

## The Only Way To Share Buddhism

**He tried writing books. He tried having big meetings. But in the end, Makiguchi realized talking to people — one at a time — was the only way to spread the Daishonin’s teachings. Then, the Soka Gakkai took off.**

*SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech at the 12th Headquarters Leaders Meeting at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, June 16.*

I thank all of you who have traveled so far from different parts of Japan and the world for today’s meeting. I deeply appreciate your hard work and dedication.

It has already been announced in the June 15 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper, but I want to report that the National University of Mongolia recently announced its decision to confer an honorary doctorate of philosophy on me. Also, the Inner Mongolia University of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China has decided to name me an honorary professor. Its president, Dr. B. Shorgan, sent me a traditional Mongolian costume along with the notification as a token of friendship. I have also been asked by the Chinese Association of Mongolian Literature, located in Inner Mongolia as well, to serve as one of its honorary advisors. With this request, I received a traditional Mongolian stringed instrument known for its beautiful sound.

These are important educational and cultural institutions. I am deeply honored to receive these awards on your behalf — they are tributes to your tremendous efforts.

*To date, SGI President Ikeda has received a total of 45 honorary doctorates or professorships from universities and scholarly institutions around the world. Including academic awards that have been announced but not yet presented brings the figure to more than 50.*

Speaking of Mongolia, Nichiren Daishonin says, “The Mongol Empire may be like King Himatala of the Snow Mountains, a messenger from heaven sent to punish those hostile to the votary of the Lotus Sutra” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 154). King Himatala was a ruler in northern India who lived around 600 years after Shakyamuni’s death. He defeated the ruler of a neighboring kingdom bent on destroying Buddhism, thus restoring peace to the area and allowing Buddhism to flourish. The Daishonin speculates that the Mongols, like King Himatala, have perhaps come to punish “those hostile to the votary of the Lotus Sutra.”

Elsewhere, the Daishonin says, “Bonten, Taishaku, the gods of the sun and moon and the Four Heavenly Kings have entered into the body of the Mongol ruler and are causing him to chastise our nation” (MW-6, 105). He interprets the Mongol invasion as a sign that the Buddhist gods — the protective functions of the universe — are admonishing Japan for attacking a person of justice.

From the standpoint of Buddhism, I believe there is profound significance in that Mongolia, along with many other countries, is today extending recognition and honors to the SGI.

### **Youthful, Hopeful Life**

I want to turn the spotlight now to the members of the Many Treasures Group.<sup>1</sup> Those of

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you in this group continue to work actively on the forefront of our organization. I keep in constant touch with your activities and feel the greatest respect and appreciation for your dedication.

When the Daishonin was in exile on Sado Island, many of his older followers of an age that would qualify them today as members of our Many Treasures Group staunchly supported and protected him. I am talking about people such as Abutsu-bo, Sennichi-ama, Ko Nyudo and his wife Ko-no-ama, and Nakaoki Nyudo — all venerable masters of life.

In the same way, you, the Many Treasures Group members, are always there at a crucial moment ready to defend the Soka Gakkai, an organization advancing in accord with the Buddha's will and decree. You are the treasure of the Soka Gakkai. In your efforts, I sense a mystic resonance with the Daishonin's times.

No one can equal your strength. No one is more trustworthy.

As an expression of my deep gratitude to all of you, I want to introduce one of your members, Riyoko Miyasaka. Mrs. Miyasaka is strenuously exerting herself for kosen-rufu as a women's division vice block chief in Takatsu Ward, Kawasaki City, Kanagawa Prefecture. And she is in fact present today.

Both her husband and son are physicians, and as a family they run a private hospital, which this year celebrates its 40th anniversary. The hospital has an excellent reputation and, in a nationwide survey, was rated one of the best in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Mrs. Miyasaka herself owns and manages real estate. She is a graduate of the former Women's Medical Academy, which was attached to Keio University Medical School before the war. Fluent in English, she is also certified as a top-level interpreter. She studied at the University of London. At present, she is learning to use the Internet. "Compared to studying the Goshu," Mrs. Miyasaka says modestly, "everything else is a breeze!" She has humility, tremendous vitality and a lively sense of curiosity.

Asked about her age, she politely demurs, saying, "I'm not keeping track." Most people would put her at around 60. She confesses to feeling 50, but the truth is — she will be 80 this year. This is, of course, strictly confidential!

Speaking of the benefits of faith, Nichiren Daishonin says, "You will grow younger, and your good fortune will accumulate" (MW-5, 158). Faith in the Mystic Law is the secret to becoming increasingly youthful and filled with ever-greater vitality as the years go by. Mrs. Miyasaka says, "A life dedicated to kosen-rufu is the most rejuvenating way of life."

Mrs. Miyasaka's father was an eminent doctor who studied at Tokyo Imperial University, forerunner of the University of Tokyo. His family is descended from the renowned 15th-century swordsman Tsukahara Bokuden. Her mother's family, meanwhile, is descended from the famous general and master spearsman Goto Mototsugu, also known as Matabe, of the Warring States Period (1467–1568). Today, their mutual descendant, Mrs. Miyasaka, is making courageous efforts in the noble struggle for kosen-rufu, with the jeweled sword of compassion in one hand and the golden spear of philosophy in the other.

### **'No Prayer Will Go Unanswered'**

Mrs. Miyasaka joined the Soka Gakkai in November 1959, some six months before I became third president. Illness initially prompted her to take faith. She was then in her early 40s and suffering from an abnormal enlargement of the heart. Her husband informed her that she probably had only two or three years to live. At that time, a Soka Gakkai women's division member, Asako Minamikawa, told her, in a tone ringing with confidence: "By practicing this Buddhism you can definitely become healthy! It is the highest Buddhist teaching and no prayer will go unanswered!"

Even just a few words spoken with honesty by a person of pure faith can deeply

penetrate another's heart. On the other hand, if one's words are vague and uncertain, they will lack the freshness and the power to move others.

Mrs. Minamikawa is one of those praiseworthy members who has always worked hard behind the scenes. For many years, she was the caretaker of our community center in Kodaira, near the Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High Schools.

*She is now a chapter women's division vice chief in Tachikawa, Tokyo, and also the leader of her local Many Treasures Group.*

It's wonderful how people with only modest educational backgrounds can persuade people of far more illustrious academic backgrounds to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism. Such individuals will undoubtedly be reborn as great scholars in lifetime after lifetime.

### **Nothing To Do With Fleeting Vanities**

Propagation is like bringing Nichiren Daishonin into someone's home. What a lofty undertaking this is! Those who dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to SGI activities are the most respectable people.

Depth of faith or human greatness is not determined by a person's position in the organization. Much less are such things decided by schooling, titles or social status. From the standpoint of Buddhism, greatness has nothing to do with the accomplishment of fleeting vanities.

Far more admirable than earning a doctorate, becoming a celebrity, or winning political power is making energetic efforts to spread the Mystic Law and help others become happy. The Daishonin will surely praise and embrace such earnest SGI members above all. To forge ahead unswervingly, with great honesty and sincerity — that is the way of true honor. People who do so are the treasures of kosen-rufu and the SGI.

The SGI will always be a realm of ordinary people. The foundation, the great earth of everything, is the people. We must therefore cherish above all these noblest members working hard on the forefront of our movement, striving amid the greatest difficulties.

### **In Faith, No Effort Is Wasted**

Pursuing her Buddhist practice despite her husband's early objections, Mrs. Miyasaka has led 90 households to embrace faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Her heart condition, at one time so grave, improved rapidly. Such is the unfathomable power of the Mystic Law. In the Lotus Sutra we find the line "Let us live out our lives!" (*The Lotus Sutra*, chapter 16, p. 228). And Mrs. Miyasaka has done just that for 40 years — she's living proof of the Mystic Law's power to prolong life.

When her husband was in a traffic accident, she overcame the ordeal through faith. And she raised a splendid family: Her son, as I mentioned, is a physician, and her two daughters, pharmacists. Mrs. Miyasaka declares: "In our practice of Buddhism, everything is clear-cut and no effort is wasted. Hard work may end in vain in society, but this is never the case in the realm of faith." What admirable conviction!

Mrs. Miyasaka still joyfully participates in SGI activities. She has developed a network of friends in the hundreds and is helping a great many people form a connection with Buddhism. She says: "Every time I have earnestly challenged myself for kosen-rufu, I have broken through another part of my karma and received great benefit. This has made me the person I am today. When I have set aside my worries and desires and devoted myself earnestly to Gakkai activities, all of my wishes have been realized quite naturally."

Mrs. Miyasaka's spirit is most praiseworthy. She has not the slightest doubt or hesitancy.

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To make a great vow and dedicate one's life to fulfilling that vow — that is the true Soka Gakkai spirit and genuine faith.

## **Life, A Song of Victory**

Mrs. Miyasaka says: “Those who left the organization and turned on the Soka Gakkai have repaid kindness with betrayal. Once, there was no crime more dishonorable than treachery. Their actions are inexcusable!” I hope the youth division members will engrave the pioneers' indignation in their hearts.

Faith is not appearances. Nor does it have anything to do with organizational position. It depends entirely on a person's fighting spirit. Those who burn with a fighting spirit are true SGI members and disciples of presidents Makiguchi and Toda.

Whether a person has genuine faith is revealed with the passing of time. It is something that becomes clear at a person's death and in terms of the three existences of past, present and future.

Mrs. Miyasaka cites as her favorite Goshō passage: “Bring forth the great power of faith and establish your reputation among all the people of Kamakura and the rest of Japan as ‘Shijō Kingo of the Hokke sect’” (MW-2 [2nd. ed], 201). Engraving this passage in her heart, she has tenaciously overcome various hardships and advanced with the determination to develop a reputation in her city of Kawasaki as “Miyasaka of the Soka Gakkai.”

In accord with her resolve, she is now showing splendid actual proof — her life is a song of victory. She continues in her endeavors, proudly proclaiming to all she meets that she is a Soka Gakkai member.

To be concerned about appearances, fear persecution or put on airs is cowardly. With cowardly faith, one cannot hope to have one's prayers answered or receive benefit. This is not the faith of a true disciple of the Buddha.

*A Goshō passage states, “Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly” (MW-4, 128).*

## **Triumph Depends on Speaking Out**

This great member of the Many Treasures Group remembers: “Back when I first joined the Soka Gakkai, others criticized me, saying, ‘You must be out of your mind joining such a vulgar religion!’ I was ridiculed and talked about behind my back. But I exerted myself in faith with the determination to one day show everyone that they were wrong. Sadly, many of those who taunted and attacked me turned out to have bleak and depressing lives. I feel truly sorry for them. I, meanwhile, have shown actual proof of faith through my victorious life!”

Hers is a drama of splendid triumph. By pressing ahead, we can open a way. Unless we speak out, nothing will happen. When we proclaim the truth, actual proof will appear clarifying what is right and wrong.

World history is filled with great people who have led outstanding lives. But more wonderful still are the lives of great ordinary people — people such as us, the practitioners of the Daishōnin's teachings, the members of the SGI and the Many Treasures Group.

Standing in the vanguard of our movement, though holding no top leadership position, Mrs. Miyasaka is a great leader of our organization. I cannot praise her highly enough.

I will now read from the Goshō:

The “Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King” chapter of the Lotus Sutra states, “A person who can accept and uphold this sutra is likewise foremost among all living beings” (LS23, 286).

What this means is that men who embrace the Lotus Sutra, even if they are peasants

from the countryside, will be superior to Bonten, lord of the threefold world and to Taishaku, the Four Heavenly Kings and the wheel-turning kings, as well as the rulers of China and Japan. It also goes without saying that they will be superior to the great ministers or nobles of Japan and the warriors of the Taira or Minamoto clans,<sup>2</sup> as well as people of all other levels of status.

And as for women who embrace the Lotus Sutra, they will be superior to Kyoshikanyo,<sup>3</sup> Srimahadevi,<sup>4</sup> Madam Li<sup>5</sup> and Yang Guifei<sup>6</sup> of China, as well as to all the countless women in the world. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1378)

Who is most venerable in the world? Nichiren Daishonin says it is the people work for kosen-rufu. This is what the Lotus Sutra states, what Shakyamuni teaches.

## **Seeing With Our Hearts**

The heart is most important of all. In his classic *The Little Prince*, the French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry writes: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”<sup>7</sup>

It is just as he says. We cannot always tell whether something is genuine just with our eyes. Only by looking with the heart can we discern the true essence. The Daishonin stresses that “our heart alone is what really matters” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1192).

In Buddhism, we either win or lose — there is no middle ground. Now and in the future, let us advance, determined to win in every sphere of our lives. By winning in our lives, we are advancing kosen-rufu. And by advancing kosen-rufu, we win in our lives.

## **Makiguchi’s Propagation Revolution**

Since this is a leaders meeting, I will say a few words about the proper attitude of leaders.

Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi championed the cause of the Daishonin’s teachings during the oppressive era of World War II. His courageous activities resulted in a dramatic increase in the organization’s membership [from around 1940].

Why was this? It was because of Makiguchi’s propagation revolution. He adopted the approach of talking earnestly with each person he met, one to one. And he would go to visit people at their homes. He concluded that this was the only way to propagate the Daishonin’s teaching.

Makiguchi was a great scholar. He initially hoped that he might reach and influence a wide audience through his written works, but the results were disappointing. Next, he tried to communicate his message to the public through holding lectures and open forums but, again, met with little success.

Nowadays, we have people suggesting that we conduct televised propagation. But you cannot touch people’s lives in a deep, lasting way through such a medium.

After writing books and holding large meetings had failed to produce results, Makiguchi concluded that talking with people one at a time was the only way. He would have to start by finding a small number of individuals who shared his concerns and aspirations.

From that point, his propagation efforts took off dramatically. Many capable, like-minded people began appearing in steadily increasing numbers. Whereas before he had talked to several thousand without even one of them remaining, his new efforts soon resulted in general meetings being attended by more than 500 people.

Members consolidated their faith at small discussion meetings, took action and experienced great benefits. This triggered a chain reaction as others, inspired by their accounts of faith, began practicing, too.

Makiguchi believed in experimentation. He would always try out his theories or ideas to see if they worked in actual practice. And he would invariably reach the right conclusion. He was truly a great individual, the kind of person who doesn't come along every day. I can well understand President Toda's profound admiration for him.

### **Meet With People One on One**

Makiguchi maintained that leaders mustn't just talk at large meetings. Those who did so, he declared, were merely coveting honor or seeking applause.

While it is natural to have large gatherings to mark important occasions, leaders need to remember that, rather than always calling meetings, they should go out and meet members one on one. Those who forget this develop delusions about their importance. Those who make high-sounding speeches in front of large audiences and receive applause, but neglect to make any real effort in the organization, are nothing but smooth talkers. They are just feeding their egos.

Genuine leaders work with tireless devotion to support and encourage the members, make regular efforts to visit others and engage them in dialogue. This is a point I want you to clearly understand.

Makiguchi put his life on the line to oppose Japanese militarism.

History repeats itself. Now, once again, Japan is beginning to walk down the dangerous path of nationalism. People in many countries are concerned that Japan may be following a course that will lead to its isolation and, ultimately, to national ruin. I share these concerns.

As members of the foremost peace organization in Japan, let us unite and work to protect Japan and the world.

### **Seeing Through Deception**

In the Goshō, time and again the Daishōnin warns his followers not to let themselves be deceived.

*In "How Those Initially Aspiring to the Way Can Attain Buddhahood Through the Lotus Sutra," Nichiren Daishōnin writes: "A sutra passage likens persons of this type [enemies of the Lotus Sutra who go along with other people's desires and so come to be revered] to a hunter who spies sharply about him as he stalks a deer, or to a cat who hides its claws as it creeps up on a mouse. In just such a way, we are told, do they flatter, deceive and mislead the men and women lay believers" (MW-6, 205). And in "Letter to Konichi-bo," he says, "If you do not know your enemies, you will be deceived by them" (MW-4, 167).*

To lead people astray and cause them to abandon faith, the enemies of the Lotus Sutra employ various kinds of cunning and spin clever lies. Those who deceive others are evil. But those who allow themselves to be deceived are foolish. I hope you will have the wisdom to see through such insidious duplicity. Let's continue to construct the great castle of Soka! Let's continue to fight! Together!

### **Members in Remote Areas**

Next, I want to introduce to you the activities of members on Tsushima Island.<sup>8</sup> Several years ago, the Nikken sect was causing a great deal of trouble on the island. During a visit around that time to Tottori Prefecture, I had the chance to meet with eight representatives from Tsushima. In the years since, our friends on that isle have struggled heroically, and they have now won total victory.

Members of Tsushima, you have created a truly magnificent organization. To all of you,

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congratulations!

I also want to warmly commend the valiant struggles of our friends on Sado.

*The members in Sado have made great strides in building friendship in the community. In May 1997, many guests from the local community took part in events to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sado Culture Center.*

The members on various remote islands are making tremendous efforts in their kosen-rufu activities. Since Japan is, after all, just a string of tiny islands, let's all work together to do our best!

On another note, I want to report on a change in certain plans. Ideas for creating a World Photography Culture Center were previously announced. However, as a result of deliberations involving the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum and other concerned parties, it has been decided to return to the drawing board and come up with a different way of contributing to the development of photographic culture.

### **Do Not Look Down On My Disciples!**

Last, I will read a passage from the Gosho "On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice":

I entreat the people of this country: Do not look down upon my disciples! If one inquires into their past, they are great bodhisattvas who have given alms to Buddhas over a period of eighty myriads of millions of kalpas.... And if one speaks of the future, they are endowed with the benefit of the fiftieth person,<sup>9</sup> surpassing that of one who gives alms to all living beings for a period of eighty years. They are like an infant emperor wrapped in swaddling clothes, or a great dragon who has just been born. Do not despise them! Do not look on them with contempt! (MW-6, 225)

The Daishonin is saying that there is no one more noble than the Bodhisattvas of the Earth working to accomplish kosen-rufu. He is telling people in society not to ridicule these respectable emissaries of the Buddha.

The universe is infinite; Buddhism, immeasurably profound.

The Lotus Sutra uses terms such as "five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkha thousand-millionfold worlds" (LS16, p. 225) in describing the vastness of the universe. Buddhahood is a state in which we can make our way with perfect freedom through this infinitely vast universe. Such a state is enjoyed by those who uphold the Daishonin's Buddhism. Serenely rising above small, trivial matters, let us advance boldly, with broad, generous hearts.

When I became president of the Soka Gakkai [in 1960], I initially prayed for two things: that Japan would not be struck by a devastating earthquake and that there would be no major food shortage. Now, I am praying every day that you, SGI members, will all be protected from accidents, enjoy excellent health and prosperity, and continue advancing along the path of kosen-rufu. Also, I am praying morning and evening that you will each become happy, realize your dreams, and bring your life to a splendid conclusion.

These are my true sentiments. On that note, I conclude my remarks.

Thank you for your long attention. Let's meet again next month!

**WT**

1. Many Treasures Group (Jpn Taho-kai): a special group for pioneer members. The Many Treasures Groups in Tokyo and Kansai are named Hoju-kai (Treasure Life Group) and Kimpo-kai (Golden Treasure Group), respectively.

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2. Taira and Minamoto clans: two powerful military families that vied to rule Japan.
3. Kyoshikanyo: wife of Kyoshika, or Taishaku, when he was a Brahman in one of his incarnations.
4. Srimahadevi (Jpn Kisshotenno): goddess said to give men virtue and happiness. Also, wife of Vaisravana (Jpn Bishamonten), one of the Four Heavenly Kings.
5. Madam Li: a beautiful consort of Emperor Wu (156–87 B.C.E.) of China's Han dynasty.
6. Yang Guifei: a notorious beauty and concubine of the great T'ang emperor Hsüan Tsung (Xuan Zong; r. 712–56).
7. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1971), p. 73.
8. Tsushima: island located between northwestern Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, and the Korean peninsula.
9. Benefit of the 50th person: refers to the immeasurable benefit obtained by even the 50th person in a chain of transmission who rejoices on hearing the Lotus Sutra.

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