

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 30 MESSAGE PARENTS AND CHILDREN PRACTICING TOGETHER

**‘When parents and children practice correct faith together,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘they can be born together in lifetime after lifetime, enjoying an unsurpassed state of being. Only when our children carry on faith does the ideal Buddhist path of the oneness of parent and child become possible.’**

*SGI President Ikeda's message to the Tokyo General Ward Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Jan. 30.*

To the general ward leaders of Tokyo—an area that is making such valiant strides forward: Thank you for all your hard work! As a token of my profound respect and appreciation, and in commemoration of this gathering of outstanding leaders, I want to share some thoughts with you today.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda once said: “The way to kosen-rufu is to take the lead in steadily carrying out what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, with tenacity and courage. I say, ‘Cowards be gone!’”

Today, Jan. 30, marks the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's death. Gandhi, who fought throughout his life to construct an ideal India, declared, “There is no place for cowardice or making excuses.” He also said, “I am not a man who would, after having formed any intention, leave it easily.” And he asserted, “Someone who cannot boldly announce a determination and resolutely carry it out following the dictates of his or her conscience cannot be called a person of courage.”

I hope you will all be courageous people of action, who leave a brilliant mark on history.

### **The essence of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is to chant both for oneself and others.**

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, the daimoku that Nichiren chants is different from that of previous ages—it is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that encompasses practice both for oneself and for others” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022).

Some great Mahayana Buddhist teachers of the Former and Middle days of the Law—such as Nagarjuna and the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai—also chanted the daimoku of the Mystic Law. But they practiced only to receive the benefit of the Law themselves, and as such their daimoku was limited to practice for oneself. Since they did not share this teaching with others, it was not daimoku encompassing practice for others.

In contrast, the essence of the Daishonin's Buddhism is to chant daimoku both for oneself and others, and to lead all humanity to peace and happiness in the Latter Day of the Law and for all eternity. This means chanting to help people become happy and advancing with faith that is directed toward realizing kosen-rufu in society.

The daimoku chanted by those who exert themselves bravely and vigorously for this cause—even if just one daimoku—has more benefit and power than 1,000 or 10,000 daimoku chanted without any goal or accompanying action. Having faith that is dedicated to kosen-rufu is what counts.

The Daishonin declares, “My wish is that all my disciples make a great vow” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1003). Elsewhere he explains, “The ‘great vow’ refers

to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 736). The Soka Gakkai, which is advancing in exact accord with the Buddha’s will and decree, is the only organization in the world that is working tenaciously, while overcoming countless obstacles, to achieve the great vow of kosen-rufu as the Daishonin had hoped.

### **To overcome any obstacle with joy and delight – this is faith.**

Half a century ago, on Jan. 29, 1952, I attended an urgent Kamata Chapter group leaders meeting in Tokyo. It was an extremely cold night, and the meeting was held at a local assembly hall. I was a 24-year-old chapter staff at the time.

I called to the 130-or-so noble members present: “February is the month of the Daishonin’s birth. And Feb. 11 is President Toda’s birthday. It goes without saying that we were able to encounter this faith because of the Daishonin’s appearance in the world, and also thanks to the fact that President Toda stood up, all alone, for kosen-rufu. Through President Toda’s guidance, we have received benefit and become happy. How will we repay this immense debt? The answer is, by introducing others to this Buddhism and expanding the flow of kosen-rufu. Let us celebrate the month of President Toda’s birth by realizing a splendid victory!”

The members’ hearts blazed with a shared determination to do just that. Some participants set off directly from the meeting place to visit friends and talk to them about Buddhism. This is how the February Campaign, which has since become a Soka Gakkai tradition, started.

I fought with all my heart as a youth and as President Toda’s disciple. The youth division, the women’s and men’s division—everyone united and exerted themselves tirelessly. Members gathered each day in high spirits at the Shiraki residence, the central base for our Kamata Chapter activities. Back in those days, there were still few people who had telephones.

Shizuko Shiraki, the Kamata Chapter women’s leader, not only traveled all around Tokyo but to the chapter’s regional bases as well, including snowy Akita and areas such as Nagoya, Hamamatsu, Omiya, Funabashi and Yamanashi. [In the Soka Gakkai’s early days, new members automatically joined the same chapter as the person who introduced them to the practice, irrespective of where they lived in Japan. This system was known as the vertical-line organization. Later, a localized organizational system was introduced, enabling members to practice in organizational units in the localities where they lived.]

Everyone happily set himself or herself to the challenge of propagating the Daishonin’s Buddhism. Even when they met with a hostile or unwelcome reception, they cheerfully reminded one another, “This is just as the Daishonin teaches.”

To dauntlessly overcome any obstacle with joy and a sense of delight, and resolutely advance toward victory—this is the world of faith.

Through this momentous, joyful struggle, we succeeded in increasing Kamata Chapter’s membership by 201 households in the course of a single month—a feat that no other chapter had realized. Until then, a propagation level of around 100 households per month had seemed like the maximum that could be achieved.

The full-fledged advance toward the realization of a membership of 750,000 households—the goal that President Toda, at his inauguration on May 3, 1951, had pledged to accomplish in his lifetime—began with this February Campaign.

From that point forward, I always succeeded in achieving the No. 1 results in Japan—in the young men’s division 1st Corps, in Tokyo’s Bunkyo Ward, in Sapporo for the

summer regional propagation campaign, in Kansai, in Yamaguchi Prefecture and in Tokyo's Arakawa and Katsushika wards.

Faith means striving to realize kosen-rufu. If we forget this struggle, our faith is no longer genuine.

### **Nothing can stop us when we base ourselves on the just cause of the SGI.**

Incidentally, the other day my eldest son, Hiromasa, commented on the episode in *The Human Revolution* in which President Toda entrusts me with the goal of realizing a membership of 10 million people.

This episode, recounted in the "Successors" chapter of volume 12, took place on Feb. 10, 1958. President Toda had just overcome a serious bout with illness, but he was still physically very weak. The next day, Feb. 11, he would celebrate his 58th birthday — which would prove to be his last.

I had just returned to Tokyo by overnight train following a three-day guidance tour of Kansai. Directly upon arriving in Tokyo that morning, I hurried to my mentor's home. President Toda was overjoyed when he heard my report on the Kansai members' spirited advance. He told me: "The Kansai organization is firmly established. I think we can say that the foundation for the entire kosen-rufu movement in Japan has now been securely laid."

He asked, "Daisaku, do you think you can accomplish a membership of 3 million households in the next seven years?" Then he mused: "I wonder how far our membership will develop through your efforts? What a magnificent age it will be when we have 10 million people practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism! I cannot wait. I really cannot wait for that day." Achieving a membership of 10 million people was a goal that President Toda bequeathed to me.

Shortly after the great victory of 1956 in Osaka, in which we accomplished what everyone said was impossible [having a Soka Gakkai-sponsored candidate elected for the first time to the Upper House], President Toda and I discussed the 21st century. As though prophesying the future, my mentor said, "Daisaku, in your later years, the Soka Gakkai will no doubt become a vital nucleus of peace and culture for humankind."

He also said: "The Soka Gakkai will undoubtedly become the king of the religious world. As such, it will send people of outstanding ability into all spheres of society, into the political, economic, educational and cultural realms. This is our mission. The great human revolution of each one of these people will contribute immensely to human society in the new century."

That was President Toda's vision for the Soka Gakkai in the 21st century. The Soka Century, exactly what he envisioned, has now begun.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China says, "One's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena" (WND, 366). In accord with the principle of 3,000 realms in a single life-moment, a strong determination for kosen-rufu exerts an impact on society, the environment and even the universe. Nothing can match the power of our faith and practice when we base ourselves on the just cause championed by the Soka Gakkai.

This February is the first February of the 21st century. It also marks the 101st anniversary of President Toda's birth. As the world's leading proponents of culture and peace, let us energetically strive to achieve another history-making February Campaign toward the expansion of kosen-rufu, President Toda's dream.

## **Good-hearted individuals deserve the world's greatest respect.**

On the night of Jan. 26, a man fell from the platform at Shin-Okubo Railway Station in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward. Two people—a Japanese photographer named Shiro Sekine, 47, and a South Korean student named Lee Su Hyon, 26—jumped onto the tracks in a heroic rescue attempt, but were tragically killed, along with the man who fell, by an oncoming train.

Mr. Lee had come to Japan as a student of the prestigious Korea University, with the dream of becoming a bridge between South Korea and Japan. He was a fine youth who worked part time to support himself while attending a Japanese language school in Tokyo.

He and the photographer, Mr. Sekine, were good-hearted, generous individuals, who could not simply ignore others when they were in trouble. Everyone mourned their noble deaths. I also offered prayers for their repose.

Two years ago in July, an All Nippon Airlines jumbo jet traveling from Tokyo to Sapporo, Hokkaido, was seized by a knife-wielding hijacker, who had forced his way into the cockpit. Concerned first and foremost for the safety of his passengers, Capt. Naoyuki Nagashima, 51, remained calm and collected, speaking quietly to the man throughout.

With great courage, he stood up to the hijacker, who attempted to seize the controls and fly the plane himself. In the process, Capt. Nagashima was mortally wounded, giving his life in the performance of his duties. But through his selfless actions, none of the 503 passengers, who included four infants, were hurt.

It is such individuals, I am sure you all agree, who are deserving of the country's highest commendation.

## **It is important to help our children inherit faith.**

The most sublime, eternal human drama is found in the dynamic transmission of correct faith, philosophy and belief from parent to child, from senior to junior, from mentor to disciple.

The Daishonin cites apparently conflicting sutra passages concerning children. One passage says that children are enemies, who cause their parents suffering and rob them of their very lives, while another says that children are treasures, who lead their parents to enlightenment (WND, 1043–44, 1091).

How important it is to help our children inherit faith! When children embrace faith, we can be assured of having prayers offered for us after we die. Moreover, when parents and children practice correct faith together, they can be born together in lifetime after lifetime, enjoying an unsurpassed state of being. This is what the Daishonin teaches. [In a letter addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the Daishonin writes: "I hear that your father's strong faith in the Lotus Sutra allowed him, a warrior, to face the final moment of his life with an unwavering certainty of attaining Buddhahood. How the spirit of your late father must be rejoicing from beyond, as you, his son, carry on his legacy through your own faith in the correct teaching. How happy he would surely be to behold your faith if he were alive. All those who embrace this sutra, even though they may be strangers to one another, will be able to meet again at Eagle Peak. In view of this, it is certain that you and your late father, since you both embrace faith in the Lotus Sutra, will be reborn in the same place" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1508-09).]

Only when our children carry on faith does the ideal Buddhist path of the oneness of parent and child become possible. For it is this that ensures the eternal perpetuation of the Law.

## **Raising our children to be active in the organization guarantees kosen-rufu's expansion.**

Abraham Lincoln, 16th president of the United States, shared a close friendship with John H. Addams, an Illinois senator. Addams was known for his uprightness and impartiality. The corrupt and underhanded feared him and would reportedly try to avoid all contact.

Addams taught and transmitted the essence of his passion for American democracy to his daughter. He even brought his daughter with him to see President Lincoln, whom he deeply admired.

On one occasion, he attended a local gathering of old settlers of a certain regional area with his daughter. During the event, Addams stood up and reminisced about his efforts to drum up support for the construction of a railroad.

As a young man, he had worked hard to convince farmers to support the project financially, but for the most part his words fell on deaf ears. At length, he became discouraged and began to lose hope. His sense of despair was immediately dispelled, though, by the enthusiasm of a woman in a farming community who brightly and vigorously voiced her support. "It's an important project, and I support it!"—this, no doubt, was her conviction. The woman's wholehearted endorsement breathed new life into the railway project, which had become deadlocked.

Later on, no matter how high the position he attained, Addams, a true champion of democracy, never forgot his debt to this ordinary, unknown woman. Having become a leader and highly respected member of society, Addams told the audience about his unwavering sense of gratitude to the woman who had supported him so long before.

Then, something unexpected happened. From within the audience, an old woman called out in a piping voice, "I'm here today, Mr. Addams, and I'd do it again if you asked me." The woman was still alive and well. And she was there at the gathering.

Addams immediately beckoned her to the stage. He greeted the woman, who was now frail and bent with age, with the greatest deference. And he dramatically and proudly introduced her as "one of the public-spirited pioneers to whose heroic fortitude we are indebted for the development of this country."

The entire audience was moved. Addams' daughter, who was 15, was deeply touched by the scene. It impressed upon her the conviction that the people themselves are the true heroes and the driving force that moves a country.

This is also the SGI's spirit.

Addams had instilled in his daughter a noble spirit of respect for the people, a sense of pride in living together with the people and the courage to fight on the people's behalf. Addams' daughter was the famous Jane Addams, who would later champion the cause of society's most destitute, bringing about a renaissance in education and welfare, working untiringly for the happiness of women and world peace. [In 1931, Jane Addams became the first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.]

My mentor, President Toda used to say, particularly to women: "Please raise your children to be fine people, and send them out into society to contribute to kosen-rufu. It is important that parent and child advance together with the Soka Gakkai, which is carrying out the Buddha's will and decree."

If our children part ways with the SGI, they themselves will shut off the flow of good fortune that we have striven so hard to accumulate in our family. Raising our children to become active in our organization leads to the great advance of the SGI and the steady,

ongoing expansion of our kosen-rufu movement into the future.

This is a very important point for the SGI's continued development in the 21st century. I want to reconfirm this point today, for the sake of the future.

### **No one can stop the SGI members' cry of the spirit.**

In the letter "On Persecutions Befalling the Sage," the Daishonin writes: "Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion king fears no other beast, nor do its cubs. Slanderers are like barking foxes, but Nichiren's followers are like roaring lions" (WND, 997).

Commenting on this passage, President Toda said: "The Soka Gakkai's propagation is the roar of the lion king. It is only natural that the villainous should be startled and tremble in fear. Without this confidence, one absolutely cannot be called a disciple of the Daishonin. How solemn and magnificent is this confidence!"

President Toda also declared: "No matter how people might hate us or scheme to bring us down, no matter who might make a commotion, you must have no fear! They are like dogs or foxes. We are lion kings!"

The indomitable courage of the lion king is the Soka Gakkai's eternal spirit. "Advance with courage!" — this is President Toda's legacy.

To close, I want to share some words of wisdom from some great intellects:

- The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte says, "Let all else abandon me, so long as I don't lose my courage."
- Thomas Jefferson, the father of democracy and 3rd president of the United States, addressing the need to keep a careful watch over the powerful, warns, "Let the eye of vigilance never be closed."
- The British author Charlotte Brontë proclaims, "Neither king nor emperor has authority to silence the inner voice that at times every man hears speaking in his heart."

No one can stop the cry of the spirit. It is by speaking the truth, by speaking out for justice, that we open the curtain on a bright age in which the people are victorious. Japan and the entire world are watching your efforts toward total victory here in Tokyo, the main force of kosen-rufu.

Please convey my warmest regards to all the members in your respective areas. Please stay in good health!