

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S APRIL 26 MESSAGE—PART 1 EXERTING OURSELVES TO CHANGE THE WORLD

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Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s message to a nationwide conference for prefecture leaders in Japan, held at the Soka Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, April 26.

Thank you all for your efforts to attend this conference. Kosen-rufu is an unceasing spiritual struggle. Each of these conferences is an important gathering that sets the rhythm for victory in our movement. To commemorate this occasion, I present you with this message.

With the arrival of May 3, 2001, we have at long last scaled the mountain of kosen-rufu in the 21st century. My sincere gratitude and praise to the leaders of all regions, prefectures and wards who have joined me in victoriously ascending many steep slopes.

In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” which I studied intensively during my youth, Nichiren Daishonin says: “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the practice of exerting oneself” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 790). Here, *exert* has two meanings: pure, in the sense of unsullied; and incessant, in the sense of continuous activity.

Exerting oneself means wholeheartedly, single-mindedly advancing forward, ever forward, without pause or vacillation. This is the essence of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Leaders should exert themselves bravely and vigorously, waging an earnest all-out struggle. Victory lies in such tenacious efforts. Trying to evade or run away from difficult challenges leads to decadence and destruction.

To raise young people is to raise the future.

At the 5th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, we made a vigorous departure toward 2030, the 100th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding (see the May 25 and June 1 issues of the *World Tribune*). This also marked the start of a new cycle of Seven Bells. Let us advance, making each of the coming 7- and 10-year intervals a milestone of victory and hope.

May 3, 2008, will signal the end of the 1st bell. The year 2010 will mark the Soka Gakkai’s 80th anniversary. May 3, 2015, will complete the 2nd bell. The year 2020 will mark the Soka Gakkai’s 90th anniversary.

Let us set our sights on crowning 2030, the 100th anniversary, with brilliant victory. During that time, we will also mark the 3rd bell (2015–22) and the 4th bell (2022–29).

The year 2050 will mark the Soka Gakkai’s 120th anniversary and the completion of the second cycle of Seven Bells. By that time, the members of the 1st class of Soka University of America and the present members of the student and future divisions will have reached the same stage in life as I have now.

To raise young people is to raise the future. I am wholeheartedly looking forward to the day when today’s youth are active in all sectors of society.

In “Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” the Daishonin says, “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years

and more, for all eternity” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 736). Each of you has the lofty, proud mission to become a wellspring nourishing the flow of kosen-rufu over the next 10,000 years.

We have to burn with the spirit of propagation.

The great minister and strategist Chuko Kung-ming, whose saga was made famous by the Chinese classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, says, “If the commanding general lacks courage, it is the same as having no general at all.” For a leader of kosen-rufu, courage means having the spirit of propagation. Someone who loses this spirit cannot be called a true leader of kosen-rufu.

Kung-ming also says, “The secret to certain victory lies in the capacity to respond to change.” In a struggle, we have to adroitly respond to changing circumstances.

The important question is whether we can create a situation in which victory is certain. And this depends entirely on our ability to fully avail ourselves of the opportunities that arise.

We have to open a way forward, burning with the spirit of propagation. We have to use every condition to our advantage, without letting any opportunity slip by.

In a letter to the Ikegami brothers and their wives, the Daishonin writes: “Nichiren’s teaching was especially difficult to believe at first, but now that my prophecies have been fulfilled, those who slandered without reason have come to repent. Even if in the future other men and women become my believers, they will not replace you in my heart. Among those who believed at first, many later discarded their faith, fearing that society would reject them. Among these are some who oppose me more furiously than those who slandered from the beginning.

“In Shakyamuni Buddha’s lifetime, the monk Sunakshatra believed the Buddha at first, then later not only backslid, but also slandered so viciously that even the Buddha could not save him from falling into the hell of incessant suffering” (WND, 502).

There are those who have turned against the benevolent world of Soka, who out of selfishness, greed and ugly jealousy have returned their debt with spite, betrayed their comrades and left the organization. What envy and chagrin they must now be feeling as they watch us celebrate this glorious May 3! What loneliness and regret they must feel in the depths of their hearts!

Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, used to say, “When those who have vilified the Soka Gakkai mournfully say to themselves, ‘Oh no, what have I done!’ — *that* will be the time of kosen-rufu.”

I was really delighted by the presence of members of the Makiguchi and Toda families, who are in excellent health, at the 5th Headquarters Leaders Meeting. This year marks the 130th anniversary of first Soka Gakkai president Tsu-nesaburo Makiguchi’s birth and the 50th anniversary of Mr. Toda’s inauguration.

Buddhism can only be protected by waging a sublime struggle.

Looking at the long sweep of history, we find that the Daishonin appeared 700 years after Buddhism was first transmitted to Japan from Korea. And that was 700 years from the time of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China.

The Daishonin says: “Now, more than 700 years after Buddhism was introduced to Japan...the great Law never heard of in previous ages is spreading throughout Japan. How reassuring it is to know that not only the people here, but those of India, China, and the

entire land of Jambudvīpa will be able to attain Buddhahood!” (WND, 482).

The SGI, which is actualizing the Buddha’s prophecy for the propagation of the Law throughout the entire world, was founded 700 years after the Daishonin waged his struggles for the Law. Were it not for the SGI, the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin’s writings would be nothing but collections of empty words.

The completion of each of these 700-year intervals has been occasioned by landmark struggles to protect the lifeblood of the Law. Buddhism can only be protected by waging a sublime, magnificent struggle of faith. A passage in the Nirvana Sutra that the Daishonin cites explains that 700 years after the Buddha’s death a villain appearing in the form of a sage or Buddha will seek to destroy the Law (see *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 651).

The Soka Gakkai has resolutely fought and defeated a conspiracy of corrupt priests seeking to destroy the Law that arose, just as this passage predicts, 700 years after the Daishonin’s passing. Advancing in the exemplary unity of many in body, one in mind, let us from May 3 make a new departure, loudly sounding a new cycle of Seven Bells in the new century.

The bell of peace resounds when each of us powerfully awakens to our mission.

The number seven has a mystic rhythm that is extremely profound. We find it in the seven characters of Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō, which is the fundamental rhythm of the universe itself. The great violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin, with whom I had an unforgettable exchange, said that he found the sound of Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō easy to hum and to have a very pleasant rhythm.

As the Daishonin says, “It is the power of the Buddhist Law that enables the deities of the sun and moon to make their rounds of the four continents” (WND, 685). The heavenly bodies all comport themselves in synch with the rhythm of the Mystic Law.

Advancing together with the Soka Gakkai, a body dedicated to accomplishing the Buddha’s will and decree, let us sound the victory bell of progress, fulfillment and expansion based on the rhythm of the Mystic Law that pervades the universe and all life. This is the path to accomplishing kosen-rufu and realizing growth in our lives. In such advance, there is positively no idleness, stagnation or deadlock.

It occurs to me that seven years was an important interval in the Daishonin’s struggles, too. Seven years after declaring the establishment of his teaching, on April 28, 1253, he admonished the ruler of the time with his submission of the landmark treatise “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” in 1260.

Just over seven years after that, in early 1268, Japan received an official demand that the country acknowledge fealty to the Mongol Empire. The first Mongol invasion of Japan, which the Daishonin had predicted in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching,” took place in 1274. And the second Mongol invasion followed again by seven years, in 1281.

Every seven years, society was thrown into great turmoil, and the clarion bell of “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” resounded throughout the country with increasing clarity.

The SGI has carried out extensive exchange with the Republic of Mongolia, the erstwhile seat of the Mongol Empire. [President N. Bagabandi was impressed on visiting the Soka University campus in Japan in May 1998. He has urged President Ikeda to visit Mongolia, saying that his country desperately needs the SGI leader’s philosophy.]

The Soka Gakkai proudly rang in the first cycle of Seven Bells from its founding in

1930. And last year, 2000, marked the Soka Gakkai's 70th anniversary. It could be said that this struggle compressed 700 years of history into a period of 70 years.

The daimoku chanted by our fellow members, the branching out of connections to Buddhism and the vast good fortune accumulated by members during the past 70 years are of an astronomical scale. This is indisputable. The SGI today shines with countless capable people and abounds with infinite energy.

We now begin a new cycle of Seven Bells, setting our sights on the year 2050. This will be a time for the SGI to further expand the solidarity of world citizens and construct an unshakable foundation of peace in Asia and the world.

The bell of peace resounds when each person powerfully awakens to his or her sense of mission. When we wholeheartedly persevere in waging an earnest spiritual struggle, the victory bell of justice rings.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.