of a planet beyond our solar system gives credence to the possibility of planets resembling our own existing elsewhere in the universe.

President Toda often used to say, “The more science advances, the more it proves the validity of the teachings of Buddhism.” Many scientists, in fact, are looking with increased interest to the Buddhist view of the universe.

The Daishonin encouraged one of his followers, Lady Nichinyo, telling her that it was nowhere but in her own heart that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the entire universe were gathered (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 915). Faith in the Gohonzon contains the benefit of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The power inherent in our lives is far greater than the ominous power of nuclear weapons. As we work to enable all people to realize the full, vibrant potential of their lives, we must continue to build a solid alliance of world citizens and promote exchange based on the culture of peace to ultimately even overpower armaments expansion. This, I assert, is our challenge toward ushering in a Century of Life.

Youth should never lose their sense of adventure.

It was on April 22, 1500, that the young Portuguese navigator and fleet commander Pedro Álvares Cabral boldly crossed the ocean—surmounting the terror and uncertainty of sailing in unknown waters—and arrived in Brazil, land of promise.

I was deeply honored this April to receive an award named after this great explorer—the Cross of Merit of Discoverer of Brazil, Pedro Álvares Cabral—from the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education. SGI-Brazil General Director Eduardo Taguchi accepted the medal on my behalf. I take this opportunity to reiterate my profound appreciation to the society.

That first journey to Brazil was thus achieved by a youth. It is always the courage and solidarity of youth that open a new world, a new age. When youth lose their sense of adventure, their spirit grows old and their lives become little more than a living death. At this time that will never come again, I call out to you: “My beloved youth! Boldly leave behind an immortal history!”

Next year, 2000, Brazil will celebrate a momentous milestone—the 500th anniversary of its “discovery.” And we of the SGI will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Josei Toda’s birth.

To respond to the deep expectations of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, we of the SGI will continue working for a world of peace and prosperity with even greater courage and enthusiasm.

Let’s make a promise to each other to gloriously adorn the Soka Gakkai’s 70th anniversary in good health, with all of us having won every challenge.

In closing, I offer my sincere prayers for the unending development of the Brazilian Society of Heraldry, Medals, Culture and Education, and for the happiness and success of Mr. and Mrs. Cuchiaro and everyone present today.

Muito Obrigado! (“Thank you very much!” in Portuguese.)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Kosen-rufu

From This Speech:

It is crucial that we bring an end to the war and conflict that have resulted from religious and ideological differences and that until now have been reenacted again and again in the pages of human history. The true purpose of religion is to enhance education and culture, and to enable society to prosper in a more peaceful way. This will be the golden rule of the 21st century. I therefore reaffirm that making sincere, steady efforts to spread understanding, friendship and trust in our local communities — to expand person-to-person links and heart-to-heart bonds — constitutes kosen-rufu.

- 1) SGI President Ikeda talks here about the true purpose of religion. Do you think that many people today view religion in the same way he does?
- 2) How do you think religion will be different in the 21st century from what it is like now?
- 3) How do your own “steady efforts to spread understanding” help to end war and conflict?
- 4) Have you had an experience where you could see this kind of a correlation between your efforts and the world changing?

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