

## The Strictness of Victory and Defeat

Since the days of my youth, my motto has been ‘The greater the resistance waves meet, the stronger they become.’ This conviction resonates at a fundamental level with the idea of challenge and response, the theory of history espoused by the great British historian Arnold Toynbee. He maintained that a civilization would continue to develop as long as people had the energy and vitality to accept life’s inevitable problems and obstacles as challenges and respond to them by growing stronger themselves.

— Daisaku Ikeda

*SGI President Ikeda sent the following message to the Yamanashi Prefecture Women’s Division Leaders Meeting, at the Yamanashi Culture Center in Kofu, Japan, Sept. 30.*

My sincere congratulations to all of you, the wonderful women’s division members of Yamanashi Prefecture! Yamanashi is leading the way for the rest of Japan. Steadfastly dedicated to upholding and proving the validity of the correct teaching just as Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin taught, you are courageously denouncing the malignant forces that seek to destroy Buddhism. As a result, the vigor and momentum of your activities continue to grow, and your lives abound with inexhaustible benefit and joy.

You who are spearheading these noble endeavors on the very forefront of our movement are people of the loftiest mission. Without question, you enjoy the protection of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout past, present and future, and of all Buddhist gods, the protective functions of the entire universe. As an expression of my deep respect and gratitude for each of you who possess such a profound purpose, I will share a few words with you today.

### **History Bears Witness**

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “In the Latter Day of the Law of both Shakyamuni and the Buddhas before him, the rulers and people who despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra seemed to be free from punishment at first, but eventually they were all doomed to fall” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 241). The Buddhist law of cause and effect is very strict.

In another Goshō, the Daishonin declares that the acts of persecution against him will result in severe retribution within a period of “one hundred days after my exile or execution, and again on the first, third and seventh anniversary [of the persecution]” (MW-1, 177). And in perfect accord with the Daishonin’s prediction, the Kamakura shogunate that had so harshly persecuted him fell to its ruin as a result of the two calamities of internal strife and foreign invasion. History bears clear witness to this fact. And needless to say, this principle of cause and effect has also been clearly verified in the present day as well. Such instances offer abundant proof of the correctness of the SGI.

### **Hei no Saemon’s Pitiful End**

Hei no Saemon was the key person behind the official persecution of the Daishonin, ordering first his execution and, when that failed, his exile to Sado. What was the fate of Hei no Saemon and his family? When it was discovered in 1293 that he and members of

his family were involved in a conspiracy against the government, Hei no Saemon's entire line was consigned to oblivion. I have discussed this matter on other occasions, but I hope that through reviewing it we can renew our appreciation of the strictness of victory and defeat in Buddhism.

Hei no Saemon and his second son, Sukemune, who were directly implicated in the conspiracy, met a grim end by being beheaded at Hei no Saemon's residence in Kamakura — the very place where Hei no Saemon had the three martyrs of Atsuhara executed. Nikko Shonin comments on the incident as follows: "This was no ordinary occurrence. They incurred the actual punishment of the Lotus Sutra" (*Honzon Bun'yo Cho* [List of the Recipients of the Gohonzon]).

In his commentary on the Goshō "On the Selection of the Time," the 26th high priest, Nichikan (1665–1726), who is venerated as a restorer of the true spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism, discusses the matter in greater detail, saying:

Reflecting on these events, it is clear to me that the reason why Hei no Saemon was beheaded was that [when he and his warriors stormed into the Daishonin's dwelling to arrest him during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution] his subordinate struck the founder Nichiren in the face. And the reason why his most beloved second son [Sukemune], then lord of Awa Province, was beheaded was that he [Hei no Saemon] tried to behead the founder Nichiren, who was born in Awa Province. (*Fuji Shugaku Yoshu* [Selected Works of the Fuji School])

Hei no Saemon's eldest son, Munetsuna, jealous of the favoritism his father bestowed on his younger brother Sukemune, secretly informed the authorities of the conspiracy, thereby setting in motion a chain of events that led to the destruction of the entire clan. He himself was sent into exile on Sado.

On this point, Nichikan declares that the reason why Munetsuna was exiled to Sado was that Hei no Saemon had exiled the Daishonin to that island. He therefore concludes: "These facts perfectly match [the founder Nichiren's prediction of actual retribution based on the law of cause and effect]. It is inconceivable, therefore, that those who commit grave offenses can avoid severe retribution."

Any act of persecution or harassment directed against those who are exerting themselves to widely propagate the correct teaching will, in the words of the Lotus Sutra, "rebound upon the originator" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 304). In other words, the destructive effects of such actions are sure to boomerang back to the perpetrators themselves. The suffering they cause others will return to them in its entirety; to the extent that they have brought misery and pain to others, their lives will become filled with misery and pain, and they will plummet toward their self-destruction.

I hope you will have a profound awareness of the uncompromising workings of the law of cause and effect, engraving it forever in your heart.

## **An Unchanging Rule**

Since the days of my youth, my motto has been "The greater the resistance waves meet, the stronger they become." This conviction resonates at a fundamental level with the idea of challenge and response, the theory of history espoused by the great British historian Arnold Toynbee. He maintained that a civilization would continue to develop as long as people had the energy and vitality to accept life's inevitable problems and obstacles as challenges and respond to them by growing stronger. Conversely, when people lose the energy and vitality to respond positively to challenges, a civilization will begin to decline.

In the second volume of his epic work, *A Study of History*, Dr. Toynbee explains this concept by citing a passage from Goethe's *Faust*. Faust declares to Mephistopheles, the

devil personified, and to the obstacles he must fight against, “Should ever I take ease upon a bed of leisure, / May that same moment mark my end!” (lines 1692–93).

The moment you assume the attitude “There’s no need to continue making effort. I can just take it easy and relax. I don’t need to expand my activities or challenge myself any further” — from that instant — your downhill decline starts.

Dr. Toynbee argues that this is an unchanging rule of history. This rule also holds true for individuals and for organizations. No matter how great the problems or obstacles that beset us, by challenging them and turning them to our advantage, we can become stronger and develop further.

## **History’s Victors**

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Doesn’t a fire burn more briskly when logs are added?... Were it not for the flowing rivers there would be no sea” (MW-1, 9). Just like these examples, practitioners of the Mystic Law grow stronger and more resilient with each obstacle they encounter. Those who advance with such vigor are history’s victors. Those who advance with such dynamic energy are winners in life. The important thing is to temper and forge oneself and to work to strengthen the SGI.

Nichiren Daishonin proclaims, “So long as one maintains firm faith, he is certain to receive the great protection of the [Buddhist] gods” (MW-3, 198). He is also saying here in a sense, “Don’t depend on others!” He is urging us to abandon the indulgent tendency to assume that someone will naturally protect us or take our side. It is essential that we become stronger ourselves. This passage attests to the fact that the protection of the Buddhist gods, the protective forces in the universe, and victory in our lives can only be gained by strengthening our faith and determination.

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, declares: “Those who malign the Soka Gakkai are maligning a gathering of emissaries of the Mystic Law. Therefore, they cannot possibly avoid incurring unequivocal retribution. You should observe closely how these people fare in the future. You should also keep your eyes open for the great and wondrous benefit that those who sincerely believe in the Mystic Law receive” (*Toda Josei Zenshu* [The Collected Works of Josei Toda]).

My dear friends of Yamanashi, I pray with all my heart that your lives will shine with ever-increasing good fortune and benefit.

Please take care! Let’s meet again soon.

With best wishes,

Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda

**WT**