

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 11 SPEECH—PART 2 BUDDHIST STUDY ILLUMINATES OUR LIVES

‘Our study of Buddhism is something that is deepened and strengthened with the passing of time as we grow in faith and life experience,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘The efforts you are making to study the teachings of Buddhism now are certain to illuminate your lives, not only in this existence but for all eternity.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 10th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Oct. 11.

On Oct. 28, the youth division Advanced-level Study Exam will be held, while the Study Department Entrance Exam is scheduled for Nov. 25. Is anyone here taking these exams? [Members in the audience responded in the affirmative.]

Those of you who are studying so hard in the midst of your busy schedules are truly admirable. Likewise, your seniors in faith who are supporting you with all their might—lecturing, encouraging and teaching you the wonderful principles of Buddhism—are respectable indeed. I want to sincerely praise and encourage those of you in both groups.

I am sure that none of our members are heartless enough to think, “I have passed those exams, so who cares about anyone else?” [Laughter.] I ask everyone to warmly support those taking the exams. I hope that there will be strong, healthy competition in every prefecture around the country that will contribute to fostering a steady stream of talented people dedicated to kosen-rufu.

Our study of Buddhism is something that is deepened and strengthened with the passing of time as we grow in faith and life experience. The efforts you are making to study the teachings of Buddhism now are certain to illuminate your lives, not only in this existence but also for all eternity.

In my youth division days, I regularly traveled to Saitama Prefecture [north of Tokyo] to give lectures on Nichiren Daishonin’s writings. I burned with a sense of mission and responsibility that I was acting as second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s representative, and my wholehearted efforts at that time have now come into full bloom. [For roughly three years, beginning in September 1951, President Ikeda was in charge of the district-level lectures in Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture. He was a 23-year-old young men’s group leader when he took on this responsibility, and held the Study Department qualification of assistant teacher.]

Among his injunctions to followers of future generations, Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin’s direct successor, calls on us to engrave the Daishonin’s teachings in our lives (see *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). The Nichiren Shoshu priests, however, scorn the Daishonin’s writings and trample on the spirit of faith to work for kosen-rufu.

In contrast, we of the Soka Gakkai have engraved the Daishonin’s teachings in our lives and advanced with faith that is earnestly committed to achieving kosen-rufu. That is why we have triumphed in every endeavor.

The French author Victor Hugo wrote: “We who believe, what can we fear? There is no backward flow of ideas any more than of rivers.” Correct ideas empower people,

contribute to their happiness and illuminate the future. This was Hugo's conviction. I hope our youth will deepen their understanding of the Buddhist teachings and forge themselves in-to outstanding thinkers and peerless philosophers.

In "How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra," the Daishonin writes: "In such an age of conflict, when the pure Law of the other sutras ceases to be effective, the wonderfully efficacious medicine of the Lotus Sutra will provide the cure for all these grave disasters.

"If one uses the Lotus Sutra to pray for the welfare of the land, it will prove to be a great pure Law that will secure and protect the nation, insuring joy and prosperity to everyone from the ruler on down to the common people" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 879).

I hope you will thoroughly study the principles of humanism and peace expounded in Buddhism, the "wonderfully efficacious medicine" for life and society.

Once again, I wish all the examinees the best luck in their upcoming study exams.

**As long as you never forget the path of mentor and disciple,
the SGI will flourish forever.**

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose work first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi read with keen interest while in prison, declared that "slandering a Socrates, so as to prevent anyone from believing in virtue, is an act of high treason committed against humanity." The persecution of President Makiguchi by nationalist Japan was just such an "act of high treason against humanity," as is the persecution of the Soka Gakkai by Nichiren Shoshu.

The Greek philosopher Socrates, one of the great teachers of humankind, was condemned to drink poison and die as a result of the machinations of jealous rivals. After his death, his disciple Plato rose to action.

After President Makiguchi died in prison for his beliefs, his disciple, President Toda, similarly rose to action. And after the death of President Toda, who had struggled valiantly against countless obstacles, I rose to action as his disciple.

The spirit and vision of great mentors is always carried on by disciples whose hearts are one with theirs. This is an unchanging formula of Buddhism. This is the true path of mentor and disciple.

What is the significance of today's date, Oct. 11? It was on this day 58 years ago, in 1943, during World War II, that President Toda—who had been unjustly arrested for violating the reprehensible Peace Preservation Act and for committing *lese majesty*—was transferred from the Tokyo Police Department to the Tokyo Detention House in Sugamo. About two weeks earlier, on Sept. 25, President Makiguchi had been moved to the same facility.

President Toda, a genuine disciple, courageously followed his mentor. "Always together with my mentor!" "Always for my mentor!" This is the spirit of a disciple. I served President Toda with the same determination.

I hope you will always remember this path of mentor and disciple walked by the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai. As long as you never forget or stray from this supreme human path, the SGI will flourish forever. And you will become eternal victors and champions of humanity without the slightest doubt.

The Daishonin writes: "It is said that, if a teacher has a good disciple, both will gain the fruit of Buddhahood, but if a teacher fosters a bad disciple, both will fall into hell.

“If teacher and disciple are of different minds, they will never accomplish anything” (WND, 909).

Single-mindedly advancing on this great path of mentor and disciple, I have made the names of presidents Makiguchi and Toda known throughout the world. Few even in Japan—much less the world—knew of them. In China and South Korea, and in every other nation I have visited in my travels, I have always spoken of the achievements of my mentors. They are now praised the world over. This accomplishment is a source of tremendous pride.

We can turn everyone and everything where we live into our allies.

I have recently received some happy news from our members in Brazil. A new bridge just completed in the city of Itapevi, near São Paulo, has been named Josei Toda Viaduct by the unanimous decision of the São Paulo state legislature. The governor signed the decree on Oct. 3. It is a large overhead bridge, 100 meters in length and 11 meters wide, spanning a highway.

SGI-Brazil General Director Eduardo Taguchi was also delighted by this development. I want to share his comments with you: “From the BSGI Nature Culture Center [located in the suburbs of Itapevi], one can now proceed down Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Street, cross the Josei Toda Viaduct and arrive in the city center of Itapevi, where President and Mrs. Ikeda are honorary citizens. It is a wonderful route that links together the first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai.”

We have also received glad tidings from Denmark. In the village of Askov, a renowned educational center, there is a beautiful pond that is one of the area’s noted sights. Recently, we have received official notification that the Askov Village Council has decided to name the pond, filled with blooming lotuses, Ikeda Pond. I humbly report this to you as an honor I have received as your representative.

The pond has a long history and is said to have existed since the last ice age. In the 19th century, the famous Askov Folk High School [founded on the ideals and principles of the noted Danish educators N.F.S. Grundtvig and Christen Kold] opened on its shores.

Indeed, it is very likely that President Makiguchi, who was interested in the educational methods of this school, may have seen a photograph of the pond [which appeared in a book published in Japan at that time]. Educational exchanges between the school on the shores of that mystic pond and the Soka schools and Soka University in Japan are now underway.

New friendships growing on the pond’s banks, the invigorating discussions of youth—what a beautiful, poetry-inspiring scene. I hope that all of you will compose poems of friendship in your own cherished communities.

No doubt the situation of each community is unique, but as long as you have courage, wisdom and sincerity, you can turn everyone and everything into allies through the art of humanity. I hope you will all become this sort of great artist, overflowing with the spirited determination to build bridges of trust and peace in your communities.

All sorts of things happen on the road to achieving kosen-rufu.

Finally, I want to address the youth in particular. On Oct. 1, I met with South African President Thabo Mbeki (see the Nov. 9 *World Tribune*, p. 7). It was our second meeting. [President Ikeda first met with Mr. Mbeki in 1998, when the latter was visiting Tokyo as South African deputy president.]

President Mbeki is a great champion of human rights and humanism. His father, Govan Mbeki, was also a renowned hero in the struggle against apartheid. Govan Mbeki survived 23 years in prison, along with former president Nelson Mandela.

When you think of spending 23 years in prison for your beliefs, you cannot help but feel how unbecoming it is for a youth to complain about petty things — such as being too busy, or not getting along with someone else in the group or how difficult it is to propagate Buddhism.

It is well known that President Mandela turned the prison where he was incarcerated into a “university” and studied together with fellow prisoners, many of who were much younger than he in years.

Govan Mbeki was willing to undergo an unending series of trials in order to raise the curtain on a new age of democracy in his homeland. He had engraved these words in his heart: “When you go into war, if your comrade in front of you falls off his horse, you must not stop and weep. You jump over him into battle. You learn not to weep.”

All sorts of things happen on the road to achieving kosen-rufu. Fellow members may pass away, having fulfilled their mission in this lifetime. It is only natural for us, as human beings, to be saddened by this.

However, we must not allow ourselves to be so overwhelmed by our emotions that we become weak. The important thing is to continue moving forward with the determination: “Whatever happens, I will keep going! I will challenge myself! And I will win!” This is the mark of a true champion, of a person of compassion, and it is the best way to reply to the wishes of those who have passed away.

Buddhism is about winning. Therefore, the correct course is striving to emerge victorious without fail. Let us win in all our struggles and live lives of great satisfaction, so that we can declare with real feeling, “Ah, that was fun!”

A life that embodies the teachings of Buddhism is a life of ultimate value.

From the Buddhist perspective, we are all family forever, throughout the three existences. The Daishonin writes, “You should always talk with each other to free yourselves from the sufferings of birth and death and attain the pure land of Eagle Peak, where you will nod to each other and speak in one mind” (WND, 909).

Let us work and talk together in this lifetime, the Daishonin says, and after death, too, let us talk together on Eagle Peak.

Throughout eternity, we will converse with one another, encourage one another and advance together toward happiness. This is the way of fellow members who share in the struggle for kosen-rufu. We must not allow the ill-intentioned who seek to exploit our organization, or the malicious who wish to torment the Buddha’s children, or the treacherous who have no sense of gratitude or appreciation, to enter this beautiful world of the SGI.

The SGI’s advance is defined by our unity as members who are striving earnestly to introduce others to the Daishonin’s Buddhism, to promote the activities of our organization, which has inherited the Buddha’s intent and decree, and to realize a world without war.

The teachings of Buddhism enable us to view things based on the three existences of life — past, present and future — and to advance cheerfully along the valuable, noble path of peace, happiness and triumph.

Let us not complain about petty things. We cannot let ourselves be discouraged by a

little hardship.

And we must never abandon our faith. To do so would be an act of cowardice and betrayal.

Let us lead lives of eternal victory, indestructible lives of unshakable conviction. This is the most meaningful life a human being can live.

There is no greater teaching than Buddhism. A life that embodies the teachings of Buddhism is a life of ultimate value.

I close my speech today with the prayer that you will all live such noble lives, bravely challenging and overcoming the raging storms and crashing waves, the rocky roads and the hardships of daily life, so that you can declare: "I have won!" "This is proof of the validity of the teachings the SGI upholds!"

Thank you for your long attention. Listening to a discourse on the Mystic Law and the philosophy of kosen-rufu is even more meaningful than studying the most advanced fields of learning at the finest universities in the world. Please know that in doing so, you are pursuing the field of eternal, indestructible happiness.

Thank you! Please stay well!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS TO EMERGE VICTORIOUS WITHOUT FAIL FROM THIS SPEECH:

Buddhism is about winning. Therefore, the correct course is striving to emerge victorious without fail. Let us win in all our struggles and live lives of great satisfaction, so that we can declare with real feeling, "Ah, that was fun!" From the Buddhist perspective, we are all family forever, throughout the three existences. Nichiren Daishonin writes, "You should always talk with each other to free yourselves from the sufferings of birth and death and attain the pure land of Eagle Peak, where you will nod to each other and speak in one mind" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 909).

1) SGI President Ikeda continually explains that "Buddhism is about winning." What exactly does this mean? What does the Daishonin say about the importance of winning? What do you think is necessary in your practice of faith to assure that you emerge victorious?

2) Based on the above passage from the Daishonin, can you think of actions that you can take in your district or in daily life that are one with its spirit? Do you think the Daishonin's words here express the oneness of mentor and disciple? If so, in what ways?