

**SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya's Guidance
The District Is Vital to the Members' Happiness
Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER**

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This year we again welcome the glorious anniversary of May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, amid a spirited rising tide of kosen-rufu. Around the world, there is a groundswell of interest in our movement, as though in anticipation of its further development as a body actively promoting peace, culture and education.

For example, the European Academy of Sciences and Arts in Salzburg, Austria, recently named SGI President Ikeda an honorary senator. The academy, which counts among its executive advisors the presidents, prime ministers and kings of European countries, is pooling the wisdom of humankind and working to resolve crucial issues of the day. Academy president Felix Unger commended the SGI leader for contributing to humanity's future through his many dialogues with influential figures. I understand he even suggested that the SGI may be the foremost in promoting dialogue among Buddhism and other religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.

In response to the SGI president's outstanding and farsighted leadership, members throughout the world are courageously exerting themselves in their Buddhist practice toward realizing the peace and happiness of all people. Through our activities, infused with rich humanism, we are positively influencing society and winning people's trust and praise.

By putting down solid roots in our communities, we are constructing an age of the SGI and a firm foundation for the future. With such development in people's understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, many new members are joining the SGI. We can take this as proof of our progress in the struggle to spread true humanism around the globe.

The part of the SGI that many people in the community and new members first encounter is the district or local organizational unit. The district is a microcosm of the SGI and its main interface with society.

When it is full of vitality and life — when it is naturally pervaded with a spirit of sincerity, common sense, tolerance and warm magnanimity — a district creates irreplaceable bonds within a community. As Nichiren Daishonin indicates when he says "I entrust you with propagation of Buddhism in your province" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 151), the growth of the district is the advance of kosen-rufu.

For members, the district, as the venue for daily activities, is the fundamental place to practice, the home ground as it were. It is also the place for the warm gathering of the Soka family. If someone falls ill, then, just as in a family, everyone comes together and prays for the person's quick recovery and well-being.

For those in the youth division, the district is like a second home, an oasis. And pioneer members, as wellsprings of wisdom in life and faith, are those with whom other district members can without hesitation discuss any worries or concerns they may have. Children, the members of the future division, are also important citizens of the district; their growth is a source of delight for all.

The local organization radiates a family-like atmosphere, which is conspicuously absent from most areas of modern society. As such, it constitutes a true human network, a world in which all individuals are united by warm human connections.

In the meantime, the ills of society are intensifying. Egoism and spiritual degeneration seem to grow worse by the day. Truly the age matches the Daishonin's description:

The sects of Hinayana and provisional Mahayana established during the Former and

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Middle Days of the Law cling all the more stubbornly to their doctrines as they enter the Latter Day. Those who espouse Hinayana reject Mahayana, and those who espouse provisional teachings attack the true teachings, until the country is overrun with people who slander. (MW-1, 112)

Japan has become a land where shallow and superficial values run rampant, where people of insight and wisdom are persecuted. Because this is the nature of the age in which we live, only if we each endeavor to build healthy human relations through dialogue can we advance kosen-rufu. The district is the stage on the forefront of our movement for carrying out this practice. And it is our sincere efforts in the district that above all enable us to polish our lives and become capable people.

Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, said, "The Soka Gakkai organization is more precious than my life." The district is a most vital and precious institution for helping people become happy. And the linchpins of the district are the central figure's spirit and the members' many-in-body-one-in-mind faith. When everyone shares a strong determination for kosen-rufu, our organization of warm and rich unity will definitely emerge. And like flowers in spring, fields of capable people throughout the world will bloom abundantly.

Focusing our efforts on the district, the jeweled castle of kosen-rufu, and making it the foundation for all endeavors, let us work valiantly and with resilient spirit to expand still further the scope of our activities toward the new century. By forging our individual lives as we take center stage in society, we will further solidify the castle of capable people within the SGI and in turn build greater trust and support for the organization throughout the world.

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