

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 4 SPEECH HOW TO WIN IN THE NEW CENTURY

**The key to winning in the new century, SGI President Ikeda says, is ‘winning over ourselves today, here and now — changing ourselves today, here and now.’**

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at an SGI Hong Kong–Macau Executive Conference, held at the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center, Dec. 4, 2000.*

I thank all of you, my dear fellow members with whom I share many fond memories, for taking time out of your busy schedules to gather here like this today. I am absolutely delighted to have this opportunity to see you all again in this final year of the 20th century. The sight of your happy faces fills me with joy and fresh energy.

This visit to Hong Kong is my 20th. So this is also the 20th “life-to-life training session” I have attended here, allowing us together to create another meaningful page in the history of our Asian kosen-rufu movement.

As an expression of my deepest appreciation and respect for you, the Hong Kong members, I dedicate the following poem:

*On my 20th visit  
I give three cheers  
For Hong Kong kosen-rufu.*

The great Chinese writer Lu Xun observes, “It is true that we must live in order to evolve; that we might as well experience hardships in order to be free of all future suffering; and that we should fight in order to bring about reform.”

I am confident that all of us are advancing undauntedly in our lives, our gaze fixed steadily on a future filled with hope.

The SGI, together with the members of Hong Kong and Macau, has begun its journey toward victory in the 21st century, leading the way for the rest of the world. Hong Kong and Macau are like winged steeds who have taken flight into the skies of the new century. You are overflowing with limitless energy and shining with tremendous hope.

My journey to realize the westward transmission of Buddhism, which Nichiren Daishonin prophesied, began here in Hong Kong on Jan. 28, 1961. Also, on my first trip to China in May and June 1974—a visit dedicated to building a golden bridge of friendship between Japan and China—I traveled via Hong Kong to and from China.

Moreover, the Chinese University of Hong Kong was the first of the 73 universities with which Soka University enjoys academic and educational exchanges.

And the first Soka kindergarten to be established outside Japan was the Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten in 1992. It is a pioneering citadel of humanistic kindergarten education for the 21st century. Following your lead, Soka kindergartens have also been opened in Singapore and Malaysia. I visited these latter two kindergartens during this trip.

Today, I was delighted to be reunited with graduates of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd graduating classes of Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten. When I first met them—they were still cute kindergartners then—in May 1993, I wrote them a calligraphy with the words “Hong Kong Soka Kindergarten is my life,” and “May you be good! May you have beautiful

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hearts!” I cannot tell you how happy I am that they have all grown into wonderful young people. I express my respect and gratitude for the efforts of Principal Wong So Yuk and all the other fine members of the kindergarten staff who have devoted themselves wholeheartedly to humanistic education.

**The key to fresh growth in the organization is sincerely caring for each member.**

Indeed, SGI-Hong Kong and SGI-Macau have served as ports of peace, culture and education for all of Asia—as a bright source of hope and the headwaters of eternal development. I hope you, the members of Hong Kong and Macau, will continue to devote yourselves to that towering mission in the coming century.

One of the unforgettable pioneer members of the kosen-rufu movement in Hong Kong is Chow Tak Kwong. He was a noble pioneer who worked hard not only for his fellow members in Hong Kong but for members throughout Southeast Asia.

Every few days, Mr. Chow would send letters of encouragement to members scattered throughout Singapore, Malaysia and other parts of Asia. If there were any problems to deal with, he would send off letters every other day, sometimes even daily.

What incredible effort this must have taken on Mr. Chow’s part! For in addition to being the central figure of kosen-rufu activities in Hong Kong, he was also the busy president of a trading company. And it was not rare for his letters to run to five or even 10 pages. This was in an age when it was uncommon to make international phone calls and way before the development of the Internet. Mr. Chow’s continuous encouragement and support of his fellow members represented a tremendous effort on his part.

In one letter to the central figure of a certain area, he writes: “It is important to create frequent opportunities for heart-to-heart dialogue with your members. Home visits are the only way to achieve this. By visiting members’ homes to share guidance and offer encouragement, you can really speak freely with each other and grow close, establishing mutual trust. Saying this is easy, but putting it into practice is a challenge.”

Mr. Chow always made a point of regularly visiting members at home, and this is the source of SGI-Hong Kong’s strong foundation today.

The unchanging key to fresh growth is to sincerely care about each member and to take time to regularly engage in heart-to-heart dialogue with them and offer support and encouragement through home visits, personal guidance or some other form of contact.

**All our SGI activities are excellent for our health.**

We are approaching the Century of Women, and I hope the women’s division members of SGI-Hong Kong and SGI-Macau will continue to advance with even greater youthful vitality and good health.

Today in Hong Kong, women over 50 make up some 14 percent of the population. As the age level rises, the ratio of women to men in the population increases.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong recently held a symposium on improving the health of middle-aged and elderly women, at which a number of practical measures were presented. For example, women in the 50–70 age bracket should try to keep their weight down. They should eat plenty of fruit and vegetables, get enough calcium and restrict fat consumption to below 30 percent of their total daily calorie intake.

The symposium also stressed the importance of exercise and maintaining fitness and mobility, and the need to keep one’s mind active to ward off the deterioration of mental

functions. It further highlighted the negative impact of anxiety and depression, and the danger posed to the elderly by falls.

Through our daily SGI activities, we are always active and on the go, working for the sake of Buddhism, society and people's happiness. We also keep our minds active by studying and discussing Buddhist philosophy. And we keep our spirits up by encouraging and supporting one another. Clearly, all of our activities are excellent for our health! They help us live long, meaningful lives.

The sight of the harmonious, cheerful and energetic activities of the SGI-Hong Kong Many Treasures Group is wonderful proof of that.

### **Someone who achieves self-mastery eventually changes history.**

Recently, the major Hong Kong publisher Cosmos Books has published a new Chinese edition of my dialogue with British historian Arnold Toynbee, *Choose Life*. The respected Chinese writer Jin Yong has kindly contributed a preface filled with sparkling gems of profound wisdom, and I want to take this opportunity to thank him sincerely.

What did Dr. Toynbee emphasize in our dialogue? One of his main themes was self-mastery.

Simply put, this means winning control over oneself, overcoming the small self that is dominated by narrow self-interest and awakening to the larger self that works for the good of all humanity. Dr. Toynbee, one of the greatest historians of the 20th century, believed with keen insight that self-mastery was vital to overcoming the crises facing humanity.

What he called for, in short, was nothing other than what we in the SGI refer to as human revolution—a fundamental transformation within the hearts and minds of human beings. Dr. Toynbee says, “The only way [for a human being] to improve [his karma] is for him to increase his self-mastery, and the struggle to master one's self is the personal action of an individual human being” (*Choose Life*, p. 350). The achievement of self-mastery by each individual will bring about momentous positive progress in society and eventually change the course of human history.

What is the key to winning in the new century? It all begins with winning over ourselves today, here and now—changing ourselves today, here and now. I hope you will remember this point.

### **Buddhism never uses people as a means to an end.**

Faith is a source of limitless power.

Many religions have lost sight of their founder's intent, becoming tools of the powers that be and winding up exploited by corrupt clergy. They have even become the cause of conflict and war. But religion is originally meant to be the ground from which culture and civilization flourishes.

The Mystic Law is a source of happiness. Through faith in the Mystic Law, the strength to live, to grow, to win, to triumph over destiny, wells forth from within us.

In the West, the word *culture* originates from the verb *cultivate*. Religion cultivates life. And a life that is richly cultivated blooms with a song of joy, a dance of celebration. That is true culture—a paean to humanity. We also see this joy in Buddhist art.

Buddhism does not use human beings as a means to an end. It teaches that human beings must courageously stand up, gain mastery over themselves and then share their joy with others. We of the SGI are walking this royal path.

Scientific advances are important. Government, economics and education are naturally important, too. But what is the most important and fundamental thing of all? It is life.

The transformation of an individual life is the foundation of everything. Shakyamuni taught us this. And so did the Daishonin.

He revealed the Law that pervades the cosmos and life. He left a way for all people to find happiness and peace, and lead lives filled with compassion and love. This unsurpassed law is the Mystic Law, and all of you who uphold it are treasures of this world.

The Buddhist law of cause and effect is strict. I want you all to be confident that those who dedicate their lives to the Mystic Law will be healthy, wealthy and beautiful, in body and mind, in lifetime after lifetime, and, as great leaders, contribute to society, winning people's praise and admiration, and enjoying lives of supreme fulfillment.

### **The 21st century will be a time of human integrity.**

Harvard University Associate Professor Charles Hallisey has used my book *The Living Buddha* as a text in one of his classes on Buddhism. He has said that he finds the concept of human revolution to be a modern expression of the Chinese Buddhist teacher T'ient'ai's doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life—that a change in one person's mind, a change in one instant of life, leads to a change in all aspects of life.

Through all your efforts, especially the members of the community center maintenance group, the SGI-Hong Kong Grand Culture Center is beautifully adorned with bauhinia flowers—the symbol of Hong Kong—and many other lovely blooms. Even the moon tonight is unusually lovely.

In one of his letters celebrating the new year, the Daishonin writes: “Just as the flowers open up and bear fruit, just as the moon appears and invariably grows full, just as a lamp becomes brighter when oil is added, and just as plants and trees flourish with rain, so will human beings never fail to prosper when they make good causes” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1013)

Based on the law of cause and effect, all of you who are accumulating the greatest possible “good causes” through your kosen-rufu activities each day, are certain to enjoy infinite, immeasurable good fortune.

Shakyamuni says, “The scent of the virtuous does go against the wind; the fragrance of righteousness perfumes all directions” (*The Dhammapada: Sayings of Buddha*, p. 22). In other words, the great flower of character and integrity wins out over every adverse wind and spreads the fragrance of humanity to all four quarters of the land. A person's faith is evident in the radiance of his or her character.

The 21st century will be a century of humanity, a century of human integrity. That is why I want you, the members of Hong Kong and Macau, to create gatherings of friendship and trust shared by beautiful “human flowers.” Everyone—members and nonmembers alike—will feel delightfully refreshed and energized by your presence and inspired to work with you.

Recently, the Hong Kong men's division executive committee presented me with a giant seal inscribed with the words “Triumphant Champion of Worldwide Kosen-rufu in the 21st Century.” It is my dearest wish that all the members of Hong Kong and Macau will strive to become just that—triumphant champions of worldwide kosen-rufu in the 21st century.

In conclusion, I present you with this poem:

*The Daishonin  
With boundless compassion  
Will embrace and protect  
Hong Kong  
Home of sincere followers.*

Please give my warmest regards to all the members I could not meet today.