

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay**  
**Our Time Has Come**  
**By HO GOKU**

**SGI President Ikeda poses a question to all the SGI men's division members: 'If we do not rise to the challenge now, then when? If we do not fight today, then when?'**

Many members place great trust and expectations in the men's division members, the pillars of kosen-rufu. The women's division members, the compassionate mothers of kosen-rufu, are never shy about voicing those expectations!

"Why aren't the men more enthusiastic?" they ask. I say that the men's division members *are* enthusiastic; they just don't make a show of it. They want to surprise everyone in the end with a brilliant achievement — like the quiet man who turns out to be a hero at the climax of a great drama.

Others ask, "Why are they so reluctant to act?" I say that the men *aren't* reluctant; they are prudent. They don't want to waste their efforts. They know the importance of waiting until the time is ripe.

"Why are they so timid?" asks another. "Why don't they speak up?" I say that they're *not* timid; they're just thoughtful. They choose their words carefully, out of consideration for others and to avoid meaningless babble.

I am also a men's division member, and I am quite aware of the feelings and circumstances of my beloved fellow members.



Many of the men's division members are facing incredible challenges. Thinking of their families' happiness, they boldly brave the winds of economic recession, racking their brains and working twice as hard as others to excel at work. For the most part, however, their wives and children don't get the chance to witness this side of them. And when, on one of their rare days off, our men's division members want to rest peacefully at home, they are criticized for "just sitting around all day, doing nothing."

Those who are fathers, meanwhile, find themselves shunned and scorned once their adored children hit adolescence. Whenever the budget is tight, Dad's spending money is always the first to be cut. If he complains, his wife will fire back: "Why don't you quit smoking and cut down on your drinking? It'll be good for your health, too."

There are times when even a reasonable argument just adds to one's already heavy pressures.



Yet even under these trying circumstances, how wonderful it is to see the men striving hard in Soka Gakkai activities, devoting themselves for the sake of Buddhism, society and their fellow members.

The Japanese word for *men* suggests vigor. Nichiren Daishonin was 50 when he faced the persecution at Tatsunokuchi and revealed his true identity as the original Buddha. And Shijo Kingo, who stood up to defend him and accompanied him at that time of crisis, had just turned 40.

It was thus in his 40s that Shijo Kingo traveled all the way to visit and seek guidance

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from the Daishonin at his place of exile, Sado Island. He went on to prove the justice and power of Buddhism despite the adverse circumstances of having his fief confiscated. In this sense, we may say that Shijo Kingo was a pioneering member of the men's division, rather than the youth division.

Centuries later, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi embraced the Daishonin's teachings at age 57. His intellectual and philosophical search led him finally to the Daishonin's Buddhism, and from there his journey of kosen-rufu began. Furthermore, Josei Toda was 45 when, in prison, he realized that it was his mission to make the widespread propagation of the Daishonin's teachings a reality.



In his novel *The Human Revolution* (written under the pen name Myo Goku), Mr. Toda shows through the main character, Gan, how one can reveal one's true potential. In one scene, Gan has awakened to faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism and is showing actual proof of that faith at work:

How strong a person can become through a simple change in attitude! You can either tell yourself, "It's too hard, I don't think I'll be able to do it," or "Yes, I can do this. Let me at it." Only a fine line separates the two. But I'll tell you one thing, if you work like crazy, you'll come to display capabilities that you never had before — or rather, I should say, capabilities or potential that you always possessed but never before tapped.

Dynamic growth begins with a positive determination. And unflagging effort is the key to breaking through our limitations. Faith is a never-ending process of challenging ourselves.



The men's division members are the cornerstones of the Soka Gakkai. They are the last runners in the relay race of kosen-rufu, the runners who determine our victory or defeat.

The men's division members are lions. Their indomitable presence gives assurance to those around them. When their resolute voices ring out, they instill courage in everyone and bring about a victory of the people.

My heroic friends! My noble comrades in the struggle for kosen-rufu! A decisive battle to usher in the dawn of the 21st century has already begun. At last, our time has come.

If we do not rise to the challenge now, then when? If we do not fight today, then when?

Life is a struggle against the limited time we have on earth. What will have been the purpose of our lives if we do not fulfill our mission? If we abandon our dream, no matter how we may try to justify ourselves, there will be little left in the end but emptiness and regret.

The Daishonin writes, "Do not spend this life in vain and regret it for 10,000 years to come" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 970). Let us leap astride our white horses and gallop intrepidly across the great plains of our mission, holding high the banner of kosen-rufu.

**WT**