

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA’S APRIL 25 SPEECH—PART 2  
TOWARD MAY 3, 2001:  
THE RAINBOW OF HOPE**

**‘Aiming toward the great rainbow of hope of May 3, 2001,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘let us triumph in all our endeavors and create a wonderful personal history.’**

*The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 45th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting commemorating May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, April 25.*

Two well-known American scholars of the sociology of religion, Dr. Phillip Hammond and Dr. David Machacek, have recently published a book titled *Soka Gakkai in America—Accommodation and Conversion*, which has attracted a great deal of interest. [A Japanese translation of the book has just been published.]

In the book, there is this passage: “As the lotus flower is to the muck at the bottom of a pond, so are art and culture to Soka Gakkai Buddhists living in the age of *mappo* [the Latter Day of the Law]. Through art and culture, Soka Gakkai cultivates a happier, more peaceful and harmonious reality than that which now exists in the modern world” (p. 31).

I wish to applaud our two newly appointed SGI arts division leaders—Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter—for standing in the vanguard of these efforts to create “a happier, more peaceful and harmonious reality.”

Today, we have representatives of the Soka Gakkai’s arts division present. I’m happy to see you. Thank you for coming.

Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism teaches that not advancing is regressing. Even if we chant a lot of daimoku (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), we cannot really be said to be moving forward or truly practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism if we fail to take concrete action for kosen-rufu. That is not true faith. Because action equals faith. Each of you—and the SGI as a whole—is working for kosen-rufu and advancing toward that goal on a daily basis. The important thing is to keep pressing forward, no matter what happens along the way, and to emerge triumphant in the end. This is Buddhism. The purpose of our faith is to achieve ultimate victory in life.

The new century will soon be here. The Soka Gakkai has won in all its struggles of the 20th century. Let’s all stay in good health and strive to lead long, vigorous lives, so that we can win in all the struggles of the 21st century—both in our personal lives and in our efforts to widely propagate the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

**Nothing is stronger than the prayers of Soka Gakkai women.**

On April 22, SGI training course members and I welcomed officials from the Inner Mongolia Art Academy. [SGI President Ikeda received the title of Preeminent Honorary Professor from this academy, located in the city of Huhhot, the capital of China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, at the Soka International Friendship Hall in Tokyo.]

The vast plains of Inner Mongolia are extolled in a song that has been passed down through the generations:

*Beautiful is the shimmering, eternal blue sky.  
Beautiful is the cuckoo’s song.*

*Beautiful is a young maid's tender heart.  
But most beautiful of all are mothers.*

Nothing is more beautiful than mothers, it proclaims. May 3 is Soka Gakkai Mother's Day—congratulations to mothers around the world! May you always be full of vitality and good health!

I propose that May 3 be a day when all women's division members take a complete rest from work and activities, and where husbands and children take care of all the housework. What do you say?

I ask the women's division members to have a really enjoyable day.

In a letter to Nichinyo, the Daishonin writes: "Even under such [trying] circumstances, as a woman you have inherited the life of the Lotus Sutra. In fact, you have inherited the life of the parents [indicating the Lotus Sutra] of Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions. Is there anyone else in the entire land of Jambudvipa who possesses such good fortune?" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 916).

There is nothing more noble or respectable than the "mothers" of our organization—the women's division members—who dedicate their lives to kosen-rufu. They shine with unsurpassed brilliance as suns of happiness and philosophy. Nothing in this world is stronger than the prayers of the Soka Gakkai mothers. Soka Gakkai presidents Josei Toda and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi often used to say this.

The Daishonin cautions Shijo Kingo, a great predecessor in faith of our men's division members, as follows: "With women, you should never go so far as to reprimand them for their faults, much less quarrel with them" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1176).

I want to reconfirm that, just as the Daishonin teaches, the Soka family is committed to thoroughly treasuring the women's division. No one is working as hard. They are worthy beyond measure.

I therefore hope that male leaders will absolutely refrain from bullying them and bossing them about. Rather, men should always thoroughly treasure and respect the women's division members. If anything, they should serve them with the utmost deference.

One tends to find that it is precisely those male leaders who are the most arrogant and overbearing in public who are constantly scolded by their wives and as meek as mice at home. Those who arrogantly bully the children of the Buddha in this beautiful, noble, pure realm of the SGI ultimately find themselves leading wretched, miserable lives.

### **Disrupting the harmony of believers is the gravest offense.**

The Daishonin repeatedly urged his followers to respect and get along with one another, to advance with unity of purpose—in the spirit of many in body, one in mind. Only then, he stressed, could they be assured the protection of the Buddhist gods.

All members are noble children of the Buddha. We are all equal. Our lives are all precious and worthy of respect. The Daishonin sought to instill this basic recognition in his followers. When meeting fellow members, the children of the Buddha, I always strive to convey my greatest respect and appreciation for them.

Only in the Soka Gakkai and the SGI can we find an ideal example of the harmonious unity of believers. In Buddhism, disrupting the harmonious unity of believers who uphold the Mystic Law is the gravest offense. The Nikken sect caused disunity among the believers who were dedicated to realizing kosen-rufu. This offense consigns them to a

state of hell for all eternity.

It is crucial that the beautiful solidarity of the SGI's kosen-rufu movement never be destroyed. Mr. Toda declared, "The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my own life." Those who seek to ridicule, exploit or destroy our organization will fall into lives of hellish suffering without fail.

### **The SGI possesses all the qualities needed of a 21st century religion.**

What qualities are needed for religions of the 21st century? In what direction should religions head?

This is a subject of much discussion around the world. Dr. Karel Dobbelaere, an internationally respected Belgian scholar and former president of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion, came up with a list of six specific qualities that he maintains religions will need in order to survive in the modern world. Having conducted in-depth research on our organization, Dr. Dobbelaere concludes that the Soka Gakkai and the SGI possess all these characteristics.

What is the first quality? It is for religions to have a communal basis and an ability to invigorate the community and bring people together.

Dr. Dobbelaere highly rates the SGI discussion meetings, in which members offer one another mutual support and encouragement, and unite to form a true human community. We thus pass the first requirement, he says.

The second characteristic is for religions to inspire people to live vibrant, joyous lives and bring forth dynamic energy. Dr. Dobbelaere sees the daily practice of gongyo performed by SGI members and the various SGI activities they participate in as a great source of vitality and energy.

Indeed, the SGI members tend to brim with life and enthusiasm. The Nikken sect, in stark contrast, has devolved into utterly lifeless, enervated "funeral Buddhism."

What is the third quality? It is for religions not to restrict themselves solely to the sphere of the individual but to provide motivation for both public and private spheres to improve society as a whole. On this point, too, Dr. Dobbelaere applauds the SGI for the wide-ranging activities it pursues in society, especially its activities to promote education, culture and peace, all of which produce unique value in society.

In particular, Dr. Dobbelaere says that since we parted ways with the priesthood, the SGI has been making even greater contributions to society. As an example, he cites the relief efforts conducted by Soka Gakkai members in the aftermath of the devastating Great Hanshin Earthquake in the Kansai area in 1995 and our promotion of value-creating education in Brazil and other countries around the world.

Incidentally, I have received reports of the dedicated efforts our members are making to offer assistance to those affected by the eruption of Mt. Usu in Hokkaido, Japan.

The fourth quality is for religions to stem excessive individualism by stressing social responsibility. Again, Dr. Dobbelaere finds the SGI doing just that. The SGI is in complete contrast to the Nikken sect, which thinks only of its own welfare and prosperity, and has absolutely no sense of social responsibility.

The fifth characteristic is for religions to demonstrate broad-mindedness. Dr. Dobbelaere clearly recognizes that the SGI suffered much at the hands of the priesthood owing to the latter's intolerance, and he was pleased when we cast off those authoritarian chains.

A grand total of 70 million pilgrims from the Soka Gakkai and the SGI visited the head

temple before the split with the Nikken sect. Our members also made enormous financial contributions to the priesthood. The Nikken sect's actions in arbitrarily cutting off and casting aside the Soka Gakkai members, who had served the priesthood so sincerely and selflessly, are unforgivably evil.

In any event, the SGI will always respect the culture and conventions of each respective country in which our members practice. The SGI members pride themselves on being good citizens of their communities and countries while working in cooperation with people from all spheres and walks of life, sincerely striving to widen the circle of trust and friendship in society.

Some people mistakenly view *shakubuku*, the way we propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism, as exclusionist. However, when we go to the very core of *shakubuku*, we find that there is no higher act of compassion and tolerance. We rise above differences in circumstances and position to sincerely listen to others. Though we may encounter opposition and ridicule along the way, we never resort to violence to get our point across. We rely solely on earnest dialogue to lead others to happiness.

Tolerance is different from compromise. Tolerance must go hand in hand with a thoroughgoing commitment to articulate the truth. Otherwise, it cannot be called genuine tolerance.

The sixth condition Dr. Dobbelaere lists is for religions to be concerned with the welfare of the global community, not just seeking the development of their own communities. The fact that we have members from 50 countries and territories here today is surely clear proof that the SGI fulfills this condition.

Dr. Dobbelaere commends the SGI for its trailblazing activities for peace. He also acknowledges the SGI's aim of creating a peaceful world where all people can live in harmony.

Based on Dr. Dobbelaere's analysis, we can conclude that the SGI today is a religion equipped with all the qualities needed for the 21st century.

### **Youth will determine the SGI's future victory.**

Dr. Dobbelaere has high expectations for the SGI youth division members, saying that they hold the key to world peace in the 21st century.

Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, too, stressed that kosen-rufu must advance through youth leadership. I share exactly the same sentiments. You, my dear youth division members, are people of mission who will shoulder full responsibility for all aspects of our movement in the 21st century. You will determine the SGI's future victory.

Consequently, I ask the men's and women's division members to train, foster and warmly watch over the youth. Unless the youth grow, the SGI will have no future, no 21st century. Youth, please stand in the vanguard of all struggles for kosen-rufu! Please win without fail. Make the new century a century of the youth division, a century of youthful leaders. Youth division members, I'm counting on you!

### **Pitiful is the fate of those who betray the Soka Gakkai.**

President Toda once said: "Betray the Soka Gakkai, and see what happens! You'll fall into hell without fail." He was incredibly strict. This was his unshakable conviction.

Pitiful is the fate of those who, though deeply indebted to the organization, betray the Soka Gakkai, a gathering of Buddhists who have directly inherited the Daishonin's teachings and are striving for the goal of kosen-rufu. No matter how such traitors may later

repent their actions, they can never fully atone for what they have done.

The great German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes, “The coward threatens when he is safe.” This describes the Nikken sect—this describes all who have betrayed us.

The German poet Friedrich von Schiller, a close friend of Goethe’s, has a character in his play *The Robbers* say: “I never despair even when things are at the worst. Courage grows with danger. Powers of resistance increase by pressure.”

### **Win through everything in life based on courageous faith.**

Mr. Toda left the injunction “Never let up in the struggle against evil!” No matter what persecution I encountered, I never slackened in my efforts to fight injustice and wrongdoing. The Soka Gakkai has waged this battle 365 days a year, year in and year out. We have never given in to any of the base, cowardly intrigues directed against us.

I have won. I have indisputably won. I have adorned this profoundly important milestone of the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding with my victory. I want all of you to follow my example and win through everything in life based on courageous faith.

Helen Keller, the renowned author and educator who refused to be defeated by the disabilities of blindness and deafness, says in *My Religion*: “Happy the man who can say to himself, ‘Here, too, was the victory!’ Here is the shrine of the life we have chosen.” These words strike a resonant chord with Buddhism.

Your good health contributes to kosen-rufu. Your longevity contributes to kosen-rufu. Therefore, please take good care of your health. I ask all of you to lead long lives.

Yesterday, a huge rainbow appeared over this Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall. I have never in my life seen such a magnificent rainbow. It was so spectacular that it took everyone’s breath away.

Aiming toward the great rainbow of hope of May 3, 2001, let us triumph in all our endeavors and create a wonderful personal history.

I conclude my speech with my sincere prayers for your good health and successful endeavors.

Thank you.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS ACTION EQUALS FAITH

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that not advancing is regressing. Even if we chant a lot of daimoku, we cannot really be said to be moving forward or truly practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, if we fail to take concrete action for kosen-rufu. That is not true faith. Because action equals faith. Each of you — and the SGI as a whole — is working for kosen-rufu and advancing toward that goal on a daily basis. The important thing is to keep pressing forward, no matter what happens along the way, and to emerge triumphant in the end. This is Buddhism. The purpose of our faith is to achieve ultimate victory in life.

- 1) Have you ever experienced that “not advancing is regressing” in your Buddhist practice?
- 2) Have you ever experienced a time when you chanted a lot but did not move forward because you were not taking concrete action?
- 3) “Action equals faith”— what does this mean to you? How would you explain it?
- 4) What goals are you taking action for right now? What action do you feel you need to take that you are not taking yet?