

SGI PRESIDENT'S NEW YEAR'S SPEECH CEASELESS STRUGGLE FOR GOOD IS THE SPIRIT OF THE DAISHONIN'S BUDDHISM

President Ikeda gave the following speech at the New Year's Gongyo Meeting held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Tokyo, on Jan. 2, 1999.

This gongyo meeting, which the Buddhist gods have joined us in celebrating, is indeed an auspicious omen for what lies ahead. Bright, lively New Year's gatherings similar to this one are being held across the country. In terms of size and the enthusiasm of its members, the Soka Gakkai is, in name and reality, the foremost religious organization in Japan.

Every day I am praying for kosen-rufu and for the good health, longevity, prosperity and success of all of you. This is all I wish for. I believe that this is the fundamental responsibility and mission of a leader of kosen-rufu. Everything else is of secondary importance. I hope that you may understand my spirit in this regard and carry it on.

A well-known Japanese business leader visited the Soka Gakkai Headquarters yesterday to convey his New Year's greetings. He made a number of remarks that I would briefly like to share with you.

To paraphrase, he said: "This year's going to be another tough one. Some analysts have remarked that in earlier times a situation like we have today could easily spark a coup d'état. There's no one we can count on to get us out of this mess.... In such an environment, I believe, the presence of the Soka Gakkai is extremely important for Japan. The Soka Gakkai has the capacity to absorb all the energy of social discontent and channel it in a positive direction.... I fear that we are entering an extremely trying period. What is required of our leaders in government and other spheres of society right now is 'philosophical depth.' That is why the Soka Gakkai is so important."

A deadlocked Japan. A resurgence of nationalism that oppresses and exploits the people. Many perceptive individuals voice deep concern that Japan is heading in a very dangerous direction, alienating itself increasingly from the rest of the world. Thinking people clearly recognize that a deeply humanistic philosophy and actions based on such a philosophy are the only means by which we can surmount this crisis. And they hold great expectations for the SGI movement, which is energetically dedicated to liberating the power of the people and creating value.

I have introduced the remarks of this particular business leader to show how highly our endeavors are being appraised today by people in society.

A leader must have humanity, a spirit of caring. To think of others rather than be obsessed with self — that is Buddhism. A genuine leader is one who humbly helps and guides others with utmost dedication, warmly supporting and protecting them throughout. Haughty, insolent leaders do not deserve to be called leaders. I am now fostering a new wave of caring leaders for the 21st century.

Twenty years ago, in 1979, I visited India, known in the Daishonin's time as the "Land of the Moon." I still remember vividly to this day the breathtaking beauty of the full moon illuminating the immortal Ganges. It was on the anniversary of my mentor Josei Toda's birth, Feb. 11.

Today, there will also be a full moon over Japan.

Two decades ago, an unsavory alliance of treacherous ex-Gakkai members, scheming priests and hypocritical political leaders attacked our organization. They sought to take

over the Soka Gakkai, wishing to control and use it for their own self-serving ends, and to get rid of me, who stood in their way.

I am a disciple who has directly inherited the legacy of Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda, our first and second presidents. I have a responsibility to protect the pure organization of the SGI. I fought alone in the storm. I fought without ceasing to this day. This year will mark the 20th anniversary of the day I saw that spectacular full moon over the Ganges.

India's largest and most prestigious institute of higher learning, the University of Delhi, has informed me of its decision to present me with an honorary doctorate. Since I am your representative, this is an honor bestowed upon all of you. I believe it is a tribute to your achievements and one proof of the "westward transmission of Buddhism" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 588), which the Daishonin predicted in the Gosho "Remonstrations with Bodhisattva Hachiman."

The conferral of honorary doctorates and honorary professorships from universities throughout Asia, including China and Korea [through which Buddhism was originally transmitted from India to Japan], and the rest of the world, corresponds to the testimony of Many Treasures (Taho) Buddha [who bore witness to the truth of Shakyamuni's teachings in the Lotus Sutra].

Civilization Depends on Triumphant Over Evil

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is an active, engaged Buddhism — in which its practitioners are constantly engaged in the struggle of good against evil.

There is a famous passage in the Lotus Sutra in which Shakyamuni states: "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five hundred year period you must spread it [my teaching] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa [the entire world] and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas or kumbhanda demons to seize the advantage" (LS23, 288).

It is a command to widely propagate the Buddha's teachings, ensuring that it is never lost, and to give no opening for devilish functions to enter and wreak mischief.

According to Arnold Toynbee, the great British historian, civilization develops and flourishes only when people respond to the challenge of evil by fighting and triumphing over it. Being defeated by evil only means ruin.

Buddhism is a battle of good against evil. It is because of our ongoing victories in that battle that the SGI has achieved the phenomenal growth it has today. If we lose our fighting spirit, then we are no longer practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism.

The widespread propagation of the Mystic Law is the wish and decree of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin.

A scholar of religion outside Japan remarked, "In the entire realm of Buddhism, only the SGI is carrying out the task of widespread propagation."

In contrast, those who embellish religion with authority, who exploit religion for personal gain and milk it for profit are nothing other than "robbers of the Law." Though things may appear to go well for such people for a time, in the end, as the Gosho teaches, they inevitably wind up in truly pitiful circumstances. The workings of the Buddhist law of cause and effect are incredibly strict.

The SGI alone is the noble organization that has inherited and is carrying out the Buddha's will and decree. I hope all of you will be proud of this fact. There is no way that you who are working so hard for kosen-rufu will not be protected by the Buddhist gods and by all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space — the protective functions of the universe.

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May all of you have a fabulous year! May it be a year of good health and much happiness. With these wishes for you for the coming year, I conclude my remarks.

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