

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 7 SPEECH—PART 1 BUDDHISM IS FOUND IN SOCIETY

‘Buddhism is neither abstract nor a fairy tale,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘It is found and its truth is borne out in society.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at a nationwide executive leaders conference, held at the Soka Gakkai Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, Japan, Aug. 7.

Those who can always resolve “I will make a new departure!” “I will construct something new!” will be victorious in the end. By contrast, those who think “I’ve done enough already” are leading lives of defeat.

Buddhism is victory or defeat. Life is an eternal struggle. To the end, we should live with strength and vigor. In any realm of activity, reality is very strict. It is the power of Buddhism that enables us to win in any situation. Difficulties are inevitable in life—that is true for everyone. Herein lies a profound reason for our practice. We should always remember this.

The Soka Gakkai exists to widely propagate the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. In the course of this struggle, there will naturally be times when we are faced with extreme hardship and difficulty. People throughout Japan fiercely attacked the Daishonin. Nevertheless, he dauntlessly took action to open a great, eternal path of hope for all humankind. We are carrying on the Daishonin’s great legacy.

The Daishonin said, “A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs but, rather, one who thoroughly understands the principles by which the world is governed” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1121). Buddhism does not exist within a vainglorious monastery somewhere. It is neither abstract nor a fairy tale. It is found and its truth is borne out in society.

The Daishonin’s Buddhism is focused squarely on human beings. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, steadfastly spread the teaching among the people, who were laboring under extreme suffering. Buddhism and the advance of the Soka Gakkai exist in dedicating ourselves to others and imparting joy, causing flowers of happiness and victory to blossom, and in unfurling the banner of justice in society.

Advancing kosen-rufu comes down to propagating the teaching. Through such efforts, we are laying the foundation for an age of the people. Those who can actually expand kosen-rufu are genuine leaders. Those who cannot do this lack courage and are self-centered.

It is important to offer words and take actions that abound with compassion.

The mission of a leader is to put everyone’s mind at ease. Toward that end, it is very important to offer words and take actions that abound with compassion. This is in contrast to the authoritarian attitude of a person who tries to manipulate people as if they were machines, assuming that they will do whatever he says. The Soka Gakkai is a world of thoroughgoing humanism.

In all activities for kosen-rufu—such as the effort to expand subscriptions to

publications—we should always maintain a warm, humanistic spirit, rather than trying to whip up people’s motivation with a lot of shouting. Unless we appeal to others with a genuine sense of camaraderie, with the spirit “We’re going to do this together,” we will not elicit any strong, warm resonance in people’s hearts.

At any rate, as senior leaders you should earnestly pray that everyone in your region enjoys good health and can joyfully accomplish his or her mission. And you should set an example for others through your own actions. A leader who is indolent and who manifests the arrogance of authoritarianism is guilty of negligence [in denouncing evil and practicing good; one of the fourteen slanders].

If a leader attends a meeting and gives guidance but no one at the meeting feels joy or is motivated to take action, then it is not genuine guidance. To make matters worse, if the central figure is curt and unsociable, that makes a mockery of everyone’s efforts in having gathered in the first place.

It is important to sincerely, cheerfully thank everyone for their hard work and offer warm, heartfelt encouragement. I ask that you use your ingenuity to effect a “meeting revolution” with the aim of making each activity really interesting and significant for all participants.

The goal of kosen-rufu is a most daring, ambitious undertaking.

Today, to mark your new departure, I want to present you with insightful words from around the world.

Soong Ching Ling, wife of modern China’s great leader Sun Yat-sen, was hailed as the conscience of China. Madam Soong said, “We must keep close to our people.” The SGI likewise must always stand together with the people, advancing in the unity of many in body, one in mind.

Madam Soong also said: “If we let false rumors and alarms disturb us the revolution will be lost. But we shall stand firm, and the revolution will not be lost.”

As leaders, we must not ignore malicious, groundless rumors. Without steadfastly refuting false allegations and those who propound them, we cannot protect the members.

Sun Yat-sen said, “To accomplish a great enterprise, above all one must possess great will, great daring, and great resolve.” The goal of kosen-rufu toward which we are striving is a most daring, ambitious undertaking. There is no higher ideal of justice. All of you are leaders of a vast, historic enterprise.

President Toda strictly admonished: “No matter how painful the situation, as a leader you should always be high-spirited and vigorous when you are in front of others. This will put your fellow members’ minds at ease and win their support. Giving everyone hope and confidence is the role of a leader.”

I hope you will be model leaders who exemplify the principles of faith manifesting itself in daily life and faith equaling excellent health. Each day, morning and evening, I strongly, deeply pray for your health and longevity.

I next want to introduce the words of the French literary giant Victor Hugo. In parliament, he issued this impassioned cry: “The people must not suffer! The people must not go hungry! That is the serious problem we face; that is the danger. That alone, gentlemen, and no other!”

Hugo’s sole concern was the happiness of the people. He also said: “To be a nation of ideals is to be a nation of justice; to be a people of beauty is to be a people of truth.”

True beauty is found in the world of faith. Things like money or academic credentials

have absolutely nothing to do with faith. People with beautiful hearts are most respectable. Everyone admires such people, and all the Buddhas and Buddhist gods praise and protect them.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.