

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
Look to the Future
By DAISAKU IKEDA, SGI President

*The SGI president explains the monthly Headquarters Leaders Meeting held in Japan.
'What is important is to instill hope in the members' hearts,' he says.
'Isn't that the true purpose of a Headquarters Leaders Meeting?'*

When activities have a definite rhythm, they are dynamic, hopeful and sustained. Kosen-rufu is a journey that will continue for all time, for eternity. That's what makes regular, monthly progress important. The pivot that establishes that all-important rhythm for victory in Japan is our monthly Headquarters Leaders Meeting.

In March 1958, just a short time before President Toda passed away, the Soka Gakkai held a busy program of events celebrating the completion of the Grand Lecture Hall at the head temple. At that time, the top Soka Gakkai leaders discussed whether or not the normal monthly Headquarters Leaders Meeting should be held. Finally, they decided to cancel it.

Mr. Toda was confined to his sickbed, but when he heard of the cancellation he was enraged. "What are you thinking?!" he exclaimed. "The Headquarters Leaders Meeting is the culmination of the month's activities and the gathering where we make a fresh departure for the next month! It provides a vital rhythm for our advancement. I always give my entire being to it."

His vehemence drove home anew to the top leaders the importance of the Headquarters Leaders Meetings.

'The Headquarters Leaders Meeting is the culmination of the month's activities and the gathering where we make a fresh departure for the next month!'

A March Headquarters Leaders Meeting was then scheduled after all — on April 3, slightly later than usual, at the Toshima Civic Hall in Tokyo. With Mr. Toda's death on April 2, however, the meeting became the public announcement of his passing. Naturally, the entire program had to be changed at the last minute.

When it came my turn to speak, I fought back my sorrow to encourage the grief-stricken members. "I believe," I said, "that President Toda lives on eternally in the Soka Gakkai, in the heart of each of us, his disciples."

What is important is to instill hope in the members' hearts. Isn't that the true purpose of a Headquarters Leaders Meeting? Those were the thoughts that I kept repeating to myself as I called on our members, with every ounce of my being, to look toward the future.

We started numbering the Headquarters Leaders Meetings after I became the third Soka Gakkai president in 1960. This sprang from my determination to carry on the tradition of the meetings that President Toda had poured his heart and soul into and to make each a vital source of energy for everyone's advancement. I earnestly devoted myself to the success of each meeting, and eventually all of the Headquarters staff came to share my spirit.

On the day of a Headquarters Leaders Meeting, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters staff members are very busy. It became a tradition for several years, beginning in February 1971, for the Headquarters cafeteria to serve rice and curry on this particular day. It's quick to prepare and quick to eat; I remember fondly how everyone would finish their meal

speedily and rush off to the meeting.

In December 1987, we reached our 339th Headquarters Leaders Meeting. We decided then to renew our commitment to the meetings symbolically by starting our numbering over from 1 at the January 1988 meeting. In May 1996, we reached the 100th meeting, and once again started from number 1 in July 1996. Our August 1998 meeting was No. 25.

Over the years, the venues we have used for our Headquarters Leaders Meetings have grown in size. We started meeting in the Taito Gymnasium and the Tokyo Gymnasium. From there, we moved to the Nihon University Auditorium, the Budokan and the Soka University Central Gymnasium.

But with the continued, momentous development of our kosen-rufu movement, it became more and more difficult to gather all our leaders under one roof. At one point, we distributed audio tapes of the Headquarters Leaders Meetings to be played at regional leaders meetings. We also began simultaneous audio broadcasts of the meetings, so that everyone could hear them live.

The present system of satellite video broadcasts was introduced at the 1st Tokyo General Meeting in August 1989. This August marked nine years of satellite broadcasts.

Using this means, we bring the Headquarters Leaders Meetings to all our fellow members striving hard on the front lines of activities around the country, allowing us all to be unified and in rhythm as we make a fresh start each month.

This is all made possible by the staff of the Soka Gakkai's satellite network and the members responsible in each region for receiving and broadcasting the transmissions at designated community centers. I am grateful for their valiant efforts.

'Each Headquarters Leaders Meeting is a milestone marking the distance we have travelled.'

The gathering of millions of our members across the country at Soka Gakkai community centers for the satellite broadcasts of the Headquarters Leaders Meetings — an occasion where members renew their pledge to work for kosen-rufu — is much like the gathering of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, numerous as the sands of the 60,000 Ganges Rivers, at the Ceremony in the Air. As a passage cited in the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" states, "The assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 757).

I have always given my all to the Headquarters Leaders Meetings, determined to make each one an eternal source of courage and joy. In my speeches, I have always striven to reach out to the members and address them as if I were speaking to each one individually. Whenever I thought it might please and inspire my fellow members, I have taken up my fan and led them in Soka Gakkai songs.

This month and again next month, let us continue our joyous advance on the path of our mission. Each Headquarters Leaders Meeting is a milestone marking the distance we have traveled, as we set our sights on the hopeful summit of kosen-rufu in the 21st century.

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