

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 14 SPEECH—PART 1 WISE WOMEN WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

‘Women possess the wisdom to somehow find a way to resolve differences of opinion and conflicts through dialogue and to move forward together in harmony,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Wherever there are wise women, one finds a steady tide toward peace and harmony being created.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 52nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Osaka, Dec. 14, 2000.

Congratulations on this final Headquarters Leaders Meeting of the 20th century! I am thrilled to greet this day amid great jubilation and celebration together with all of you, the members of Kansai and representatives from throughout Japan.

Congratulations on the Soka Gakkai’s wonderful triumph in the 20th century! It is the result of your unity and your prayers, and I express my most sincere gratitude to you all. Let us continue to advance and achieve further momentous victories in the 21st century.

I want Kansai to take the lead. Kansai is the heart of the kosen-rufu movement. Kansai is a prime mover of Japan and indeed the entire world. This is Kansai’s mission.

It was here in Kansai that I was placed under arrest and confined in prison. [In the Osaka Incident of July 1957, President Ikeda was arrested on false charges of election law violations in an Osaka district by-election for the upper house. The subsequent court case dragged on for almost five years, ending with President Ikeda’s full exoneration in January 1962.] The Soka Gakkai spirit is alive in Kansai. The fact that this historic last Headquarters Leaders Meeting of the 20th century is being held here is deeply significant.

Next month, we will enter the 21st century. I want to propose, so that we can make a fresh start in the new century, that from January we begin renumbering our Headquarters Leaders Meetings from No. 1. What do you think? Let us set off joyfully once again, with a fresh rhythm and fresh resolve.

I want our leaders to be caring and sensitive to others’ needs. When holding a meeting, for instance, I hope you will pay attention right down to the smallest detail, remembering to bear in mind such points as “Will the participants be hungry?” “Will we have sufficient restroom facilities?”

Please do your utmost to ensure everyone’s comfort, being quick to notice if anyone is feeling unwell or experiencing some problem. It is also important that you warmly recognize and applaud the efforts of those who have traveled long distances to attend a meeting.

What matters is not empty formality but our heart, our sincerity.

Everything is determined by the wisdom and warm concern for the members demonstrated by those in leadership positions. An organization that has such leaders will flourish.

We experience great joy precisely because we face various problems.

We sang a magnificent chorus of Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” together earlier!

Nichiren Daishonin says, “[Chanting] Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the greatest of all joys” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). I declare that our choral performance was a rousing song of joy celebrating the Soka Gakkai’s decisive victory over all obstacles in the past decade and

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indeed in this century.

The Soka Gakkai has won! Through your valiant efforts, we have rebuffed the many insults and attacks of jealous, envious individuals, and we have emerged triumphant on all fronts!

The famous composer Beethoven was born on Dec. 16, 1770. This year marks the 230th anniversary of his birth.

Beethoven writes, “We finite creatures with infinite spirits are born only to suffer and to rejoice and one could almost say that the most excellent among us derive joy from suffering.” We can experience great joy precisely because we suffer and go through various problems. Beethoven’s profound insight has much in common with such Buddhist teachings as earthly desires are enlightenment, the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana, and the *saha* world is a place of happiness and ease.

We have fought our way through many bitter challenges and won. No one can now interfere with our joyous song. With “Ode to Joy” on our lips, let us advance even more spiritedly toward the future.

Beethoven observes, “Hatred recoils upon those who harbor it.” How true that is! Buddhism also teaches us that the offense returns to its originator. [*The Lotus Sutra* states, “The injury will rebound upon the originator” (p. 304). When someone persecutes a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra, the offense will return to the perpetrator.]

What kind of negative effects are being manifested in the lives of those who 10 years ago, out of envy and hatred, attacked and tormented us of the Soka Gakkai, who jubilantly sang Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy”? You have seen with your own eyes positive proof of the uncompromising strictness of the workings of the Buddhist law of cause and effect. [Nichiren Shoshu’s scheme to destroy the Soka Gakkai was set in motion 10 years ago with the summary dismissal of SGI President Ikeda from the position of the chief lay representative of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations on Dec. 27, 1990. High Priest Nikken Abe’s 2000 court defeat in the Seattle Incident Trial can be considered an example of the uncompromising strictness of the workings of the Buddhist law of cause and effect.]

Countries and organizations that value women will flourish.

In all the places I visited recently — Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong — our fellow members are making wonderful efforts. The SGI organizations there have achieved splendid growth with their members contributing dynamically to society.

The activities of the young women’s and women’s divisions shone with special brilliance. My stay in each place reinforced my feeling that the bright dawn of the Century of Women has arrived. Not only in the SGI, but in society as a whole, women are extremely active and serving as an invigorating force.

I met many outstanding women during my recent trip. There was the renowned Australian educator Dame Leonie Kramer, who is chancellor of the University of Sydney — which presented me with an honorary doctorate as your representative during my stay in Singapore — as well as the university’s Deputy Vice Chancellor Judith Kinnear, who delivered the citation at the ceremony. There was also Professor Madya Kamariah, dean of the Faculty of Educational Studies of the Universiti Putra Malaysia, who delivered the citation for the honorary degree that I received from that Malaysian university at a special convocation ceremony.

And there was Hong Kong’s Chief Secretary for Administration Anson Chan, who invited me to her official residence and with whom I spoke at length. She is an outstanding

leader who holds the second highest-ranking post in the Hong Kong government next to Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa. At our meeting, she voiced her belief that women tend to excel in areas where human relations are important.

The times are changing. Countries and organizations that recognize and value women and their contributions will flourish.

If women take a more active role and give full play to their abilities in the Soka Gakkai and Japanese society, I am certain that our organization and Japan as a whole will be revitalized and move in a more positive direction.

The illustrious German poet Schiller writes of men:

*The striving of men is hostile
With crushing violence
The wild one goes through life
Without resting or stopping.
He destroys what he has made.
Competing wishes never rest.*

And of women, he writes:

*But with soft persuasive prayer
Women wield the scepter of manners,
Extinguish the raging flames of discord,
Teach the forces that fiercely hate each other
To embrace each other in a friendly form,
And unite those forever fleeing.*

The poet praises women, saying that, in contrast to men, they possess the wisdom to somehow find a way to resolve differences of opinion and conflicts through dialogue and to move forward together in harmony. Wherever there are wise women, one finds a steady tide toward peace and harmony being created. The Daishonin says, “Women will open the gateway” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1566). In the unending advance of our kosen-rufu movement, it will be women—and especially young women—who will open the gateway of good fortune and benefit, of hope, of eternal victory.

In their families as well, the young women possess an unfathomable ability to positively influence and motivate their parents and siblings in a natural way. Their activities and conduct have also contributed to many prominent individuals in society deepening their understanding of the SGI movement.

A case in point is the late Japanese writer Sawako Ariyoshi, whom I once had a chance to talk with. Though she was a Christian, she apparently developed a profound appreciation of our activities through seeing the bright, confident attitude of our young women.

By the way, I remember second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once humorously remarked that he wanted to be reborn as a beautiful woman and work in that capacity to further worldwide kosen-rufu. [At the 2nd Young Women’s General Meeting, held Dec. 19, 1954, President Toda said: “In ‘The Teacher of the Law’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra, it says that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra ‘freely choose where they will be born’ (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 163). So I want to be born as a woman next time. But not just any

woman—I want to be born as a great beauty.... I want to be born as a woman who is intelligent...and who is acclaimed for her beauty around the world. Of course, since I will be such a striking beauty, people will want to buy photographs of me. When they ask me to autograph them, I will refuse unless they take up faith! ... I aim to make great contributions to kosen-rufu!”]

The young women’s division is the flower and the treasure of kosen-rufu. As such, we must thoroughly support and encourage the young women. The brighter the young women shine, the brighter the Soka Gakkai shines.

Today’s young women will determine the course of the 21st century.

George Sand, a famous French writer, was a social activist who worked hard to realize her dream of a “republic of friendship.” In connection with that ideal, she writes, “The most respected in this society will not be the most learned but those with the highest degree of wisdom and honesty.”

I agree with her completely. I, too, have always placed the utmost value on wisdom and honesty.

The French author also says: “It is their goodness that makes the people so strong. And that makes them the greatest of friends.”

Elsewhere she says: “Go ahead and defame us if you will. The wise and good-hearted people can tell who their true friends are now and in the future.”

A beautiful realm of friendship woven by good, honest people—this is the Soka Gakkai. Important are not the famous or powerful. We must make friends and allies of wise, ordinary people.

Since the early days of the Soka Gakkai, vibrant young women have been the driving force of kosen-rufu. I hope that our young women here in Kansai will be a model for all Japan and advance in the vanguard of our movement, like their pioneering predecessors before them. This is not a difficult thing. All it requires is working together in harmony and close cooperation.

I hope our young women will strive to be good daughters to their parents and to become people well liked and trusted at their places of work.

You, the present generation of young women, will ring in the second series of Seven Bells. You have a mission to write a glorious history—a mission that you will share with your children’s generation.

Today’s young women will determine the course of the 21st century, of the next 100 years. It is no exaggeration to say that whether the Soka Gakkai develops or declines hinges on the young women.

That is why I want our men’s and young men’s division members to value and support the young women.

I ask for your sincere cooperation in creating an environment where the young women can advance with confidence, hope and joy.

We have entered an age of opportunity, in which every-thing can be improved.

In October 1930, just one short month before the Soka Gakkai’s founding, India’s future prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru—who also, incidentally, once visited Kansai—wrote from prison: “But a time comes when a whole people become full of faith for a great cause, and then even simple, ordinary men and women become heroes, and history

becomes stirring and epoch-making. Great leaders have something in them which inspires a whole people and makes them do great deeds.”

When the people move into action, history is set in motion—this was Nehru’s view after long consideration of world history, past and present, East and West. It was also the firm conviction of my mentor, Mr. Toda.

This truth has been borne out by the Soka Gakkai itself. Countless humble ordinary men and women stood up together with the great leaders Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda and went on to become heroes who changed history.

And now we approach the 21st century. The time is upon us. We have entered an age of seismic changes, where established forces are collapsing and new forces are emerging. It is an age of opportunity, when the new and old will be evenly matched. At the same time, it is an age fraught with danger.

Let us seize the present as a golden opportunity to usher in an age of peace and humanity. Through an alliance of awakened people, let us create a history of towering achievement.

When I arrived at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium today, a brilliant ray of light broke through the cloud cover. Like that bright burst of sunshine, let us send the light of hope to a clouded, chaotic world. This is the mission of the Soka Gakkai.

It is time for every single one of our members in Kansai, in the rest of Japan and across the globe to leave behind a legacy of indestructible achievement as champions of kosen-rufu. It is our chance to build selves that shine with tremendous good fortune.

There is no true joy or fulfillment in a life without aim or focus, a life passed in empty pleasures. The final days of one who lives this way will be sad and forlorn.

The eminent physicist Albert Einstein writes: “Our time is distinguished by wonderful achievements in the fields of scientific understanding and the technical application of those insights. Who would not be cheered by this? But let us not forget that knowledge and skills alone cannot lead humanity to a happy and dignified life. Humanity has every reason to place the proclaimers of high moral standards and values above the discoverers of objective truth.”

To proclaim lofty spiritual values—this exemplifies our SGI activities. All of you therefore are the most respectable people in the world. You are walking the most elevated path there is in life.

None are more noble than those who uphold the Mystic Law. The Daishonin tells us this repeatedly. I hope you will proudly advance with this conviction.

To be continued in an upcoming issue

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN KOSEN-RUFU FROM THIS SPEECH:

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“Women will open the gateway” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1566). In the unending advance of our kosen-rufu movement, it will be women – and especially young women – who will open the gateway of good fortune and benefit, of hope, of eternal victory.

- 1) Why do you think women have a natural ability to resolve conflicts and bring people together?
- 2) Who are some examples of women in history who have made outstanding progress for world peace?
- 3) Who are some of the heroic women you have met in the SGI organization? How have they changed your life?
- 4) Why do you think SGI President Ikeda is emphasizing the importance of young women in this speech? At this time in history?
- 5) What are ways that all of us – whether men or women – can support the growth of women?