

## AGAINST THE POWERFUL

**In Kansai in May, SGI President Ikeda encourages youth to fight the abuses of authority. He uses episodes from Gandhi's campaign for human rights to illustrate his point.**

*This is part one of the speech that SGI President Ikeda gave at the 22nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in conjunction with the 3rd Kansai Youth Division General Meeting, at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Osaka, Japan, May 26. Part two will appear in next week's issue.*

Hello and welcome to everyone! I hope you are in high spirits. Congratulations on today's Headquarters Leaders Meeting and Kansai Youth Division General Meeting!

Our organization in Kansai is strong because the Kansai members are down-to-earth and unaffected. They're content to be themselves, which leaves them free to give full play to their potential as human beings. That is the source of their strength.

Alexander the Great once said that life is not valued by one's years, but by one's triumphs. These are words of profound import. We must triumph. In life's victories lie true value and meaning.

A victor is one whose life shines with faith. Emerson, a leading exponent of the American Renaissance and one of the favorite writers of my youth, once said, "That which befits us...is cheerfulness and courage, and the endeavor to realize our aspirations" ("New England Reformers"). To advance toward our dreams cheerfully, to courageously work toward achieving them — this is what gives the most sublime meaning and value to our lives.

### **Battle the Powerful, Arrogant and Authoritarian**

Supported by your prayers and good wishes, I recently visited South Korea. I participated there in the unveiling of a magnificent statue of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of India's independence movement, at the SGI of Korea Headquarters in Seoul. The statue depicts Gandhi walking purposefully, staff in hand, during his famous Salt March of 1930. It is truly impressive.

At the time of the Salt March, India was still under British colonial rule. The government had a monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt, on which it levied a high tax. It was illegal for ordinary citizens to make their own, and Gandhi challenged this oppressive restriction head-on.

Great individuals fight abuses of authority. The truly strong do not lord it over the weak. People of genuine strength and courage battle against the powerful, the arrogant, the authoritarian, the evil and the corrupt — all who look down on the people with contempt.

Gandhi embarked on the Salt March with 78 of his followers, their destination the sea, their goal to make salt. In the course of 24 days, they walked 240 miles.

All of you in Kansai are also on a great march — a march for kosen-rufu.

Gandhi took the issue of salt, an essential commodity, and made it a symbol of Indian independence. His message was clear and easy to comprehend, and with each passing day more and more people joined him in his march. Soon they numbered in the thousands. He stated his case simply, in a way that could be readily grasped by all. Moreover, the issue he was protesting had great relevance to people's daily lives.

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## **Nikken Uses 'Faith' To Make Believers Serve Him**

The SGI's strength, too, comes from its close involvement with people's daily lives. This is poles apart from fine-sounding yet empty rhetoric.

Take, for instance, the Nikken sect priests, who mouth the importance of faith to others but are totally indifferent to faith as it concerns their own lives. In testimony to their authoritarian nature, the priests do the exact opposite of what they urge others to do. Their sole intent is to use faith as a tool to make believers subservient.

The Soka Gakkai is fundamentally different. It respects and treasures the people and has always advanced with the conviction that faith manifests itself in daily life, and faith manifests itself in society. The greatness of the Soka Gakkai's first and second presidents, Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, was that they continually stressed these points and wholeheartedly cherished the people.

## **Gandhi Asks About Nam-myoho-renge-kyo**

Gandhi, incidentally, is known to have read the Lotus Sutra with immense reverence in his later years. He possessed a Sanskrit copy of the sutra edited by a Japanese and a European and printed in Russia in 1908. Four years ago, I received a volume of the same edition from Dr. Lokesh Chandra, director of the International Academy of Indian Culture. I understand that it is an extremely rare volume.

Gandhi received his copy of this Buddhist text from none other than Dr. Chandra's father, the noted scholar of Eastern Studies, Professor Raghuvira.

Dr. Chandra said in a letter that he wanted to present me with this same version of the Lotus Sutra because "this edition is the eternal and returning rhyme of an out-of-heaven grace of Gandhi and Ikeda." To have my name linked with Mahatma Gandhi's in such a poetic manner and to think that our lives pulse with the same rhythm is a great honor indeed.

Dr. Chandra also shared with me a very significant but little-known fact: "In the mid-1930s, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the mantra Namu-myoho-renge-kyo in the hymnal of his ashram. He knew that it was a dream of man's cosmic power, life itself borne upon the dream of sound."

I find this most significant. And I think Gandhi had a correct understanding.

Gandhi apparently asked Professor Raghuvira the meaning of the term *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, so the latter read a book about Nichiren Daishonin by a Japanese scholar of Buddhism. He then explained to Gandhi the historical background of the daimoku and the meaning of the seven Chinese characters that comprise it. According to Dr. Chandra, his father told Gandhi that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is "the germinative core [of all universal phenomena] that subsequently expands and takes form."

## **A Deep Sense of Satisfaction**

How incredible it is to chant this wonderful daimoku each day! Nichiren Daishonin writes, "There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The sutra [Lotus Sutra] says, 'The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease'" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 161). There is no joy, happiness and ease surpassing what we can attain through chanting daimoku. No matter how much you may pursue the things you love, and skip gongyo to have a good time — all such fleeting, worldly pleasures pale beside the deep sense of satisfaction that comes from chanting daimoku.

The Daishonin also states: "When Bonten, Taishaku, the deities of the sun and the moon, the Four Heavenly Kings and the others hear this sound [of our voices chanting Nam-

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myoho-rengo-kyo], how could they fail to take on a healthy color and shine with a brilliant light? How could they fail to guard and protect us? We should be firmly convinced of this” (MW-7, 188).

Here, the Daishonin assures us that if we chant daimoku we will definitely be protected by the Buddhist gods, the protective forces of the universe. He urges us to have confidence in this. I hope that all of you will practice with this unshakable conviction.

### **At Last, a True Friend of the People**

Gandhi declared: “I have traveled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes....”

Gandhi tirelessly traversed the length and breadth of India. This parallels what we are doing in our respective countries for kosen-rufu.

As one human being, Gandhi went into the midst of the people, personally meeting and speaking with them. Disappointed and disillusioned by their leaders time and again, the Indian people at last found a true friend in Gandhi. They found a spokesperson who could make their voices, their true sentiments, heard.

Genuine communication and understanding come from personal contact and dialogue. People will place their trust in those whose words are genuine and relevant, and be inspired to work with those individuals, confident that together they will realize peace and build a better, happier world.

We have to go out and meet with people, not keep ourselves aloof and observe their lives from a distance. This was Gandhi’s firm belief.

It has also always been the guiding policy of the SGI and the reason why our movement has grown and developed to this extent. Let us work always among the people and in society, with positive, joyful, tenacious commitment, based on our resonant daimoku. Unless we strive to benefit individuals and society as a whole, our ideals — no matter how lofty — will be nothing more than empty words.

Failure will be the only outcome. This applies to business and all other areas of social endeavor.

It is important that we conduct ourselves in a bright, pleasant manner. Many have learned about the greatness of the Daishonin’s Buddhism as a result of coming into contact with the warmth and humanity of SGI members. In particular, the smiling courtesy and common sense that the women’s and young women’s division members bring to their activities and daily affairs have won widespread praise. Those who act with discretion and speak with sincere concern for and interest in others will leave a deep, lasting, positive impression on people and steadily gain the trust and confidence of many.

Activities such as introducing people to the Daishonin’s Buddhism or promoting our newspaper, for example, are not easy undertakings by any means. They are actually quite a challenge. It is thus a true accomplishment when we succeed.

Challenging ourselves in these activities, even if we don’t always achieve as much as we’d hope, is itself most respectable. The Daishonin would undoubtedly hail all of us striving devotedly for kosen-rufu as “the foremost people in the world.” Winning the praise of the original Buddha, the Daishonin, who perceives the past, present and future, is the highest honor.

Let us continue to work unceasingly for the sake of kosen-rufu with courage, zest and joy.

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## **You Never Lose in Faith**

Buddhism views all phenomena in terms of the eternity of life across the three existences of past, present and future. From the standpoint of the eternity of life, all whom we meet and form a Buddhist connection with will share profound ties with us in lifetime after lifetime. All whom we help and support will in turn function as protective forces, Buddhist gods, to safeguard and aid us. Those who have assisted many people will definitely be reborn as great leaders in future existences. They will not only enjoy happiness themselves but will lead the way to happiness for all whom they have helped as well.

In addition, all the places where you conduct your activities for kosen-rufu will form the bedrock of your indestructible happiness.

Nothing is wasted in faith. One never loses out. Please be confident that all your efforts to help others and promote Buddhism are accumulating immense treasures of good fortune in your life. This is what is meant by inconspicuous benefit.

I hope you will thus advance with youthful vigor. Youthfulness is an unsurpassed source of strength, a precious treasure, the greatest triumph. Demonstrating again the blazing force of your vibrant energy, please create a fresh groundswell that will spread from Kansai to the rest of Japan and the world. May you expand Kansai's ever-victorious march of the people as you continue to advance in boisterous, joyful harmony.

Nothing is stronger than the people. Nothing shakes the times more than the march of the people. As a great Chinese philosopher once said, "The people are emperor."

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