

FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR SELF-REFORMATION IS THE ENGINE OF OUR MOVEMENT

Greetings to the readers of *Living Buddhism*. I recently returned from visiting thirty cities across the United States. I was happy to see so many of you again! I listened to your reports of the struggles you have been going through, but each story was punctuated with joy — the joy of overcoming hardship and the joy that comes from striving to transform your lives. Thank you for inspiring me. It is truly the drama of individual self-reformation that is the engine of our organization and the purpose of our movement.

Last May, SGI President Ikeda wrote many meaningful poems including “Our Brilliant May 3” to commemorate that significant date. On May 3 itself, he wrote “The Indestructible Power of the People.” In addition, to commemorate the first Mother’s Day of the new century, he wrote, “The 21st Century is the Century of Women.” Each of these poems is of substantial length, and must have taken so much effort to write. Moreover, each expresses a deep feeling of appreciation and praise for all of our efforts, as well as a grand vision for the future.

Though each poem is unique, one theme pervades them: the theme of victory. President Ikeda begins “Our Brilliant May 3”:

*Finally, we have won!
You and I have won!*

*We have triumphed,
Amid cheers and jubilation,
We have triumphed,
Overcoming every obstacle and hardship.*

The conclusion to his poem dedicated to mothers reads:

*I have won.
You have won.
We have definitely won!
That is the declaration
Of Nichiren Daishonin and Shakyamuni Buddha.*

And in “The Indestructible Power of the People,” he writes that victory of the people is the essence of the SGI.

*Whatever happens,
Our movement of ten million friends —
Powerfully united
In faith and spirit
And the cause of truth and justice —
Constitutes a great movement of the people
That will go down forever in history.*

All of these poems attest to the victory that we have accomplished during the last seventy

years of the twentieth century. We have developed a global movement of peace, culture and education, and millions of people have awakened to the practice of human revolution.

These poems also attest to the victories that each one of us has won in our daily struggles to live in the real world. The fact is, we practice Buddhism to be victorious in our lives — to overcome our suffering, to purify our lives, and to create beautiful and harmonious relationships. Therefore, the real meaning of victory is to win over ourselves.

As President Ikeda writes in his most recent education proposal (see page 22): “In other words, the role of religion is inseparable from the individual and society: Religion must enable individuals to achieve their personal goals as well as contribute positively to society.” What this means is that the purpose of our practice is to achieve individual victory. Such individual victories — a collection of “human revolutions” — become our collective victory, and indeed, the victory of our society.

I have this conviction based on my own experience. My mother raised me by herself. She was ill and because of the various difficulties she faced, she had to work as an independent vendor. When I look back, I can’t believe how hard she worked in order to support our family. While I was a teenager, I gave her so much difficulty and got into so much trouble. But during this time, she also dedicated herself wholeheartedly to activities for the sake of others, within the Soka Gakkai. She did so with the conviction that this was the most meaningful way she could live her life. At the same time, she was certain that by exerting herself wholeheartedly, she was establishing fortune and would thereby transform the negative circumstances of her life.

My mother died five years ago. She was financially secure and had lived to an advanced age. She completely transformed her life by overcoming poverty, illness and the difficulties of having me for a son.

Looking back over my life, I know that ninety-five percent of my fortune, ninety-five percent of my character, ninety-five percent of who I am is because of my mother. I would not be the man I am today; I would not be able to take responsibility for kosen-rufu, if not for her consistent and selfless dedication. Ultimately, it was President Ikeda’s encouragement and inspiration that allowed her to develop the tenacity to overcome her difficulties and polish her life. It is because of my mother that I was able to meet President Ikeda — my mentor in life.

From my experience, I want to stress that the real victory is not only what we get at the end of our struggle, but is also the struggle itself based on faith and conviction. In other words, living with a noble sense of mission, developing profound confidence that no matter what happens, we are creating value and a meaningful history with our lives — this, too, is the meaning of victory in our lives.

This summer, we are engaged in preparations for our family youth festivals across the United States. I hope that we don’t see these events as ends unto themselves, but as opportunities to care for others and to learn more about the practice of faith. In this way, organizational activities are motivated by our desire to achieve victory in our own lives and to support the growth and development of others. The study of the Daishonin’s teachings and President Ikeda’s guidance in our publications is also crucial to our growth and development and will provide us with a solid foundation for this summer’s success. This success is especially important when we think in terms of our worldwide kosen-rufu movement. Let’s use these festivals as a vehicle to introduce others to the power of Nichiren Daishonin’ Buddhism.

Again, thank you very much. Please take care during these hot summer months.

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SGI-USA General Director