

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 7 SPEECH—PART 2 MEETING DIFFICULT TIMES WITH STRONG FAITH

‘During difficult times, we can overcome hardship through faith and renew our determination to dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘That has been the spirit of the Soka Gakkai since the early days of our movement, and it accords with Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching.’

The conclusion 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.

The German playwright Ernst Toller is well known as the first Jewish author to stand up to the Nazis. He wrote: “Beneath the yoke of barbarism one must not keep silence; one must fight. Whoever is silent at such a time is a traitor to humanity.”

I want to present these words to the youth in particular. One must not remain silent when confronted with acts of inhumanity. Silence amounts to tacit approval. If you are verbally attacked, then counter with 10 or 20 times the force. To manifest the blazing spirit to struggle like this is the proof of your youth.

The French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson observed that as long as we simply continue advancing, we will draw near our goal. In the process, moreover, we come to recognize that “the so-called obstacles were for the most part the effects of a mirage.”

The important thing is that we ever continue striving to realize our objective. It is true that not to advance is to backslide. When we challenge our circumstances with a strong determination, it suddenly dawns on us that things that had previously seemed onerous and difficult are in fact no big deal at all.

The mind is a wondrous thing. Everything changes completely depending simply on our frame of mind. That is the power and function of the Mystic Law of three thousand realms in a single moment of life.

The Chinese poet Su Shih asked, “Even if someone occupies a lofty place, if his spirit is base, then what can he truly gain?” No matter how high someone’s station, what good will it do the person if in his heart he is craven and lowly? Su Shih was not only a poet but a politician, and his words carry much weight.

This certainly goes for Soka Gakkai leaders. There is no need for leaders who have lost their spirit for kosen-rufu in the Soka Gakkai. I hope your hearts always overflow with a strong passion for kosen-rufu.

Also, I want you to be leaders of faith who sincerely respect their fellow members. Those who can respect their comrades in faith will in turn win their respect. This is cause and effect in Buddhism.

When facing a strong enemy, youth should play a leading role in our efforts.

This is the age of youth. Let us genuinely dedicate ourselves to raising fine young leaders. Let us do our best to develop the next generation.

By this, I do not mean that you should be doting or overly protective. The point is to offer steady training with due strictness and discipline. When new capable people are appointed to positions of leadership, new avenues open up.

At the same time, we need to treasure those who have worked hard for long years to construct the present foundation. When new leaders and old leaders unite in the spirit of mutual respect, the organization's strength increases many times over.

When facing a strong enemy, youth should play a leading role in efforts to defeat that enemy. But while playing a pivotal role, they must not become arrogant and cause disharmony with the women's division.

As always, our victory at the start of the 21st century was due to the victory of the women's division. It is only natural that everyone should respect and appreciate the women's division members, supporting them so that they can continue to freely, jubilantly carry out activities.

Just because someone has a high standing in the organization or status in society does not mean the person has faith. Someone who behaves arrogantly solely because he or she went to a prestigious school is the worst kind of person, utterly lacking in character. Some people are flashy, some are modest. Some people have advanced degrees, some do not. Some people are wealthy, some are poor. While all people are different, the important question is this—who is truly happy?

A person of conviction, who leads an upstanding life and demonstrates shining victory in society, is a true winner. More precisely put, a person who has faith is the ultimate victor. Buddhism exists to enable us to lead such a life. This is something that I want to clarify for the sake of the future.

**No matter how adverse our predicament,
we need to live out our lives with steadfast faith.**

The Japanese economy continues to be mired in severe recession. And no doubt many members are facing difficult circumstances on that account. I hope that as leaders you will show great sensitivity to people's individual situations.

At the same time, I want to remind you that no matter how adverse our individual predicament, we need to live out our lives based on steadfast faith. Only then can we accumulate all kinds of treasures in life as true benefit.

The Daishonin encouraged one of his precious disciples, "You should be willing to offer your life for the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 1003). He advised another follower not to "allow concern for your parents, wife, or children to hold you back, or be worried about your property" (WND, 764). The Daishonin offered very strict guidance out of his profound compassion for his disciples. It is an expression of austere love.

Faith means limitless hope. Through faith, we can accumulate infinite benefit and create a life of boundless victory. A commentary by the Great Teacher Dengyo states, "To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage" (WND, 402). During difficult times, we can overcome hardship through faith and renew our determination to dedicate our lives to kosen-rufu. That has been the spirit of the Soka Gakkai since the early days of our movement, and it accords with the Daishonin's teaching. Such tenacity of faith and conviction in the power of the Gohonzon generates the strength to overcome any obstacle.

The manner in which President Toda served, respected and protected President Makiguchi was awe-inspiring in every respect. When referring to President Makiguchi, President Toda was the image of solemnity itself.

The mentor-disciple spirit is the soul of the Soka Gakkai. It is the essential path of humanity.

Also, putting the members first is the eternal spirit of the Soka Gakkai. We must absolutely never forget this.

Please do everything you can to cause your place of mission to flourish, taking action as a hero of kosen-rufu surpassing even the heroes of the Chinese classic *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [an epic saga of three rival kingdoms that fought for control of China in the 3rd century].