

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 11 SPEECH TO GIVE EVERYONE THE JOY OF WINNING

**‘Through victory, justice is proven,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘To give everyone the joy of victory—that is the mission and the glory of a leader. Toward that end, leaders have to work many times harder than others, taking concrete action and opening a way forward.’**

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at a conference for region leaders, held at the Soka Culture Center at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, April 11.*

Thank you all for your efforts to attend this region leaders conference. In every part of the country, members are achieving unprecedented success in advancing kosen-rufu and their lives. It is a great cause for joy that we are able to welcome the long-awaited date of May 3, 2001, amid this rising tide of successive victories. I want to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to all the members.

The humanism of the SGI is also spreading in Asia, Africa and throughout the world. The dawn of the new century is a time of tremendous promise for kosen-rufu. This is a most auspicious juncture. A time of golden opportunity has arrived.

Those who fail to exert themselves at the crucial time cannot attain Buddhahood. Discarding vanity and concern for appearances, let us cause the “gears” of our hearts to mesh and resolutely advance along the great path of supreme faith.

In a well-known passage, Nichiren Daishonin instructs a lay disciple as follows: “I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province. It is stated that ‘the seeds of Buddhahood sprout as a result of conditions, and for this reason they preach the single vehicle’” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1117). Each of you has been solemnly entrusted by the original Buddha, the Daishonin, with the realization of kosen-rufu in your area in the 21st century. Please create a splendid, glorious history in the land of your mission.

A leader has to stand up in the vanguard. You must not simply leave everything up to others. It is the duty of leaders to rack their minds in an effort to enable everyone to advance with joy, self-confidence and soaring hope.

We need to strive daily to build and expand our connections with people based on Buddhism, sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law and the seeds of victory in their hearts. These seeds will assuredly blossom as flowers of peace and happiness that fill the new century with exquisite fragrance.

### **Society is placing more and more trust in our movement for peace.**

Buddhism becomes manifest in society. SGI members throughout the world are building wonderful trust in their respective countries.

The other day I received a fax from the South American country of Bolivia. The words of SGI-Bolivia General Director Takeshi Kamiya and Vice General Director Katsuo Takeno seemed to dance with joy on the page. They related how a special session of the city council of San Lorenzo was held April 7, with Mayor Freddy Antelo, the city council president and all members attending. There, City Council Secretary Elvira Antelo de Adriazola read a declaration stating that the city was awarding my wife and I, representing

SGI members in 163 countries and territories, the title of Illustrious Guests, in praise of our activities for peace. Mr. Takeno accepted the commendation on our behalf.

Mayor Antelo also delivered a touching congratulatory speech. He said that while the world is full of confusion, with materialism and egoism running rampant, SGI members in Bolivia and throughout the world are “sowing seeds of compassion and peace.”

Following the city council session, SGI-Bolivia members planted 30 cherry tree saplings in a park adjacent to the city hall. The park has a statue of the city’s illustrious native son José Eustaquio Méndez Arenas, a high-minded, courageous leader of independence, who stood up on behalf of the oppressed.

While a bouquet of flowers was presented at the base of the statue, the SGI-Bolivia Fife and Drum Corps performed a lovely melody praising Méndez. The event was attended by a direct descendent of the hero. Mayor Antelo declared that April 7, 2001, the date of the presentation, be designated Peace Day in the city.

I also recently accepted an honorary citizenship from the Bolivian city of Tarija and an education award from the state of Tarija. I have taken the liberty of reporting these matters as proof of the absolute trust that society places in our movement for peace.

Our friends in Bolivia are making wonderful contributions to society. A showing of the exhibition “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” in Santa Cruz last August was visited by 110,000 people. This comes to fully 10 percent of the city’s population of 1.13 million. Bolivian President Hugo Banzer and Mr. Tito Hoz de Vila Quiroga, the country’s minister of Education, Culture and Sports, sent congratulatory messages to the opening, which was attended by many distinguished guests.

SGI members’ victory in spreading waves of peace to 110,000 citizens is all the more remarkable in light of the fact that the membership in the city comes to only about 500 households. In advance of the showing, everyone made a concerted effort to visit universities, educational institutions and all 1,030 schools in the city. The exhibit’s great success was the direct result of their steadfast, earnest efforts to carry out dialogue with as many people as possible.

The exhibition also elicited a powerful reaction when it was shown in the Bolivian capital, La Paz, in September and October 2000. More than 52,000 citizens visited that showing, yet it was organized by a core group of only 27 members.

The opening ceremony was attended by former First Lady Ximena Iturralde de Sánchez de Lozada. And Education Minister Hoz de Vila Quiroga toured the exhibit with great interest.

During a visit to the Bolivia Culture Center in February, the education minister praised SGI members for having helped raise interest in peace among Bolivia’s citizens. He added that he had been looking forward to seeing their activity center with his own eyes. [Last December, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports awarded SGI President Ikeda the Medal of Merit in the Grade of Comendador (Knight Commander), one of its highest honors.]

### **You cannot become a great person without winning a life-or-death struggle.**

The great liberator of Latin America, Simón Bolívar, after whom Bolivia takes its name, says, “The noblest thing that a man can do is to enlighten his fellow men.” In Bolivia today, the SGI members are harmoniously, vibrantly conducting dialogue to enlighten others. And the activities of the SGI women, led by Women’s Leader Masako Kamiya and Women’s Peace Forum Chairperson Hiroko Sasaki, stand out in particular.

Once a year, the Women's Peace Forum, which is composed of both women's and young women's division members, holds peace gatherings in cities across the country. By promoting the study of local history and the lives of distinguished individuals, they are sending out waves of fresh inspiration to society. Through holding joyful dialogue with local cultural figures, they are constructing an important network of humanism.

The Mystic Law activates all things. Through its practice, we can give full play to the unique character and culture of our particular area, causing it to blossom. While earnestly seeking to contribute to the community, we can create and expand a seamless, boundless solidarity of peace and justice.

Franz Tamayo, the Bolivian poet activist, calls out: "It is necessary to teach people to speak up about the truth, and to be honest with themselves, too. The worst evil is not evil by itself—if any exists. Even worse is to know about the existence of evil and to conceal it, or to see it and yet remain silent."

Another poet, Fernando Diez de Medina, says: "To fight for truth and beauty is not easy. But to fight among mountains, harassed by envy and ingratitude, and among people of denial and silence, that is even more difficult." Those who undertake such an extremely difficult struggle of words are truly great.

Tamayo declares: "Nothing is proven by simply suffering a great deal. However, it is possible to prove that we are greater than our suffering." And Bolívar cries out, "Victory led by justice has always been our guide."

Through victory, justice is proven. To give everyone the joy of victory—that is the mission and the glory of a leader. Toward that end, leaders have to work many times harder than others do, taking concrete action and opening a way forward.

In any realm of activity, one cannot become a person of the highest caliber without overcoming some kind of life-or-death struggle. And this is all the more true when it comes to the strict path of mentor and disciple in Buddhism.

Young people, in particular, ought to delight in hard work. They should determine with genuine humility to struggle hundreds of times harder than others. For only thus is it possible to become a great leader.

### **Gandhi's followers had the faith that they were always together with their mentor.**

In Bolivia and other countries around the world, the activities of women truly shine. The Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize was recently awarded at Morehouse College, which is a stronghold of human rights. Gandhi, who deeply trusted and had the highest expectations for women as champions of peace, says, "I have worshipped woman as the living embodiment of the spirit of service and sacrifice."

In 1930, the year of the Soka Gakkai's founding, Gandhi, having set his sights on the new target of winning India's total independence, initiated a nationwide movement that led to a decisive confrontation with the powerful colonial regime. That March, he began his historic Salt March. [The British colonial government that ruled India had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt, on which it levied a high tax. Gandhi challenged this oppressive system by marching with his followers to the sea to make salt. Over the course of 24 days, they walked some 240 miles.]

As the struggle spread during April and May, many women bravely stood up and surged to the front of the popular movement, taking the place of men who had been imprisoned. One of the central figures among them was the poet Sarojini Naidu, who is known as the

Nightingale of India.

When Gandhi was imprisoned after completing the Salt March, Naidu nobly called out to her comrades, “Gandhi’s body is held in jail, but Gandhi’s spirit exists within all of you.” Always together with the mentor! Always together with justice! With this faith, they fought on without any fear. News organizations transmitted accounts of this nonviolent struggle and the ensuing onslaught of repression, rallying international public support.

For me, the courageous efforts of those women call to mind the valiant struggles of the women of the Kansai Soka Gakkai, who joined me in overcoming the Osaka Incident and many other difficulties, as well as achieving unprecedented propagation results during the Osaka Campaign. [In the Osaka Campaign of May 1956, the Kansai members, rallying around President Ikeda, who had been dispatched by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda to support them, introduced 11,111 households to the practice of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In the 1957 Osaka Incident, President Ikeda was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in an Osaka by-election. In January 1962, at the end of a lengthy trial, he was fully exonerated of all charges.]

### **Sincere praise encourages the growth of young people.**

What lent still more force to Gandhi’s campaign was the appearance and ripple effect of new leaders, new classes—new people from new communities standing up and summoning unstoppable passion. Today, in every region of Japan, new capable people are awakening one after another to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and vigorously taking their place on center stage.

This is truly the rhythm of a victorious struggle. The unity of capable people will expand to the extent that leaders develop their own state of life and exert themselves with all-out intensity.

In his work *The System of Value-Creating Education*, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, says, “The root of every deadlock in society and all spheres of endeavor comes down to a lack of capable people.” The “humanistic competition” that he proposed is also the competition to raise capable people.

Praise encourages growth—this is particularly true in the case of young people. I hope that leaders in the men’s and women’s divisions, as experts in humanistic education, will earnestly seek to encourage, train and raise capable successors.

The first recipient of the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Award was His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, who has made important contributions to peace in the Middle East. Prince Hassan is president of the Club of Rome, a gathering of some of the world’s leading intellectuals, and is active in a number of international organizations. [President Ikeda is an honorary member of the Club of Rome.]

Prince Hassan has highly praised the SGI’s movement for peace. He emphasizes that the SGI places importance on education, and that its activities are based on a philosophy of the sanctity of life and the value of the human being. He has described our movement as playing an extremely important role in the world and has expressed heartfelt sympathy with its ideals. Prince Hassan’s comments suggest a long-standing familiarity with the SGI’s philosophy of humanism and harmony.

Morehouse College is well known as the alma mater of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In conjunction with the presentation of the award, a special exhibition, “Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace,” was held on the campus. The world now looks to the SGI to carry on the movement of nonviolence.

## **The SGI's cry of justice is a struggle to change the spiritual climate of society.**

The purpose of our advance is to enable everyone to become happy and to create a world overflowing with the joy of life. Toward that end, we need to construct a society in which justice and reason are victorious.

In April 1275, the year after his return from exile on Sado Island, the Daishonin writes to Shijo Kingo: “I nearly had my head cut off. [But] Because I have persevered without fear, there are now people who think my teachings may be true. ... Watch what happens in the future. If those priests who abuse me should pray for the peace of the country, they will only hasten the nation’s ruin....

“I have enjoined the heavenly lords Brahma and Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings to punish those who have become enemies of the Lotus Sutra....

“When I speak in this way, the ruler and others may think I am making threats, but I in no way speak out of hatred. I speak out of the profound compassion to enable them to eradicate in this life the tortures of the hell of incessant suffering, into which they are otherwise destined to fall. The Great Teacher Chang-an said, ‘One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent.’ Nichiren, who admonishes them for their evil, is father and mother to the ruler, and the teacher of all living beings” (WND, 489).

The Daishonin makes this supremely confident declaration after overcoming a persecution that nearly cost him his life. I feel that the Daishonin’s words express his brilliant spirit of justice.

The members of the SGI—which is carrying on the Daishonin’s true spirit—have fearlessly overcome numerous persecutions arising from libelous allegations, just as the Daishonin instructs. Our cry of justice is a struggle to change the spiritual climate of society and construct true happiness and prosperity.

To a woman follower of admirable faith, the Daishonin writes: “The people of Japan, by becoming enemies of the Lotus Sutra, have brought ruin on themselves and their country. And because I proclaim this, I am called arrogant by those of little understanding. But I do not speak out of arrogance. It is simply that if I did not speak out I would not be the votary of the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, when my words prove later to be true, people will be able to believe all the more readily. And because I write this down now, the people of the future will recognize my wisdom.

“[*The Annotations on the Nirvana Sutra* states,] ‘One’s body is insignificant while the Law is supreme. One should give one’s life in order to propagate the Law.’ Because my body is insignificant, I am struck and hated, but because the Law is supreme, it will spread without fail....

“The benefits that come from opening the eyes of even one blind person are beyond description. How then is it possible to describe the benefits that derive from opening the blind eyes of all the Japanese people, and from giving the gift of sight to all human beings throughout Jambudvīpa and the other three continents? In the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra it reads, ‘If after the Buddha has passed into extinction one can understand the meaning of this sutra, one will be the eyes of the world for heavenly and human beings.’ Those who uphold the Lotus Sutra will be the eyes for all the heavenly and human beings in the world. Therefore, those Japanese who are hostile to me are in effect gouging out the eyes of all the heavenly and human beings in the world” (WND, 615).

The SGI members who are carrying on the Daishonin’s legacy are the “eyes” of the

people of Japan and the world in the 21st century. Hope for the new century rests with the victory of the SGI. Resolutely defeating all unjust slander, let us cause the great light of justice of the SGI to shine in our communities and throughout the world.

### **When we exert ourselves for kosen-rufu, we naturally become healthy.**

April 20 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. In 1956, on the newspaper's 5th anniversary, President Toda said: "We have the good fortune to have been born as human beings at the time of kosen-rufu and to devote ourselves to the Law, which is extremely difficult to encounter.

"How encouraging it is to think that the bodhisattvas Superior Practices and Boundless Practices, as well as Pure Practices and Firmly Established Practices are sure to appear to valiantly assist with the great work of kosen-rufu. The *Seikyo Shimbun* is working to accomplish this mission with these bodhisattvas as its standard-bearers. In truth, we can call it a most honorable newspaper. My hope is to enable all people in Japan to read this newspaper as soon as possible."

The *Seikyo Shimbun* has the determination and mission to accomplish kosen-rufu. It is brimming with hope and encouragement. It has a universe of poetic spirit, a flower garden of experience and offers a window on new philosophical horizons. It gives voice to the clarion cry of justice to resolutely battle the evil that tramples on humanity.

Through the printed page, it is facilitating dialogue with intellectuals around the world. It is creating a global solidarity of peace with friends the world over. This venerable paper now marks its 50th anniversary.

I offer my sincere gratitude to all those who have promoted the *Seikyo Shimbun* throughout the country, and to those uncrowned heroes who deliver it daily.

And I want to present all of you, who are leaders among leaders, with some words of wisdom.

The father of modern China. Sun Yat-sen, observes, "Out of faith power is born." It is not about other people. Everything depends on whether you yourself burn with dauntless faith.

The Athenian philosopher Isocrates says, "Base men wrong alike those who help and those who harm them." This is why we absolutely cannot ignore evil.

The legendary Chinese minister and strategist Chuko Kung-ming says: "When you seize the force of the moment to attack evil, you can manifest power surpassing even that of the sagely Huang Ti. When you gather together the strength of allies and victoriously advance, you can realize success surpassing even that of King Tang of the Yin dynasty, or King Wu of the Chou dynasty, who were known as great rulers. When you face your opponent, aware of your source of strength and utilizing it fully, you can defeat even a brave general who leads a force of ten thousand or a renowned hero."

The important thing is the time. It is a rising tide of enthusiasm. It is to pool our strength.

When we exert ourselves for kosen-rufu, we become healthy. Joy wells forth. We lead lives of increasing value.

Each of you should become a Chuko Kung-ming of kosen-rufu, a great leader who dauntlessly leads others toward certain victory. Be always youthful! Be vigorous! Be full of life force! That is my heartfelt wish.

Please convey my warmest regards to all the members in your area.