

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MARCH 24 SPEECH—PART 2 FOR THE SAKE OF THE NEXT GENERATION

‘We are on the right path only when the next generation can enjoy an even more solid, stable peace and happiness than we do today,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘This is the view of Buddhism.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 44th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, March 24.

Inheriting the spirit of the prophecies of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin, I wish to lead humanity in the direction of peace for the sake of the next generation, the generation after that and for all generations to come. The desire to turn the entire universe, for billions of years in the future, in the direction of peace—this is the vow and the vast, boundless state of life of the Buddha.

It will be a tragedy, if, although we may be doing well now, the next generation fails. We are on the right path only when the next generation can enjoy an even more solid, stable peace and happiness than we do today. This is the view of Buddhism. This is the Buddha’s immense compassion. I want to build a base that ensures that the SGI will develop even further and work even harder than it did in the 20th century to contribute to people’s happiness in the 21st century.

Selfishness—caring only about one’s own convenience, position, wealth and benefit—is not the way of genuine faith. It is not the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism. Kosen-rufu is an undertaking to blaze a path to the happiness, prosperity and peace of all humanity, based on a great philosophy that will shine across eternity. This is an awesome enterprise.

Not even the greatest scholar, philosopher or political leader can accomplish such a feat. Only the SGI can do it! And let us do just that! [Participants enthusiastically raised their hands in agreement.] You’ve just raised your hands. This may seem like a small thing, but from the perspective of Buddhism, everything has meaning. Those who have raised their hands will be leaders in lifetime after lifetime. Buddhism tells us that by raising your hand now in a pledge to work for the happiness of the people, you have made a cause to have many people in the future raise their hands in support of you.

When one devotes one’s life to the Mystic Law and lives according to it unswervingly, the smallest, seemingly inconsequential act can result in immeasurable future benefits. Similarly, to the extent that you have paid your highest respects to the Gohonzon, people will respect, honor and protect you in lifetime after lifetime.

This may sound like a fairytale, but the law of cause and effect that governs life is uncompromising. Its workings are in fact so powerful that it is difficult to believe.

Introducing one person to Buddhism contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement.

I want to share with you a passage from Nichiren Daishonin’s “On the Buddha’s Prophecy,” a letter he wrote on May 1273, when he was in exile on the island of Sado: “At such a time [the Latter Day of the Law, when the country is overrun with slanderers of the Law], the heavenly gods and benevolent deities abandon the country, and only perverse heavenly beings and perverse demons remain, possessing the minds and bodies of the

ruler, his subjects, and monks and nuns, and causing them to curse, revile, and heap shame on the votary of the Lotus Sutra” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 400).

Who today are the practitioners of the true teachings of the Daishonin’s Buddhism who have been cursed and reviled by the authorities and evil priests, just as the Goshō predicts? It is us, the members of the SGI, an organization committed to carrying out the Buddha’s will and decree.

I am certain that the story of the relentless, continual persecution that we have experienced—particularly that of the last 20 years—will be handed down from generation to generation.

The Daishonin continues: “If, however, in the time after the Buddha’s passing, a person renounces his attachments to the four flavors and three teachings [the entire body of teachings preached prior to the Lotus Sutra], and converts to faith in the Lotus Sutra that is true Mahayana, the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, as well as the bodhisattvas numerous as the dust particles of a thousand worlds who emerged from beneath the ground, will protect him as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Under their protection, he will [establish and] spread abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world] the object of devotion of the essential teaching, or the five characters of Myōhō-*renge-kyō*” (WND, 400).

The votary of the Lotus Sutra referred to here is of course the Daishonin. In a broader, general sense, however, we can read this passage as the Dai-shonin’s encouragement for those who are striving to carry out *kosen-rufu* across the globe in modern times—the SGI members, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who are rising to fulfill this mission.

Today, the SGI has earned the trust and applause of the world’s Brahmās and Śakras [the two major tutelary gods of Buddhism, representatives of the heavenly gods and benevolent deities who function to protect the practitioners of Buddhism]—in other words, leaders in every field of human endeavor around the globe. This, I believe, is the protection that the Daishonin speaks of.

In any event, the Daishonin, along with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space, and the heavenly gods and benevolent deities, have rigorously protected the SGI because our actions are in complete accord with the Dai-shonin’s teachings.

The road to the SGI’s further development in the 21st century opens brightly, limitlessly before us. We are aiming to propagate the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. Let us advance with that great goal firmly in mind. The world is not somewhere far from us. Just introducing one person to the Daishonin’s Buddhism or visiting the home of one person for the sake of *kosen-rufu* contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Let us courageously advance along the path to *kosen-rufu* and attain eternal benefit!

The brilliant sun of truth ultimately reveals what is right.

Today, fellow members from the golden land of Malaysia, who are visiting Japan for study and training, join us. Thank you for your wonderful efforts!

The new SGI-Malaysia Grand Culture Center, a symbol of the SGI’s phenomenal development in that country, is scheduled to open this December. With 14 floors—12 above ground and two below—it is roughly the same height as Soka University’s new Central Tower. Congratulations!

Also with us today are fellow members from Italy, the birthplace of the Renaissance, who are here on a training course as well. Thank you for all your hard work!

In Italy, as in other parts of the world, lively, high-spirited youth division general meetings were held to commemorate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day. I have heard that meetings took place in 13 centers around Italy, and that more than 13,000 members attended. Congratulations! I have been told that the youth division general meeting in Florence was attended by the city's mayor, Leonardo Domenici, and that he officially announced the city's decision to present me with its Seal of Peace.

Discussion meetings were also held throughout March all across Italy at 2,500 locations to commemorate March 16, with more than 27,000 people attending. I wholeheartedly applaud the Italian members on their magnificent progress, which is truly a model for all.

Speaking of Italy, I am of course reminded of Leonardo da Vinci.

Incidentally, when former Philippine president Fidel Ramos visited Soka University on March 23, he viewed the statue of Leonardo da Vinci that adorns the new Central Tower's main lobby.

Leonardo declares, "Nothing is hidden under the sun" (*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 1, p. 357). In other words, the brilliant sun of truth ultimately reveals what is right. Leonardo, who fought his entire life against slander and insult, firmly believed that lies and falsehood would not endure.

Leonardo likens lies to a mole: "The mole has very small eyes and it always lives underground; and it lives as long as it is in the dark but when it comes into the light it dies immediately, because it becomes known; —and so it is with lies" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 319). Lies are short-lived. They cannot survive in the sun of truth. Please never become the kind of person who cannot live under the sun.

If you say you're going to do something, then you must do it!

Leonardo wrote several fables ridiculing arrogance and pride. In one, he narrates the story of a proud cedar: "The cedar, puffed up with pride of its beauty, separated itself from the trees around it and in so doing it turned away towards the wind, which not being [hindered] in its fury, flung [the tree] uprooted on the earth" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 374).

The priesthood took all it could get from the SGI, which had made tremendous contributions to the head temple, and then separated itself from us. But, in so doing, it has, just like the cedar tree, brought about its own ruin.

Another of Leonardo's fables warns against the folly of straying from one's destined path in life: "A stone of some size recently uncovered by the water lay on a certain spot somewhat raised, and just where a delightful grove ended by a stony road; here it was surrounded by plants decorated by various flowers of diverse colours. And as it saw the great quantity of stones collected together in the roadway below, it began to wish it could let itself fall down there, saying to itself: 'What have I to do here with these plants? I want to live in the company of those, my sisters.' And letting itself fall, its rapid course ended among these longed for companions. When it had been there sometime it began to find itself constantly toiling under the wheels of the carts, the iron-shoed feet of horses, and travelers. This one rolled it over, that one trod upon it; sometimes it lifted itself a little and then it was covered with mud or the dung of some animal, and it was in vain that it looked to the spot whence it had come as a place of solitude and [tranquillity]" (*Notebooks*, vol. 2, p. 339).

How sad and lonely are the lives of those former members who have left the SGI, our joyous organization that accords with the Buddha's intent and decree! This is all too apparent when we look at the kind of existences led by those who abandoned their faith.

Today in Italy, in Malaysia and all around the world, a new, 21st century Renaissance — based on the principle of human revolution — is beginning to bloom. Let us move forward cheerfully and enthusiastically, always together with the Daishonin’s Buddhism of the sun, along the great road to happiness!

In closing, let me share the words of the great Chinese philosopher and writer Lu Xun with you: “If you say you’re going to do something, then do it! Blaze a new trail!” This was Lu Xun’s creed. Let us advance with the same commitment into a grand Century of Soka!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES

From This Speech:

The road to the SGI’s further development in the 21st century opens brightly, limitlessly before us. We are aiming to propagate the Mystic Law throughout the entire world. Let us advance with that great goal firmly in mind. The world is not somewhere far from us. Just introducing one person to the Daishonin’s Buddhism or visiting the home of one person for the sake of kosen-rufu contributes to the worldwide spread of our movement. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Let us courageously advance along the path to kosen-rufu and attain eternal benefit!

- 1) What does SGI President Ikeda mean when he says that “the world is not somewhere far from us”?
- 2) How does practicing this Buddhism help us to become true global citizens?
- 3) How does introducing one person to this Buddhism or home visiting one person contribute to kosen-rufu?
- 4) Have you ever had a home visit that changed the way you practice Buddhism? That changed your life?
- 5) “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” What’s the next step that you want to take in your Buddhist practice?