

A Magnificent Drama Begins With One Person

SGI President Ikeda made the following speech at the 7th Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held jointly with the 5th Chiba Prefecture General Meeting and the 1st Nationwide Women's Division Leaders Meeting, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 7.

Friends throughout Japan and around the world, happy New Year! This year again, let's work together and further advance!

The sunsets from this Makiguchi Memorial Hall are truly beautiful. The popular children's song "Yuyake Koyake" (Sunset), by the way, is about Hachioji.

Morning and evening, the sun enacts a spectacular drama of light. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's founding president, begins the first chapter of his book *The Geography of Human Life*, first published in 1903, with a discussion of the sun. He uses expressions like "the dazzling radiance of sunrise" and "the glorious brilliance of sunset." He discusses the great impact the sun's splendor has on us, both aesthetically and spiritually.

A Youth Like the Morning Sun

President Makiguchi devoted his youth to value creation with a vigor like that of the morning sun. And he brought his life to a most solemn, magnificent conclusion, just as the crimson orb of the setting sun radiates a golden light.

A beautiful sunset promises a beautiful tomorrow. The setting sun that paints the western sky with golden hues ensures clear skies the next day. Similarly, a serene and peaceful death at the end of a great life assures happiness throughout eternity.

The lives of those who devote themselves earnestly to kosen-rufu without regret will shine eternally with the brilliant state of Buddhahood. Let us therefore advance unswervingly along the supreme path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime! Let us devote this life to kosen-rufu! Nichiren Daishonin rigorously stresses the importance of doing so.

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, remarked with great conviction after Mr. Makiguchi's death:

If we believe in the Daishonin's words and look at things in this mirror [of the Lotus Sutra], then we may be firmly confident that President Makiguchi will be reborn as a prince of a royal house of the purest virtue in a land where the Lotus Sutra has spread. His good fortune after leaving this world must be thousands or tens of thousands times greater than my own. And for that I can only rejoice with all my heart.¹

The True Nature of the Universe

Buddhism teaches that there are countless worlds in the universe. The universe is enormous; its vastness is beyond our comprehension. Practicing Buddhism awakens us to the fundamental Law of the universe.

A philosopher observed that the universe will probably never be fully explained by science. It is doubtful, he said, that even astronomy can completely clarify the universe's true nature — much less can mathematics, economics, chemistry, politics or any other scientific discipline do so. The Eastern philosophy of Buddhism, he affirmed, is where we find the most deductive understanding of the universe.

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How truly fortunate are we who embrace and strive to spread Nichiren Daishonin's supreme Buddhist teaching!

Earth is not the only planet where life exists. It is speculated that there are many planets inhabited by intelligent life. And there are no doubt a good many worlds among them where the Lotus Sutra is widely practiced and upheld. That is why, based on the Gosho and the Lotus Sutra, President Toda declared that Mr. Makiguchi must be reborn as a noble prince of a fine family in a wonderful "land in which the Lotus Sutra has spread." So vast was the good fortune his mentor had accumulated, Mr. Toda said, that it surely exceeded our own — thousands or tens of thousands of times.

Resolute Faith

We are following in the footsteps of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda. When we devote our lives to kosen-rufu, we are sure to savor the same eternal victory and honor. For this reason, we must not lose. No matter what happens, we must carry through with resolute faith.

The Daishonin says, "One should regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). No matter what difficulties we encounter, we must not be shaken, we must not be fearful, we must not retreat. Rather, we need to continue struggling forward. Such strong faith is itself proof that we enjoy "peace and comfort."

Only by struggling against obstacles can we forge the indestructible "diamond-like body" of a Buddha that will last through eternity. We must not be fearful, cower or be swayed when something untoward happens. We must not veer from the true path of happiness — the path of faith — on account of such weakness.

True Happiness Lies in Chanting and Teaching Others the Law

Nichiren Daishonin says in the Gosho, "There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161); and, "Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world" (MW-5, 38).

This life is fleeting and illusory, as the Daishonin affirms when he writes: "This life is like a dream. One cannot know if he will live until tomorrow" (MW-4, 283). We don't know what may become of us a day from now, let alone over the course of eternity. No matter how much wealth, status or fame we may have in this world, such things are as ephemeral as a dream. We cannot take them with us when we die.

In contrast, we are dedicating our lives to kosen-rufu, chanting and propagating the eternal Mystic Law. There is no existence more lofty. In carrying out SGI activities we find an unsurpassed way of life.

Moreover, everything in the universe is a function of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The fundamental law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo exists in our lives. How truly wondrous this is!

Again today the sun rises. Again today we chant daimoku, causing the inner sun to rise in our hearts. Once the sun rises, it illuminates everything. The challenge is to keep this sun blazing brilliantly in the depths of our lives, to renew each day our determination to chant, fight on, live victoriously and accumulate good fortune. Herein lies the ultimate path to happiness.

May you again make each day this year one of golden triumph through faith. Please win brilliantly in this strife-filled *saha* world, this "world of perseverance."

Inconspicuous Benefit Vs. Inconspicuous Punishment

We began this year with a record turnout at the New Year's gongyo meetings throughout Japan. Participation surpassed even that of last year's.

In Chiba Prefecture alone, close to 300,000 people attended New Year's gongyo meetings — this far exceeds the total New Year's attendance throughout the country at Nikken sect temples. Our movement is truly on a different scale.

Year after year, the Nikken sect sinks deeper into pitiful decline. The SGI, on the other hand, with the dynamic energy of the rising sun, is realizing monumental growth.

Buddhism expounds very clearly that great benefit will be enjoyed by those who uphold the Law, while great punishment will be incurred by those who slander the Law or its practitioners. In light of the Daishonin's teachings, nothing is more fearful than inconspicuous punishment. Though such punishment may not be immediately manifested, there is a definite, progressive downward spiral — and ruin lies in store in the end. There is no more inexorable verdict than that delivered by the uncompromising law of cause and effect.

In the Gosho, the Daishonin writes, "There are four kinds of punishment: general and individual, conspicuous and inconspicuous" (MW-1, 241). General punishment is that received by all people in a given group or society. Individual punishment is that received by the individual.

Conspicuous punishment occurs right away and in a manner that is clearly apparent. Inconspicuous punishment does not manifest immediately and is the gravest of the four kinds of punishment.

In the Gosho "Letter to Horen," the Daishonin writes: "There are two types of persons who show animosity toward the Lotus Sutra. The first are persons who cultivated the roots of goodness in former existences, who in their present existence are searching for some connection with Buddhism, who conceive a desire for enlightenment and are capable of attaining Buddhahood. It is these persons whose mouths are stopped or whose heads split apart [i.e., they incur conspicuous punishment].

"The other type are persons who have slandered the Law in their previous existences, slander it in their present existence, and for existence after existence go on creating karma that will condemn them to the hell of incessant suffering. These persons, even though they may curse, will not have their mouths stopped [i.e., they incur inconspicuous punishment]. They are like men who have already been sentenced to execution and are awaiting their turn in prison. While they are in prison, regardless of what evil acts they may commit, they will receive no further punishment other than the death sentence already passed upon them. However, with regard to persons who are eventually to be released, if they commit evil acts in prison, then they will receive warnings [i.e. conspicuous punishment]" (MW-7, 121).]

Buddhism is concerned with victory. As the Daishonin says, "All phenomena in the universe are manifestations of the Buddhist Law" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 563). Everything is a matter of victory. Since it is a question of winning or losing, then the only alternative is to win.

Develop Indestructible Happiness

Whether in day-to-day existence or the movement for kosen-rufu, solid, unshakable victory is not achieved overnight. While receiving conspicuous benefit is wonderful, you

can't expect it to happen all the time. It's like winning the lottery — just because you win it once doesn't mean you'll win it every time. Far more important is inconspicuous benefit.

We need tenacity and perseverance to accumulate benefit through faith steadily and surely with each step we take. We cannot build anything solid or indestructible by neglecting to make efforts when no one is looking nor through pretentious posturing or empty gestures. Results may be invisible at first, but just as the towering trees of the forest grow by putting down deep, strong roots, they will manifest unmistakably over time. The inconspicuous benefit we amass through our Buddhist practice enables us to construct a state of happiness that absolutely nothing can destroy.

Presidents Makiguchi and Toda staked their lives on building the Soka Gakkai. And I, too, have fought with the same spirit. For precisely this reason, the Soka Gakkai has become the great organization it is today — an organization that stands as fearless as the lion king in the face of all obstacles.

Chiba — Birthplace of a 'Giant Religious Reformer'

To the members of Chiba, congratulations on holding a high-spirited general meeting!

In the masterpiece of his youth, *The Geography of Human Life*, President Makiguchi argues that “peninsulas are the starting points of civilization.”² As an example, he points out that the Boso Peninsula in Chiba Prefecture (the southern part of which was formerly known as Awa Province) produced the “giant religious reformer,” Nichiren Daishonin. Mr. Makiguchi wrote this long before taking faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Nonetheless, from the viewpoint of civilization theory, his attention was drawn to Chiba, where the Daishonin was born and raised. Such was our founding president's penetrating insight. Later, Mr. Makiguchi embraced faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism and also worked wholeheartedly for religious reform.

President Makiguchi often encouraged fellow members in faith by citing how Nichiren Daishonin began his religious movement alone from Chiba.

One time that he did so was in 1939, when he traveled to Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, to propagate the Daishonin's teachings. At the time, the trip had to be made by steam locomotive; there weren't, of course, any commercial flights as there are today. It must have been an extremely exhausting journey for the 67-year-old Makiguchi. But he would spare no effort for the sake of the Law.

One woman who met Mr. Makiguchi for the first time during that trip was so impressed by his vibrant, youthful voice, his absolute confidence, his sincerity and compassion, that she promptly decided to take faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Your voice, confidence and overall manner are important. Everything is a manifestation of the true entity of life.

Mr. Makiguchi never did anything halfway. When he spoke, his powerful determination to kindle the flame of mission and hope in the hearts of those listening pervaded his words. To this woman in Kyushu he declared, “In light of the principles of Buddhism, your receiving the Gohonzon will eventually liberate the lives of all people in Kyushu from misery!” He drove home to her the profound mission she had to fulfill. He was urging her to advance with the stand-alone spirit.

Wherever it may be, the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism always begins with one person.

On that occasion, President Makiguchi shared the following passage from “The True Entity of Life”: “Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future” (MW-1, 93).

With great feeling, Mr. Makiguchi was said to have explained: “When the Daishonin

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chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the first time at Kasagamori³ in Chiba, he was all alone. In light of the principle of bodhisattvas emerging from the earth to propagate the Law, the fact that you, one person, will now chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to this wondrous Gohonzon means that in the future there will definitely appear two, three and a hundred others in Kyushu who embrace the Gohonzon.”

And just as he predicted, the seeds of the Mystic Law that he planted have now splendidly borne fruit as the great Soka Gakkai of Kyushu. Let’s hear it for indomitable Kyushu, land of pioneers!

Advancing With ‘the Same Mind As Nichiren’

The Daishonin declares, “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” (MW-1, 93). We do not become “of the same mind as Nichiren” merely by praying. Those whose hearts are aflame with the passion to introduce others to the Daishonin’s Buddhism, to widely propagate the Law for the happiness of all, are “of the same mind as Nichiren.” In that respect, presidents Makiguchi and Toda truly fought with the same spirit as the Daishonin.

Only the SGI is, and will forever remain, “of the same mind as Nichiren.” The Daishonin surely praises most highly those who protect and work to develop the SGI.

I sincerely hope that this year the members of Chiba, making the Daishonin’s heart and President Makiguchi’s spirit their own, will accomplish a magnificent “Chiba Revolution.” Let’s advance boldly as genuine comrades who are truly “of the same mind as Nichiren.” I pray that my beloved Chiba will develop into a flourishing new center of a value-creation-based civilization in the 21st century.

I sincerely thank the Chiba members for the beautiful blossoms that adorn the stage today.

At present, a magnificent Chiba Training Center is under construction in Tateyama. And plans are also in the works for a new culture center. Chiba will play an increasingly important role in the future.

Chiba is vast, so members often travel by car to do activities. Please take utmost care to avoid traffic accidents. You each have a great mission; each of your lives is a precious treasure. When driving long distances, please be careful not to overdo it. I hope you will exercise wisdom and common sense and be sure to take regular breaks along the way.

The First Tagore Peace Award

The Asiatic Society of India, which boasts an illustrious history of more than 200 years, recently announced its decision to present me with its first Tagore Peace Award. This honor has been bestowed upon me as your representative; it is the same as if each of you were receiving it. I dedicate this honor to presidents Toda and Makiguchi.

The Asiatic Society is an international center for research on Asia, which has been designated by the Indian Parliament as an “institution of national importance.” In honoring President Ikeda with this award, the society cited his “creative contribution to the development of human understanding toward peace.”

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), after whom the award is named, is a towering figure in history. I have talked about his life and work on many occasions. Today, I’ll touch on just one point: the warning that he sounded to Japan. His insights still have great relevance today.

A Warm Welcome — and a Cold Send-off

Tagore set out for Japan from India on May 3, 1916, aboard the Japanese steamship *Tosamaru*. The ship was lashed by violent storms and tossed endlessly on rough seas, finally arriving safely at its destination in Japan.

Tagore had become world famous as the first Asian awarded the Nobel Prize [in literature, 1913]. The Japanese laid out the red carpet to welcome him. A huge crowd of enthusiastic well-wishers was on hand to greet this man, hailed as “India’s most distinguished author” and “the internationally acclaimed poet Tagore.”

*Tagore later reminisced: “No sooner did we reach the wharf than we were hit by a human typhoon.”*⁴

But when he left Japan three months later, only a few friends saw him off. It was a truly lonely scene; the treatment was entirely different from what he had received on his arrival. Just what had happened during that time? What had caused the attitude of the Japanese toward Tagore to change so radically?

Probably the main cause was the frank concern Tagore expressed about the course on which Japan was then advancing. His earnest words grated on the ear and caused the Japanese to turn their backs on him. He had issued an outspoken plea for Japan to abandon its platform of nationalism. Otherwise, Tagore predicted, the people would be crushed by the state, the country would come to ruin. He called on Japan instead to adopt humanistic policies, arguing that this was where its brilliant mission really lay.

Tagore’s cry 80 years ago and the position maintained by the Soka Gakkai in Japan today are in complete accord.

Condemnation of Selfish Nationalism

In an address at Keio University in Tokyo, Tagore remarked:

I can see her [Japan’s] motto, taken from science, “Survival of the Fittest,” writ large at the entrance of her present-day history — the motto whose meaning is, “Help yourself, and never heed what it costs to others”; the motto of the blind man.... And nations, who sedulously cultivate moral blindness as the cult of patriotism, will end their existence in a sudden and violent death.⁵

He suggested that the Japanese labored under moral blindness and, as a result, could not see the dangers of their present course. “Open your eyes!” he shouted.

Tagore proclaimed to the Japanese the danger of destroying their souls for military might and becoming “money-making puppets” in imitation of the Western “civilization of power.”

*Tagore declared: “Real power is not in the weapons themselves, but in the man who wields those weapons; and when he, in his eagerness for power, multiplies his weapons at the cost of his own soul, then it is he who is in even greater danger than his enemies.”*⁶ *He also noted: “Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets, ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism.”*⁷

Sadly, just as Tagore feared, Japan later used its weapons to launch a war of aggression against Asian countries. Subsequently, the Japanese, like a nation of money-making puppets, have pursued profit and shown neither international good faith nor a spirit to help

others. Under such circumstances, it's practically a foregone conclusion that the country will not be trusted in the international community.

A Country That Criticizes Anyone Who Stands Out

Tagore cried out that rather than oppressing the peoples of neighboring countries with a civilization of power, Japan should work to create solidarity in Asia through promoting a civilization of the spirit.

Not only did the Japanese of the day ignore Tagore's cry — many heaped censure and slander upon him. He was deluged with petty criticism tinged with jealousy.

Yet, almost none of Tagore's detractors had taken the trouble to read his writings with any care. Lacking a correct perception of what he was trying to say, they simply made a fuss in blind imitation of others. "Who is he to criticize Japanese nationalism!" they cried. As a result of the country's failure to heed Tagore's warnings, 29 years later Japan was in ruins, defeated in war.

This tendency of the Japanese remains essentially intact today. I have openly stated in the past: In Japan, before and during the war, people tagged along behind military expansion, while in the postwar era they tagged along behind economic expansion. Unless we change society so that people are the central focus, Japan will have no future. Many leading figures heartily concur with this assessment.

Tagore Predicted China's Development

Tagore predicted that China, at the time seen as a weak country, would eventually manifest tremendous power. More than 30 years ago, at the height of Japan's postwar economic boom, I, too, foresaw that China would eventually realize great development. And I widely voiced this opinion.

Tagore wrote, "China is holding her own; no temporary defeats can ever crush her fully aroused spirit."⁸ His position on Japan, meanwhile, was that its apparent veneer of prosperity in the early part of the 20th century was due to its borrowed culture from the West, which had been realized at the cost of spiritual bankruptcy and as such could never have lasted long.

Tagore wanted to convey to the Japanese, in effect: "Recognize the evil of nationalism! You must not become slaves to its insidious lure! The state does not have human character. What Japan should work for instead is cultivating a universal humanism that all people will applaud."

A soulless country is sure to decline. The Japanese should now humbly heed Tagore's warning. I cannot help but feel that Japan is now repeating the mistake it made 80 years ago when it lambasted Tagore.

Civilization Built on Reciprocity

Tagore also had great expectations for women. He argued that the present animalistic civilization of power has been created by men. And that under this civilization people are turned into a means; they become machines. He asserted the necessity of building a civilization of the spirit and emphasized that women would play a leading role in developing such a civilization.

Tagore wrote, "At the present stage of history civilization is almost exclusively masculine, a civilization of power."⁹

He also said: "Men have been losing their freedom and their humanity in order to fit

*themselves for vast mechanical organizations. So the next civilization, it is hoped, will be based...upon spiritual ideals of reciprocity.... And then women will have their true place.... [W]oman can bring her fresh mind and all her power of sympathy to this new task of building up a spiritual civilization, if she will be conscious of her responsibilities.”*¹⁰

I completely agree with these words. Perhaps they'll give cause for self-reflection to those men who tend to be overbearing and power-driven! In all areas of society and in the world of kosen-rufu, women are making outstanding contributions. We have to create an age in which women can play an even more active, decisive role. I have strongly sensed that things are indeed changing in this direction. An Age of Women is at last at hand.

This year — all 365 days of it — I will again put every ounce of my energy into leading the kosen-rufu movement. I will continue to exert myself unstintingly.

While taking care of your health, please continue to advance cheerfully, overcoming all obstacles and accumulating good fortune each day.

Throughout the year, I will continue to pray for your health, longevity, happiness and prosperity. I look forward to your earnest efforts again in the coming year. Please convey my very best regards to all those who could not attend today.

Thank you.

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1. Josei Toda, *Toda Josei Zenshu* (The Complete Works of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1992), vol. 1, p. 320.

2. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 145–49.

3. Kasagamori: a woody knoll on the grounds of Seicho-ji temple in Awa Province (present-day Chiba Prefecture) where, on April 28, 1253, Nichiren Daishonin chanted the first invocation of the supreme Law, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

4. Translated from Japanese: “Nihon Kiko” (Journey to Japan) in *Tagoru Chosaku Shu* (Collected Works of Tagore) (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1987), vol. 10, p. 436.

5. Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), pp. 96–97.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

8. “Poet to Poet,” *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (Santiniketan, Bengal, India), vol. 4, part 3, November 1938–January 1939, p. 205.

9. Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1921), p. 172.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–83.

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