

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 1 SPEECH—PART 2 PERSEVERANCE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

‘Perseverance is the key,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Determined perseverance—this is the secret to victory and glory.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 8th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, Aug. 1.

Today members from 27 countries, including France, South Korea and Brazil, join us. Thank you for coming from so far away!

The SGI is committed to forging bonds of friendship throughout the entire world. This is our basic policy.

Recently, a new SGI culture center was opened in Ivory Coast, a great country of peace in West Africa, and a lively general meeting was held to commemorate the event. [The culture center, located in the country's largest city and de facto capital, Abidjan, was completed on July 14, and the general meeting was held the following day.]

Speaking of Ivory Coast, I have met and talked at length with Mr. Amara Essy, the country's former minister of foreign affairs, now secretary-general of the African Union. Through that encounter in July 1999, we formed a strong bond of friendship.

Such meetings are part of my ongoing efforts for the prosperity of Africa, a continent I love so dearly, and for the happiness of our members there.

A true struggle means making strenuous, painstaking efforts behind the scenes, always being the first to take action on all fronts, always thinking ahead and being well prepared in advance, in order to open a sure path to victory.

My wife, who is constantly by my side, knows better than anyone does the efforts I make in this regard.

Happy people are always sincere, possessing the greatest inner strength.

Today, we have some 5,000 members active in Ivory Coast. SGI-Ivory Coast General Director André Déason is providing inspiring leadership. He is an assistant professor at the University of Abidjan-Cocody, specializing in computer science, and a model of intelligence in action. I have met and talked with him on several occasions. His French-born wife, Martine Déason, is SGI-Ivory Coast women's leader. Mr. and Mrs. Déason are both persons of great sincerity. Nothing can beat sincerity.

Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand. The happy are always sincere, and they possess inner strength. Such people shine as the ultimate victors.

Due in no small part to the exemplary character of Mr. and Mrs. Déason, understanding of the SGI is spreading rapidly in Ivory Coast. This is in complete accord with Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that "the Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856).

In Ivory Coast, it is our youth who are most active. They also comprise more than 60 percent of the entire membership in that country. By the youth inspiring and rallying other youth, their numbers continue to grow and grow. Young women's leader Djato Akoua,

incidentally, took 1st place in the Ivory Coast National Karate Championships in May.

In Japan, as well, the valiant efforts of our young women and men shine brilliantly. I wish to loudly proclaim, “The age of youth has arrived!”

The SGI has expanded to 177 countries and territories.

Let me share some news with you. Recently, at a women’s division meeting in the Tokyo area, I announced that the SGI had reached 166 countries and territories where there are members. Today, I can announce another 11 countries and territories where SGI members are practicing — bringing the grand total to 177. I proudly report this to all of you, as well as to Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, our first and second Soka Gakkai presidents [whose portraits hang in this auditorium].

Of the new countries and territories, four are in Africa. The first is the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the oldest independent country in Africa. The famous Olympic gold medalist Abebe Bikila, a marathon runner, was from Ethiopia.

The next is the Republic of Namibia, located in southwestern Africa, long wracked by civil war. Here, too, our fellow members are striving earnestly in faith, carrying aloft the banner of the great Buddhist teaching of peace.

Next is the Republic of Botswana, east of Namibia and famous for its diamonds.

And finally, we have SGI members on the island of Saint Helena, which is in the South Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa. Saint Helena is well known, of course, as the place of Napoleon’s exile and final days.

We have two new territories in North America and the Caribbean, as well. One is Bermuda in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Florida.

The second is the tropical island of Aruba in the southern Caribbean Sea. In both locations, women are the central driving force of SGI activities. The Age of Women is a global trend.

Another addition in South America is French Guiana, north of Brazil. The territory already has an active membership of some 150.

Next, in Europe, is the Republic of Estonia, on the Baltic Sea, and the idyllic Republic of Malta, in the Mediterranean.

Finally, there is the Isle of Man, which is situated between England and Ireland and is the home of the oldest regularly operating electric railway.

There are also SGI members in the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, long a victim of internal conflicts, in which many lives have been lost. Our members there are working wholeheartedly to help rebuild the country.

These 11 countries and territories now join the list of places where SGI members are sincerely striving for the sake of the Law. Let us share our joy at the increasingly rapid rate at which worldwide kosen-rufu is proceeding.

Our own efforts contribute to a dynamic momentum that spreads throughout the world.

Committed to the welfare of your local communities, you have all labored diligently under the hot sun in the noble cause of kosen-rufu, visiting the home of one friend after another out of sincere concern for each of their happiness. This is our greatest strength.

You have also carried out steadfast, tenacious one-on-one dialogue with many people. These unflagging efforts build on one another and are the reason why the Soka Gakkai will never perish. This is the foundation for great victory, for great construction.

Our earnest prayers and grassroots activities—starting from the local community and rippling out to the entire world, starting from the individual and rippling out to all humanity—create the momentum for the achievement of peace and kosen-rufu.

Some may think our daily activities are inconsequential and mundane. But I hope you will be aware and proud that each of our efforts contributes to a dynamic momentum that spreads throughout the entire world. The Age of the SGI has finally arrived, causing people around the world to sit up in wonder!

The unknown warriors who comprise the ranks of ordinary citizens are the true heroes.

Some 60 years ago, when Japan was in the grip of militarism, presidents Makiguchi and Toda intensified their efforts to propagate the Law. They manifested incredible life-force in the face of adversity. The harsher the wartime persecutions became, the stronger their faith and their courage grew.

At about the same time in Europe, the famous Battle of Britain took place [July–September 1940]. The future of the world hinged on the outcome of this critical battle between the evil forces of the Nazis, who were growing more powerful by the day, and the last bastion of the forces of democracy in Europe, the people of Britain. Hitler initiated a fierce attack on London, the British capital, with the aim of intimidating the populace and crushing their spirit.

Intimidation—this is the dictator’s perennial weapon of choice. The same is true of the Nichiren Shoshu priests, who have attempted to intimidate the SGI and have misused our members’ offerings.

But Hitler’s plan misfired. The invincible fighting spirit of the British people could not be crushed. They united with their military forces and repulsed the enemy. In the end, Hitler’s strategy failed. It was a miraculous victory of the British people.

Perseverance is the key. Determined perseverance—this is the secret to victory and glory.

Britain’s wartime leader, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, praises the actions of the British people, the “unknown warriors,” in defending their nation: “This is indeed the grand heroic period of our history, and the light of glory shines on all.” He declares that the unknown warriors who comprise the ranks of ordinary citizens are the true heroes. *Unknown warriors*—that also aptly describes all of you who are striving energetically for kosen-rufu.

I receive letters from many of our members. Some of them are from grandmothers of the SGI. These letters show me just how hard everyone is working. The brave, determined spirit that shines through the words bring tears to my eyes.

Sometimes, the sentences are awkward. Sometimes, there are misspellings. But all of these letters are from praiseworthy champions of kosen-rufu. Out of deep appreciation for their hard work, I cherish and preserve their letters.

When the Nazis were finally defeated, Churchill said, “The evil-doers...are now prostrate before us.” And he called out to the British people: “This is your victory! ... In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this.” I offer these words to all of you, noble fellow members in faith who have accomplished your own great victory.

Soka graduates are taking on important roles in every sphere of endeavor.

Graduates of Soka University and the Soka schools of both Tokyo and Kansai are beginning to make their mark in the world. They are taking on important roles in every

sphere of endeavor.

For instance, there are already some 3,000 Soka graduates active as educators. In April, a Soka University graduate was appointed principal of a junior high school in Japan for the first time. In addition, every year the number of Soka graduates teaching at overseas universities—in the United States, Kenya, Malaysia, mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan and Mexico, among other nations—is increasing.

I hope that, more than anyone else, those Soka University graduates who teach at their alma mater in Tokyo or at Soka University of America—which opened this year thanks to the unstinting support of SGI members—will stand in the vanguard and do their best as educators. I hope that they will hone their scholarship and take good care of their students.

The contributions and cooperative spirit of the Soka alumni also shine brilliantly in the world of business. Several Soka Junior and Senior High School alumni who are company presidents or run their own businesses generously supported the Tokyo and Kansai schools' annual student festival “Day of Glory,” which was held on July 17. I was very happy at this expression of their sincerity and devotion to their alma maters.

In addition, a member of the 1st graduating class of Soka University holds a top position in a leading company that was recently listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. The ranks of the Soka alumni now include more than 10 branch managers of banks.

We have entered the age when the achievements of the Soka alumni, graduates of Soka Education, are beginning to shine.

Many alumni also send their children to the Soka schools and Soka University. This is a beautiful expression of their love for their alma maters.

Years ago, President Makiguchi argued fiercely for educational reform, calling out: “Popularity-hungry politicians, wearing nearsighted spectacles that allow them to see only as far as the next election, pay no attention to the sphere of education, which needs long-range policies with a view toward the next hundred years.” Let us look to the far distant future with a broad, global perspective and advance our movement for humanistic education.

The July 25 *New York Times* ran a page 1 article introducing the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, in Orange County, Calif. (see the Aug. 10 *World Tribune*). One of the leading newspapers in the United States is giving serious attention to education and to SUA. The *Times* notes: “Here in the newest incorporated city in Orange County [Aliso Viejo]...humanistic, egalitarian values are to be put to work in the cause of world peace.” How happy presidents Makiguchi and Toda, the founders of Soka Education, must be!

I have worked selflessly without rest to convey the greatness of my predecessors, presidents Makiguchi and Toda, throughout the world while constantly striving to protect my fellow members. Nothing makes me happier than having fulfilled another of the vows that I made to my mentor, President Toda, by establishing SUA.

I am determined to do whatever I can to protect and promote for all time the development of Soka University, the Soka School System, and SUA—citadels of learning dedicated to fostering leaders for world peace.

Philosophy and spirituality are the foundation for the development of democracy.

Finally, I want to share the words of some great European thinkers with you.

Karel Havlíček Borovský was a famous Czech journalist and revolutionary fighter for his homeland. His works, written under the pseudonym Havel Borovský, had a strong

influence on Czechoslovakia's first president Tomáš Masaryk, who was also a great philosopher. Havlíček says, "One lie breeds a thousand lies, and one act of tyranny destroys a thousand rights." These are important words.

Victor Hugo writes, "Insult only strengthens my certainty and my will."

The father of European unification, Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, with whom I published a dialogue [available only in Japanese], says, "We need leaders rather than rulers." Democracy does not need rulers, it needs leaders—leaders of the people.

Count Coudenhove-Kalergi goes on to say, "We need a lofty spirit rather than lofty titles." Now we have the opposite—social renown overshadows inner substance. He also says: "We need rich hearts rather than rich purses. This is the spirit of democratic progress."

The heart is what matters most. Philosophical and spiritual values that foster inner richness are the foundation for the development of democracy.

I thank you all for coming here today in this hot weather. With a sincere prayer for the health and happiness of cherished fellow members everywhere, I close my speech. Please give my best regards to all those who could not attend today.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS SINCERITY LEADS TO HAPPINESS FROM THIS SPEECH:

Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand. The happy are always sincere, and they possess inner strength. Such people shine as the ultimate victor.... This is in complete accord with Nichiren Daishonin's teaching that "the Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856).

1) SGI President Ikeda says: "Victors are always sincere. The arrogant, who betray others' sincerity, always come to a fall in the end, even though it may seem for a time that they have gained the upper hand." Can you think of some examples in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* that show how sincere behavior leads to happiness and victory? Can you also think of examples from the Daishonin's writings or human history where the betrayal of others' sincerity created the betrayer's downfall? Do you have experiences in your own practice where your sincere behavior turned the tide to victory?

2) The Daishonin says: "The Law does not spread by itself. Because people propagate it, both the people and the Law are respectable" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856). How does this passage express the immense importance and dignity of ordinary people? Do you think this passage conveys the egalitarian and democratic spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism? If so, how? Based on this teaching, why is disparaging the noble sincerity of the Daishonin's believers such a serious offense? Do you think such betrayal must be countered? If so, why?