

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JULY 18 SPEECH—PART 1 HEARTS OF QUIET COMMITMENT AND PASSIONATE RESOLVE

‘Let us put our minds to work,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘bringing forth unlimited wisdom, and strive to expand the flow of kosen-rufu with quiet commitment and passionate resolve.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 48th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, July 18.

Today, I want to talk with you in an informal, relaxed manner.

The other day, a well-known Japanese intellectual said to me, “The leaders meetings of the Soka Gakkai are unparalleled summits of life-to-life exchange, summits of heart-to-heart communication between human beings.” As you can see, aware and intelligent individuals give credit where it's due. Let us advance, proudly regarding our leaders meetings as unpretentious yet infinitely noble summits of the people. [This Headquarters Leaders Meeting was held a few days before the Okinawa G-8 Summit Meeting began.]

The corrupting nature of power always lurks in government authority. Religion, too, has both good and evil sides. Corrupt government oppresses the people. Corrupt religion gradually poisons people's innermost being. Both treat human beings as little more than a means for enriching themselves.

The most correct path is humanism. That is why the Soka Gakkai's advance is so important.

SGI-USA has been moving forward at an astonishing pace.

Soka University of America's new campus in Aliso Viejo, in California's Orange County, is nearing completion. [It is scheduled to open in May 2001.] I propose that at the new campus—choosing an appropriately significant date—we fly the flags of the 50 states of the United States, along with the Soka Gakkai flags for each prefecture and division in Japan. In addition, I propose that we erect a plaque engraved with the names of Japanese cities, towns and communities where our organization has made great strides in kosen-rufu, along with the names of outstanding representatives of those local organizations, thus preserving their legacy for all time.

SGI-USA has been moving forward at an astonishing pace under the leadership of General Director Danny Nagashima. I pledge to support and encourage that progress with all my strength.

America is today a pivotal world center and, for that reason, I want to leave a record there for posterity of the people and places that have greatly advanced kosen-rufu. [The names of 20 cities, towns and communities in Japan where the Soka Gakkai organization has shown tremendous growth and development were then announced.] Congratulations! We will make another announcement of leading communities next year.

As long as we are engaged in this struggle, let us challenge ourselves cheerfully, triumph cheerfully and leave a momentous history of achievement for future generations. Let us put our minds to work, bringing forth unlimited wisdom, and strive to expand the flow of kosen-rufu with quiet commitment and passionate resolve.

Let us achieve a resounding victory in 2001.

We have with us today several women educators from abroad. From the United States, we have Ms. Sherry Breskin, a high school principal. And from France, we have Ms. Betty Mori, a junior high school English teacher who is the women's leader of SGI-France, Ms. Marie-Lise Rescoussié, a kindergarten principal, and Ms. Annie Becquet, an elementary school principal. Thank you for coming all this way. I deeply appreciate your efforts!

Seventy years ago, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, then an elementary school principal, published his treatise *The System of Value-creating Education*. How happy he would be to see you, educators from distant shores, here with us today! I thank you on behalf of Mr. Makiguchi.

My gratitude also to all the other visiting SGI members who have joined us at today's meeting. Thank you for traveling from so far away!

The Lotus Sutra says, "If you see a person who accepts and upholds this sutra, you should rise and greet him from afar, showing him the same respect you would a Buddha" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 324). I hope you will always treasure and respect your fellow members who seek the way and exert themselves for kosen-rufu. Greet them warmly, and welcome them with open arms.

The SGI's goal is kosen-rufu. Nichiren Daishonin tells us, "All phenomena in the universe are manifestations of the Buddhist Law" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 564). Therefore, all our efforts contribute to kosen-rufu. Everything forms part of our struggle, our Buddhist practice, toward developing and expanding our faith.

Let us achieve a resounding victory next year, in what will be the first important challenge of the new century. Remember that everything we do for the sake of kosen-rufu also benefits our lives. A person who can impart that conviction to others and foster an atmosphere where all can strive joyfully is a great leader.

Instead of making your fellow members unhappy and miserable by scolding and criticizing them, give them hope and encouragement so that they can confidently face the future. Creating an environment where members can work happily together for kosen-rufu is a leader's mission. It is also the measure of a leader's greatness.

The treasure of the SGI is that we are many in body but one in mind.

It is beautiful when people can get along and work well together. Buddhism is a doctrine of cooperation and harmony. This spirit of friendship is articulated as many in body but one in mind and is the SGI's foremost treasure.

To talk behind others' backs, to carp and complain, to plot and scheme—such behavior points to selfishness and ego. It points to prejudice and narrow-mindedness, and it always leads to the most grave of offenses in Buddhism, disrupting the harmonious unity of believers.

I hope that, should a problem or disagreement arise, the parties involved will talk about it directly until they resolve it to everyone's satisfaction. The ideal path of a harmonious Buddhist organization is to advance together, always wisely and always based on faith.

I ask the men and young men to be courteous when talking to our women and young women. Please never shout at them or speak in a haughty, condescending or arrogant manner. You have no right to do so.

Men and women are equal. The Daishonin states, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 385). I hope that

the men and young men will always be gentlemen who respect and value women. That is a tradition of the SGI.

Similarly, it is important for leaders to warmly thank their fellow members for their efforts and hard work. Simple expressions of thoughtfulness and concern—“Thank you,” “Please take care,” “Don’t catch cold”—warm people’s hearts and spread a lovely spirit of humanity throughout our organization. The SGI is a realm of beautiful human ties.

In a successful organization, the leaders take action first.

What is it that distinguishes a successful organization? Leaders who take committed action, who make unstinting, all-out efforts, who lead the way in visiting individual members at home to offer words of encouragement and guidance. This is what makes for a successful organization. Our organization in Kansai is a perfect model of this.

“Leading the way”—this is the virtue of Bodhisattva Superior Practices. It is contemptible not to make any effort oneself but get others to do all the hard work. It is arrogant and exploitative.

Momentous changes confront us as we enter the 21st century. Everywhere people are fighting a desperate struggle for survival. It is win or lose.

Since Buddhism is a battle, we must fight and win. It is our only option. I have fought and won through all struggles across the decades. Not putting up a struggle is defeat. Only by being victorious can we attain Buddhahood.

That is why I want you to strive hard, for yourselves and your communities. That is why I want you to win.

Remember, too, that both good and evil can manifest themselves in the written reports and letters you may deal with as a leader. Some people are always trying to blame things on others. Some people are very clever with words.

It is important for leaders not to make misjudgments in such matters or to be manipulated by words. Leaders must always ascertain the facts and look at every situation in a fair, balanced manner.

Allowing lies to prevail will mean the destruction of Buddhism. The Nikken sect is the prime example of this.

An organization pervaded by warmth, sincere faith, concern for fellow members, unity and devotion to kosen-rufu—an organization whose members’ hearts are fused together in faith—this is the SGI. Let us always maintain this tradition.

Let us make our way into the 21st century, further strengthening our organizations and leadership lineups in each area so that we can forge ahead toward kosen-rufu.

The Italian freedom fighter Giuseppe Mazzini says: “Association multiplies your strength a hundredfold.” “Youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith.” This is a perfect description of the SGI’s way of life.

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy was fond of these words by the German writer Lichtenberg: “Arm yourself with courage to speak the truth for the good of your fellow man.” A person who speaks the truth is a person of faith. For the sake of peace, let us arm ourselves with courage. This is the secret of the Soka Gakkai. This is why we are so strong.

The Okinawan members are realizing a peaceful, prosperous society through Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

In a few days time, on July 21, the much-awaited Okinawa G-8 Summit will get under way. I pray that this historic meeting will be a great success.

As you may know, I first visited Okinawa 40 years ago—on July 16, 1960. It was the hottest time of the year in Okinawa. The day of my arrival marked the 700th anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin submitting his treatise of remonstrance, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” to the ruling authorities.

I selected that day of tremendous historical importance for my visit. Okinawa was experiencing a difficult period in its history. [After Japan’s defeat in World War II, the islands of Okinawa were occupied by the United States and remained under American rule until 1972.] I took that opportunity to encourage our members. “Okinawa,” I said, “will become the Hawaii of Asia in the future. It will become a destination that people the world over will flock to.”

Okinawa suffered more horribly in World War II than perhaps any other place in Japan. [One third of the civilian population was killed in the war. Okinawa was treated as a kind of shield to protect the Japanese main islands.] That is precisely why Okinawa must win unparalleled peace and happiness for itself! This is Okinawa’s mission and Okinawa’s challenge.

That was my fervent wish, determination, and absolute belief in 1960. And I am convinced that that wish has now become a reality.

On my first visit, I went to see the Star Lily Monument, dedicated to teenage Okinawan nurses and others who lost their lives, where I chanted daimoku for the eternal happiness of the war victims. I thought: “The future is what counts now. What kind of future will we create here?”

I am always concerned with the future. The Daishonin speaks of the “far distant future of the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law.” I have continued to work quietly behind the scenes for the future of Okinawa.

And it was for all these reasons that I chose my beloved Okinawa as the place to begin writing my novel *The Human Revolution*.

Our noble Okinawan members have devoted themselves in complete accord with the Daishonin’s intent, striving “with all their might and unswerving dedication”—as go the lyrics of one of my favorite Soka Gakkai songs, “Heroes of Okinawa.” Today, Okinawa is marking the fastest advance in kosen-rufu in the world.

Our members there have pushed through the fields of grass, unafraid of poisonous snakes, weathered stormy seas and blazed a trail of kosen-rufu where none was before. Compared to Okinawa, our members in Tokyo have it too easy.

The growth of the Soka Gakkai in Okinawa and the neighboring Amami Islands has been remarkable. It is a golden achievement that will shine in world religious history forever. One of Japan’s leading scholars of the sociology of religion, the late Shin Anzai of Sophia University, recognized this achievement. Professor Anzai, who has died, was a dear friend. I will never forget our friendship.

I offer my sincerest praise and congratulations to our Okinawa and Amami members for the magnificent history they have created. It is also wonderful that, hand in hand with the spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, Okinawa has been walking a path to admirable prosperity. The great light of peace—of the ideal of realizing a peaceful, prosperous society through Buddhism—has begun to shine with ever-growing brilliance as we make our way into the 21st century.

It is important to note that our members, not only in Okinawa and the neighboring Amami Islands, but on all of Japan’s remoter islands, are extremely active. These islands are important. Their communities are close-knit, and neighbors know each other. They

know who the Soka Gakkai members are. It is important for members on those small islands to steadily gain the trust of their neighbors, demonstrating what it means to win in life.

This is why I have placed so much emphasis on such island communities as models of kosen-rufu. I have sent the warmest encouragement to isolated places where no top Soka Gakkai leaders ever go.

Our members on the island of Sado off the coast of Niigata, a place I cherish fond memories of, have reported to me on the success of their activities. They have designated July 20 as Sado Day.

It was on that day 42 years ago that I first visited the island. We have representatives from Niigata here with us today. Please give my best regards to the members on Sado!

(To be continued in the Sept. 8 issue)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS HOPES FOR NEXT YEAR

From This Speech:

Let us achieve a resounding victory next year, in what will be the first important challenge of the new century. Remember that everything we do for the sake of kosen-rufu also benefits our lives. A person who can impart that conviction to others and foster an atmosphere where all can strive joyfully is a great leader.

- 1) Have you started thinking about your personal goals for 2001? If so, what are they?
- 2) Have you accomplished all your personal goals for 2000? If not, how are you still trying to accomplish them?
- 3) What would you like to see your district accomplish next year, “the first important challenge of the new century”? What would you like to see SGI-USA as a whole accomplish?
- 4) What are the most important things we can do to achieve our goals, be they personal or organizational?
- 5) President Ikeda reminds us that “everything we do for the sake of kosen-rufu also benefits our lives.” Have you experienced this in 2000? What were the most memorable activities you did? How did they benefit you?
- 6) How can we best teach others that efforts for kosen-rufu come back to us as benefit? How can we set the example?