

## VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

LAST month the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL) and its coordinator, Jody Williams, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Ms. Williams' victory brings to mind our organizational theme for next year, "Year of Victory of the People for the New Century."

Here is an ordinary woman, working from her home on a dirt road with no street name or number in Putney, Vermont, able to mobilize NGOs around the world—the grass roots—as she pushed for the worldwide elimination of the weapons that kill or maim an estimated 26,000 fellow human beings a year. Ms. Williams' campaign started less than six years ago with some friends sitting around a Thanksgiving meal, discussing the horrible plight of mostly children, women and the elderly being maimed and killed by the leftovers of war. We applaud the ICBL and their victory that the Nobel Committee honored for having changed "a ban on anti-personnel mines from a vision to a feasible reality."

Thinking about the SGI's 1998 theme has helped me focus on just how accessible the people's victory is; especially if one can view it as the awakening of ordinary people to the dignity of life and to their value as human beings. I also think the people's victory is the teaching of *kosen-rufu*.<sup>1</sup> As SGI President Ikeda remarked during a recently published conversation with youth, there are some who connect *kosen-rufu* to the phenomenon of people all over the world embracing Nichiren Buddhism. From one perspective, that certainly will be the time of *kosen-rufu*. Then there are those who believe *kosen-rufu* is a matter of seeing that the Law is passed on from one person to another. This, too, is true. Or when the number of people practicing multiplies.

But *kosen-rufu* is not a number. Nor is it a fixed time or condition that can be measured or evaluated in the context of time and space. *Kosen-rufu* is something that happens within the reality of our lives, which is why it is so closely associated with the concept of human revolution. They both flow eternally. To that point, President Ikeda said that "Everything in the cosmos moves along its own path in exquisite harmony. Just as the earth naturally follows its own orbit, so, too, is *kosen-rufu* like the revolution of a planet around the sun. In the same manner, our individual human revolution is like the rotation of a planet on its axis. These two motions are inseparable."<sup>2</sup>

HE said that it is neither a formality nor an exercise of the ego, but a continuous flow among humanity, like a river or the spreading out of an immense bolt of material. It will flow everywhere. During the flow, perhaps our character improves, or our disposition; but not our status. We will still be ordinary human beings who happen to have the insight to take actions to improve ourselves.

*Kosen* means to widely declare the philosophy of Buddhism, its justice and its beliefs—that is why we propagate. *Rufu* means flow like an immense river. It is

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not a formality, but a continuous flow among all of humanity. When you examine a piece of cloth carefully, you will notice that it is woven of very fine horizontal and vertical threads. By way of analogy, Mr. Ikeda said that the vertical threads can be likened to the mentor-disciple relationship; while the horizontal threads symbolize transcending all differences as we spread the correct philosophy equally among the people of the world.

PLEASE be confident that all such efforts will lead to the victory of the people. I remember when President Ikeda was visiting the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, some years ago. While viewing various pieces of art, he stopped in front of a painting by the French painter Jean François Millet (1814–75). It was of a peasant farmer standing in an open field with his head bowed as he leaned on his rake for support. President Ikeda remarked that the farmer in the painting represented the common people. He said that though the farmer seemed serene and quiet, once his ire was awakened, he would stand up for justice with tremendous power and strength.

That was the experience of the late Hiroe Clow, a simple Seattle housewife who decided to tell the truth. As a result of her effort, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu must stand before the bar of justice. When common people aren't intimidated by people of authority and are willing to stand up for what is right—that is kosen-rufu and the beauty of human revolution. It is the people's voice; the same voice we use when we encourage one another at a discussion meeting or during a home visit or on a telephone call early in the morning or late at night. It is all a reminder that we needn't pursue fame and fortune in order to have a voice.

The foundation of our people's victory was suggested in the following thoughts from President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal:

The only real solution to the issue of nuclear arms is to struggle incessantly against that "evil of life" that threatens the survival of humanity. And this is why Josei Toda entrusted younger generations with the task of disseminating the idea of the "dignity of all life" as the overarching ethos of our times.

Nichiren Daishonin, the thirteenth-century Buddhist sage whose teachings we at the SGI follow, said, "Life is the most important of all our properties." This respect for life is the essential inspiration of the Toda declaration.<sup>3</sup> Herein lies the reason we at SGI aspire for the inner revolution of all individuals—the human revolution—that will establish the respect for all life as the basic norm of human society.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Kosen-rufu is an expression that traces its origins to the Lotus Sutra, which states: "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five hundred year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambuvipa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas or kumbhanda demons to seize the advantage" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 288). The phrase spread it abroad widely is Shakyamuni's mandate to propagate the Law throughout Jambuvipa (the world).
2. From "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," installment twenty-five, to appear in the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*.
3. Toda Declaration: In September 1957, Mr. Toda made his famous appeal calling for a total ban of nuclear weapons production.
4. April 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 26.