

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 5 SPEECH—PART 1 OUR STRENGTH IS INDOMITABLE

‘Next year marks the first year of the 21st century,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Let us stand up together and brightly declare our indomitable strength to the world.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 50th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Oct. 5.

The 20th century has been one of resounding victory for the Soka Gakkai. Dedicated to justice and truth, we have triumphed over all kinds of schemes and intrigues to bring us down, all kinds of slander and abuse designed to discredit us.

This victory has been made possible solely through the fortitude, perseverance and efforts of each of you. How incredible is the benefit that you are accumulating as a result! I wish to sincerely thank all of you — my beloved fellow members in Japan and throughout the world — for your tireless devotion.

Let's open a brilliant Century of Soka!

Struggle is eternal. All living things in the universe are engaged in a struggle to survive. Those who base their efforts on the ultimate law of the universe, the Mystic Law, are victorious.

As we of the SGI prepare to take on the challenges of kosen-rufu in the 21st century, let us all — including my friends of the Many Treasures Group, whose vibrant daimoku keeps them young — unite anew and launch a fresh drive toward everlasting victory.

I also ask the women and youth to spearhead a new phase of development for the Soka Gakkai and the entire kosen-rufu movement.

Arrogant leaders — those who have stopped growing, lost the spirit of challenge and just strut around self-importantly — are, if anything, a hindrance to our movement.

It is the time for a new generation of talented people to take the stage, confidently and without hesitation. May the young people stir up a storm with their youthful power and energy, creating a whirlwind of dynamic progress for kosen-rufu in the new century — in Japan and around the globe.

Rising serenely above the petty, narrow-minded mentality of Japan, let's open a brilliant Century of Soka — our century!

Buddhism is a battle between enlightenment and destruction.

The famous German poet Friedrich von Schiller writes, “I do what's right, and care for no man's hate.” The Soka Gakkai, too, follows the path of justice, so it fears nothing.

And Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a good friend of Schiller's, says, “Life's drudgery / Alone makes us appreciate life's rewards.” Only by experiencing and living through hardships can we appreciate how wonderful life is. This is a truth that resonates with the teachings of Buddhism.

Buddhism is eternally a battle between the Buddha and devilish functions — between the enlightened and destructive forces inherent in life and the universe. It is a battle against devilish functions and those held in their thrall, against those forces that seek to obstruct Buddhism, people's happiness and the progress of kosen-rufu. The onslaught of devilish

functions is strong because the devil king of the sixth heaven, the dogged commander of these destructive forces, dominates the realm of human affairs.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: "The devil king of the sixth heaven takes possession of the bodies of wives and children, and causes them to lead their husbands or parents astray. He also possesses the sovereign in order to threaten the votary of the Lotus Sutra, or possesses fathers and mothers, and makes them reproach their filially devoted children" (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 496).

But these forces must not defeat us. Only by triumphing over them can we attain Buddhahood.

Buddhism is a battle—it is either win or lose. No matter how much we believe in the Mystic Law, if we are cowardly we cannot attain Buddhahood. This is the Daishonin's strict teaching.

The SGI's unparalleled development is all thanks to you!

We will soon celebrate the milestone 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding, on Nov. 18. Once again, my deepest appreciation to all of you. The Soka Gakkai's unparalleled development is the actual proof you have achieved through your sincere faith and selfless, ungrudging devotion in the same spirit as the Daishonin to advance kosen-rufu, to uphold the integrity of the correct teaching.

Shortly before he died, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda called me to his side and said: "Daisaku, I don't care if the Soka Gakkai gets any bigger. As long as our members lead happy and healthy lives, that's all that matters."

Mr. Toda knew that as the Soka Gakkai continued to grow, the risk of persecution would increase. Growth would bring suffering and hardship. Growth would invite envy and jealousy from people in society.

He was worried about the arduous struggles that would lie ahead of me. That is why he said what he did. I am grateful to have had a mentor who cared about me so deeply.

However, I did not shirk from difficulties and obstacles. I used them as an impetus to build today's Soka Gakkai and to open new roads for kosen-rufu around the world.

Whereas most people in the world have heard of Jesus Christ, hardly anyone has heard of the Daishonin. Even many Japanese have little knowledge about him. Nevertheless, we of the SGI have succeeded in spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism across the globe. How happy this would make the Daishonin! How happy it would also make Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda!

This is due solely to your unceasing efforts to take the lead for kosen-rufu throughout the world. You are truly praiseworthy. I wish you good health and long, fulfilled lives. I hope you will continue to work wholeheartedly in your endeavors.

Leaders who throw their weight around are failures.

Next year marks the first year of the 21st century. Let us stand up together and brightly declare our indomitable strength to the world.

To succeed in a struggle, we must persevere, we must fight with all our might. Let us advance with compassion and goodwill, joyfully and cheerfully, quietly and calmly, and with indignation at injustice, as the situation demands. Let us advance, making friends all over Japan and throughout the world. And let us lead lives of victory.

Please remember there can be no battle or contest without opponents. So there is nothing to fear. Opponents only make us stronger.

The 21st century will soon be here. We have at last entered the age of the Soka Gakkai. Let us cheerfully make our way on the global Silk Road of kosen-rufu, forming a long, continuous caravan of the world's people. The SGI has now spread to 163 countries and territories. We can find SGI members virtually anywhere on this planet. The world is our stage. I especially wish for our youth to travel the globe for kosen-rufu.

I want our leaders to win the love and trust of many people—to be the kind of people of whom their juniors can say: “He is dependable like a father or big brother.” “She is warm and caring like a mother or big sister.”

Leaders who, in contrast, throw their weight around, whose attitude at meetings is so off-putting that it causes members to wish that they had not bothered coming, are failures at their job. The times have no need for such leaders.

We should encourage the members to be strong. And it is perfectly all right for members to take a strict stance toward leaders. Please know that society as a whole is moving into an age of increased respect for the dignity of each human being.

SGI-Brazil members have surmounted all obstacles and emerged triumphant.

This is also the Kanto General Meeting. Congratulations! Our Kanto Region organization [comprising prefectures surrounding Tokyo] is making wonderful strides in its activities. As the old saying goes, “Rule Kanto, and you rule all of Japan.”

To Kanto area followers [Toki Jonin and others], the Daishonin wrote letters containing such famous lines as “You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come” (WND, 622) and “Life is limited; we must not begrudge it. What we should ultimately aspire to is the Buddha land” (WND, 214).

During World War II, despite being under constant surveillance by members of the Special Higher Police, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi traveled boldly throughout the Kanto region, writing a glorious history of selfless devotion to propagating the Law. [Mr. Toda also began his regional propagation campaign from the Kanto prefectures of Tochigi and Gumma.]

I hope the Kanto members will emulate Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda and—with the heart of lion kings—leave behind an immortal page in the annals of our movement. Please become a model for the rest of the world.

In commemoration of the Soka Gakkai's Outlying Islands Division Day on Oct. 7, we are joined today by representatives from the islands of Iki, Tsushima, Amami Oshima and Yoron-to. We also have with us members from the island of Miyakejima, who have recently suffered the hardship of being evacuated [following the eruption of Mount Oyama. Thank you so much for being here today.

I hope all of you will continue to chant earnestly to surmount the challenges before you—not only for your own sakes but for the happiness of your ancestors and your descendants, and for the prosperity of your communities.

I also ask our leaders to take good care of our members living on remote islands, making sure to extend warm support and encouragement to them.

To our members on 240 outlying Japanese islands: I wish you all the best of health!

A warm welcome also to our SGI members from the United States and other parts of the world here today. Thank you for traveling so far to be with us.

I ask our Japanese leaders to take good care of them during their stay, making every effort to ensure that the visiting members are not tired out and can enjoy a meaningful training course.

We also have with us representatives from SGI-New Zealand, led by their young, new general director, Jimmy Wallace. New Zealand will be one of the first countries in the world to greet the start of 21st century. It will beat Japan, land of the Rising Sun, by four hours.

Thank you also to the representatives from SGI-Korea for joining us today. Rose of Sharon blossoms, South Korea's national flower, have been in bloom in the Makiguchi Memorial Hall's gardens all summer long, and they are in beautiful bloom today as well.

I am also delighted to meet again with friends from SGI-Brazil. Visiting Japan this time are five representatives of the Brazil Kirishima Group, including Vice General Director Julio Kosaka and 10 representatives of the Brazil Tokushima Group, including Vice General Director Isamu Onozato. I will never forget our respective meetings in the city of Kirishima, Japan, 17 years ago and the city of Tokushima, Japan, 15 years ago. You are all infinitely precious to me.

In the past, when Brazil was ruled by a military dictatorship, our members there suffered persecution arising from prejudice and misunderstanding. Also, for a long time, the Brazilian authorities would not allow me to enter the country. The members of the Kirishima and Tokushima groups here today are true champions of Soka, warriors of kosen-rufu, who stood up bravely and fought fearlessly at that most difficult of times.

I propose that we leave a lasting record of their noble names on the grounds of Soka University of America. It was this core group of leaders who endured and triumphed over persecution, and forged SGI-Brazil into a model organization of our worldwide kosen-rufu movement.

Our members in Brazil have surmounted all obstacles and emerged triumphant. They have also won total victory over the corrupt Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. The São Paulo temple, Ichijo-ji, which Nichiren Shoshu illegally occupied, has been restored to SGI-Brazil, its rightful owners, and renamed the SGI Brazil Ever-victorious Center.

The Brazilian members have also won incredible recognition and trust from their local communities. Again this month, for instance, a Makiguchi Park will open in São Paulo State. And in the not too distant future, I understand, I will be named a nonresident member of the Amazonian Academy of Letters and receive a commendation from the City of Manaus. [The honors that President Ikeda has received from Brazil to date number close to 100.]

All of this is due to the Brazilian members' earnest prayers and their sincere, tenacious efforts to contribute to the community and promote the SGI's ideals.

On Oct. 1, Brazil launched an innovative new electronic voting system in its nationwide municipal elections. One of the people involved in developing this system is a young SGI-Brazil chapter leader, Osvaldo Imamura.

We must always manifest the teachings of Buddhism in society, and society must always be the place where we put the teachings of Buddhism into practice. It is the mission of Buddhists to contribute to society, to invigorate society and to create value for society.

To be continued in the Nov. 17 issue

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND

From This Speech:

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1) Next year is the start of the 21st century — what are your goals for next year? What did you accomplish this year that set the stage for what you are going to do next? What do you think is the best thing that will happen to you next year? What was the best thing that happened to you this year? What is one experience from this year that you will never forget?

2) What do you think the “age of the Soka Gakkai” will be like? How do you think the 21st century will be different from the 20th century? In what ways do you think it will be the same?

3) What do you think SGI President Ikeda means when he says, “The world is our stage”? And why do you think he encourages young people to travel to foreign countries? Why is it important for people of all ages to see other cultures?