

A CIVILIZATION THAT ENSURES JUSTICE

Congratulations on the start of the new year! My best wishes to all of you! Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the renowned Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and Prof. Alfred Balitzer of Claremont McKenna College are presently visiting Japan. During one of their discussions here, they made an observation that I want to share with you. They expressed concern about the Japanese tendency to gloss over issues related to World War II and Japan's past history of aggression against other nations. It's this seeming desire to bury the past, and simply forget all about it.

Such an attitude is in stark contrast, they said, to the growing tendency in other parts of the world — particularly in China, the United States and the leading nations of Europe — to leave an accurate record of history for the 21st century. How is it possible to steer a correct course for the future, they asked, without a correct understanding of history?

Their assessment is right on. That is the conventional wisdom of the world.

More and more in Japan, however, we are seeing a trend to cover up the facts of history that are unpleasant or inconvenient and to teach a false history of events. A dangerous nationalism is spreading.

It is imperative, therefore, that we of the Soka Gakkai fight against these forces, that we strive with all our strength to expand the alliance of people of conscience and reason. And let us do just that!

Rabbi Cooper and Professor Balitzer referred to the SGI leader's courage in speaking out and taking action in a country where fact and truth are so easily distorted. Proclaiming that calls for peace are meaningless unless they are accompanied by action, the two men paid tribute to President Ikeda's efforts to foster individuals of character, who are unafraid to take a stand for justice and truth when the need arises.

There is also no place for vagueness when recording the history of kosen-rufu. We mustn't turn a blind eye to people who betray the Soka Gakkai, who trample on the trust of their fellow members or who seek to suppress the kosen-rufu movement.

Rather, it's vital that we thoroughly expose their actions and see that they are brought to justice. If we leave things vague and ambiguous, our foundation will begin to crumble.

A bright future awaits us only if we keep fighting against — only if we completely defeat — those who would destroy Buddhism.

The world is our stage, Buddhism teaches.

Incidentally, I recently received a message from Cuban President Fidel Castro, saying that he was very happy and honored by the good wishes I had earlier conveyed for his good health considering his busy schedule. In his message, he declared that, since he is a "revolutionary," he will keep fighting until his final breath for the dignity of the Cuban people and the sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba.

He called me a revolutionary, as well, one who fights each day for the dignity of ordinary people, regardless of the consequences. And acknowledging the long hours I work, seven days a week, for the accomplishment of world peace, the Cuban leader wished me

good health in my endeavors. He also voiced his hope that on my next visit to the Americas, I will visit Cuba again.

When I visited Cuba about three years ago, I received a very warm welcome. *During his stay, in June 1996, he met with President Castro in the Palacio de la Revolución in Havana.*

The world is our stage. Nichiren Daishonin serenely dismissed the ruling authorities of Japan of his day, calling them “the rulers of this little island country” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 176).

The Daishonin’s Buddhism derives from an infinitely vast state of life — one that encompasses the entire world and universe. So let us of the SGI, its practitioners, turn our hearts to the world and the universe while taking action in our local communities.

To form spiritual ties with India has been the SGI’s long-held dream.

It is an unsurpassed honor today to welcome such distinguished philosopher-scholars from India, the land of a great spiritual heritage that is the treasure of all humankind.

Most esteemed Vice-Chancellor Mehta, Madame Mehta, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Ahmad, distinguished professors of Delhi University, ladies and gentlemen: I wish to express my deepest appreciation for the degree of doctor of letters, *honoris causa*, which has been conferred upon me by your venerable institution.

I regard this event as one of profound significance. For to form spiritual ties with India, the birthplace of Buddhism to which we owe such an immense debt, has been the cherished dream of followers of the Dai-shonin for 700 years.

The Soka Gakkai’s first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, strove valiantly to make that dream a reality. I therefore dedicate the honor that has been conferred on me by your illustrious institution to my two noble predecessors. It is also my firm belief that people 50 or 100 years hence will look back on today’s historic ceremony with great pride.

Gandhi was determined to win — to even turn his enemies into allies.

Allow me to share an incident that took place when Mahatma Gandhi was fighting for human rights in South Africa (from *Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation*, p. 47). Gandhi sought the repeal of a notorious law requiring the registration of all Asians.

Passed in 1907, the law mandated the registration of all Indians over the age of 8 resident in South Africa. Their fingerprints were taken and kept on record, and carrying the Asian resident registration card was made compulsory. Noncompliance meant stiff fines, imprisonment, the loss of the right to residence and, ultimately, deportation.

Gandhi went straight to the general who was the head of the government and told him, “I’ve come to tell you that I am going to fight against your government.”

Gandhi was a person of true courage. This is the only way one can fight injustice.

The general laughed scornfully and queried: “You mean you have come here to tell me that? Is there anything more you want to say?”

“Yes,” Gandhi said distinctly, “I am going to win.”

What a wonderful assertion! He'd already decided on the outcome. In terms of his powerful resolve, he had already won.

Astonished, the general asked, "Well, and how are you going to do that?"

Gandhi smiled and replied, "With your help."

True to his declaration, Gandhi in the end managed to turn the general into an ally for his cause. He did this by winning the general's respect through his personal integrity and courage. And finally, he succeeded in having the law repealed. This is a true story.

As a result of Gandhi's long, nonviolent struggle, during which he courted imprisonment, the law was repealed and basic civil rights for Indians were in 1914 brought into legislation.

What boldness, what spirit, what optimism Gandhi displayed! How inspiring were his actions! These are the qualities and characteristics of a true revolutionary. I want all of you, the revolutionaries of Soka, the revolutionaries of the new century, to emulate his spirit.

A revolutionary must have iron strength and fortitude. Someone commented on what they saw as a growing number of Soka Gakkai leaders who lack courage and backbone compared to the early days of the organization. They noted that there were even some who had risen to high positions thanks to the sincere support of fellow members but had become ungrateful and arrogant. Such people, this person said, were truly foolish and not to be trusted.

I call on the youth division to stand up once again and build a new Soka Gakkai!

Even if no one else does, I will stand. Even if I am the only one, I will fight on! I am a successor to Mr. Makiguchi's legacy. I am a direct disciple of Mr. Toda. I will strive once more, onward into the 21st century. Please join me!

In Japan and around the world, New Year's saw the SGI make a magnificent departure — with an alliance of hope unprecedented in size and number — for the 21st century. There is no other organization in the world like the SGI, whose members are practicing in exact accord with the Buddha's will and decree. It is an organization directly connected to the Daishonin.

Let's advance joyfully with the resolve that if the Soka Gakkai is rock-solid, then Japan and rest of the world will be rock-solid, too. We are working for no one and no cause other than kosen-rufu, the happiness of the people, and our own fulfillment. And if we're going to strive in that endeavor, then let's achieve a really stunning victory!

New beginnings can always be traced back to just a few people, Gandhi taught.

Twenty years ago, on Feb. 6, 1979, I arrived at New Delhi airport just after midnight. It was my first visit to India in 15 years.

As dawn broke, the streets of Delhi were enveloped in a magical morning mist. It was a solemn, breathtaking picture.

The very first thing I did was pay a courtesy call on your splendid Delhi University. As Soka University founder, I also presented some books to your library, an expression of goodwill, in a ceremony in the university's Tagore Hall. That visit remains a golden page in my life.

Title: A Civilization That Ensures Justice [mahatma Gandhi]

Subject: World Tribune 01/29/99 n.3227 p.1 WT990129p01 Hachioji, Japan 01/07/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 01/07/99 Activists Civilization Daisaku Ensures Gakkai Gandhi] Hachioji Headquarters
Ikeda Japan Justice Leaders Meeting Nonviolence People Soka Speech

Delhi University is a renowned center of learning that is creating new directions for human history. Many decades ago, it was the cradle of India's struggle for independence. Mahatma Gandhi visited the university many times, engaging in dialogue with students as he led the movement for India's self-rule. Gandhi saw a great ray of hope in the beautiful unity of the university's youth, who were striving to learn together, rising above differences of birth, social standing, and religion.

As a young university in those days, Delhi University faced many challenges, such as finding adequate funding and facilities. Its student body was still small.

Gandhi, with his penetrating insight into history, watched warmly over the university's development. Said Gandhi: "A beginning is always made by a few, even one," and "Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glory in fighting alone."

Living up to Gandhi's prediction, Delhi University went on to achieve spectacular growth and development.

We need new talent, new ways of thinking — there's no other way to win now.

Vice-Chancellor Mehta is one of India's leading political scientists. In his capacity as vice president of the International Association of University Presidents, he has also exercised vibrant leadership in the sphere of global education.

In his highly acclaimed book *Beyond Marxism: Towards an Alternative Perspective*, Prof. Mehta stressed that "a new integral man must accompany the new social revolution" (p. 38). I am in complete agreement with this.

In order to emerge victorious from a period of profound historical transition, we need the contributions of new talent. We need expanding ranks of capable people with fresh ideas and new ways of thinking.

It is crucial, therefore, that we foster a new generation of youth and raise a new generation of leaders. This is the only way. This is the formula for victory.

That is why I want the youth division members to advance freely and without restraint. There's no need to be shy or hesitant. Just follow your heart, and do what you feel needs to be done. I want you to open a vast path of kosen-rufu double that of the present — and even double that again! I entrust everything to the youth division members, successors in whom I place the utmost faith. That time is already here.

The women and youth of Gandhi's movement had no thought of reward or personal gain.

Many women came together to courageously take part in Gandhi's nonviolent movement. Some had young children who accompanied them and died along the way. Still these brave mothers forged on, enduring all. Said one stalwart mother: "We must not pine for the dead who will not come back to us for all our pining. It is the living for whom we must work."

Women and youth joined in the struggle for independence with no thought of reward or personal gain. They did not let grief or sorrow defeat them. They did not succumb to self-pity.

Their selfless dedication was a source of immense courage and inspiration for Gandhi

himself. He declared that the highest respect and honors belonged not to him but to these ordinary people.

One scholar said that it is an obscene affront to civilization that politicians and the like — those who use the people to get ahead — are lavishly honored, while ordinary people working valiantly to improve society at the grass roots are never recognized.

Today is also a women's division leader's meeting. With the same spirit of veneration and affection Gandhi had for women, let us convey our greatest respect and appreciation to the women's division members, the noble mothers of kosen-rufu!

The members of the women's and young women's divisions are the treasures of our organization. The members of the men's and young men's divisions are not to behave arrogantly toward them or scold them. Arrogant, high-handed behavior is inexcusable in any leader.

Madame Mehta has likewise made enormous contributions to social welfare and education while wholeheartedly supporting the extremely busy vice-chancellor. Let's applaud her for her wonderful efforts.

Mr. Makiguchi said that if you're deadlocked, go back to your starting point.

Mr. Makiguchi, the originator of value-creating education, often said, "When you come to a deadlock, go back to the beginning, to your starting point." This is a well-known principle.

Humanity is now in a serious deadlock. It is vital, therefore, that we listen again, with intent humility, to the profound spiritual message that continues to arise, calmly and quietly, from the eternal land of India.

The starting point of a steadfast humanism is the concept of human victory based on the Dharma — meaning the Law, justice, or truth — as was demonstrated by India's King Ashoka. I spoke about this in my lecture at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (see January 1998 *Living Buddhism*).

Prof. Rana of Delhi University, one of our distinguished guests today, is a renowned authority on King Ashoka.

During World War II, when Mr. Makiguchi was interrogated in prison by the Japanese military authorities, he asserted with great dignity his commitment to the Buddhist principle of relying on the Law, not on people. The Law is what matters. People are fickle, but the Law is constant, unchanging. We should therefore base ourselves on the Law.

Mr. Makiguchi based his actions on the fundamental principle of the universe, the eternal, unchanging Law. From this noble perspective, he looked down upon the power of military authorities.

This is the great Soka Gakkai spirit. There is no stronger, happier way of life than one lived in harmony with the ultimate Law.

There is no strategy more powerful than the strategy of the Lotus Sutra. There is no joy greater than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Let's advance with that unshakable conviction.

The deepest struggle is against the negativity and destructiveness within the human heart.

We find these words in one of King Ashoka's rock edicts: "All people are my children. What I desire for my own children — and I desire their welfare and happiness both in this world and the next — that I desire for all people" (*The Edicts of King Ashoka*, p. 18).

I have always believed that the essence of humanistic education, as well, lies in teachers' determination to love their students as if they were their own children.

Another of King Ashoka's rock edicts states that ruling a country means working for the happiness of the people. Still another describes the task of governing as repaying the debt owed to the people [for their sustenance and support].

Government or political leaders who exploit the people for all they're worth, who gain power and position as a result, and who then strut around, puffed up with self-importance, don't know the first thing about the true meaning of governing. Even more deplorable are those who have no sense of gratitude toward the people, who betray the people and their trust. They are the lowest of the low.

Gandhi, who revived King Ashoka's spirit in the modern age, listed politics without principles as first among his list of seven sins (see Jan. 15 *World Tribune*, p. 11). He repeatedly taught that without a firm spiritual base, without the support of a religious outlook, politics will become debased and corrupt.

In light of the Mahatma's beliefs, the assertions and actions of the SGI are valid and correct.

Prof. Mehta also said with great eloquence and insight: "Whatever we may think, evil will always keep its place in the human heart, especially in places of power. We all combine within ourselves, though in different proportions, good and evil, brute and human. But our task as civilised beings is not to unleash evil upon the world, but to fight it and evolve towards better ideals..." (*Beyond Marxism*, p. 131).

I completely agree with his words. The deepest struggle is the struggle against the negativity and destructiveness — the devilish nature — within the human heart. Therefore, we must fight against the devilish nature of power, against wanton abuses of authority. Leaders, especially, must stand in the vanguard of the struggle against evil and injustice.

The key to contributing to the community is coming in contact with each and every community member.

My mentor, Josei Toda, once presented me with a poem filled with his boundless expectations:

*Live eternally
Like a phoenix
Soaring through the sky*

With these lines, I believe he was urging: "Just as a phoenix serenely wings its way through the heavens, make your way throughout the world your whole life long, into eternity. Live a long, long life and work intrepidly toward the goal of peace."

Deeply cherishing my mentor's warm expectations, I have lived all these years and striven earnestly for the happiness of humanity and world peace. I hope all of you will follow in my path.

It is a big, wide world. How foolish it is to be preoccupied solely with one small society or minor, insignificant things.

January is the month of Gandhi's martyrdom. [He died on Jan. 30, 1948.] What was his most pressing concern in the final period of his life, just prior to his assassination? India had finally achieved political independence the previous year. Thus, in order to reach the goal of social, moral and economic independence, Gandhi now felt the need to create an organization rooted in the community, serving the needs of citizens.

He insisted that leaders come in personal contact with every villager within their jurisdiction. Gandhi himself took the lead in contributing to the local community. This undertaking was one of his final wishes.

Contributing to the community — the SGI has been doing just that for many, many years. The key in this endeavor is coming in personal contact with everyone in the community.

Vice-Chancellor Mehta has also written on this point: "We need to realise that, for most of us, spiritual life is to be found not in seclusion from society or residence in the Himalayan caves, but in participating sincerely in the social process. It is only through commitment to others that we can become ourselves" (*Beyond Marxism*, p. 37).

Only by working for the happiness of others can we realize our potential. In that sense, the daily activities of SGI members on behalf of their friends and neighbors can be thought of as one of the most appropriate, cutting-edge people's movements in the world today.

The Daishonin, the founder of the school of Buddhism we follow, left us these words: "Wherever we dwell and practice the single vehicle [the Mystic Law], that place will be the capital of Eternally Tranquil Light. And, without having to advance a step, those who are our disciples and lay supporters can view Eagle Peak in India and day and night will go to and from the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light that has existed for all time. How inexpressibly joyful to think of it!" (MW-7, 27).

He expounded a great life philosophy.

Let's advance once again this year, holding high the banner of humanism of the SGI — in the communities in which we reside, in which we live joyfully, in the very place where we find ourselves now.

Gandhi wrote: "I believe in the truth implicitly that a man can serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours is in no way selfish or exclusive.... The neighbours will then understand the spirit in which such service is given. They will also know that they will be expected to give their services to their neighbors. Thus considered, it [service to neighbours] would spread like the proverbial snow-ball, gathering strength in geometrical progression encircling the whole earth."

Fearing nothing, fearing no one, is the way to true freedom.

Looking toward the future, Vice-Chancellor Mehta stated yesterday in a speech at Soka University, "The 19th century was the century of freedom; the 20th, of equality; and the 21st will be the century of justice...." I fully support this statement.

Justice — true justice is the happiness and welfare of humanity. The foundation for this is justice based on the Dharma or Law.

Toward the construction of a 21st-century civilization that will ensure the clear victory of justice, we are committed to creating firm bonds of friendship and solidarity with the esteemed scholars of Delhi University and the university's student body of 250,000, which is one of the largest in the world.

Unless justice triumphs, darkness will prevail. We cannot afford to lose in this struggle.

Defeat spells misery and unhappiness — be it for an individual or an organization. And, in order to win, it is important to fear nothing.

The great poet-sage Rabindranath Tagore is also the recipient of an honorary degree from Delhi University. Before a large assembly of students at the convocation ceremony at which this honor was bestowed, he recited his famous poem “Freedom from Fear.”

Fear nothing! Fight proudly, with your head held high! This is the key to true freedom, to victory. Never be afraid. Nothing can match the strength of those who stand on the side of justice, those who uphold the Dharma, the Law.

Finally, I want to share a few lines of verse from Tagore’s “The Full Vision,” which I loved to recite in my youth:

*The glory of the sun
Shines in the valour of man;
His rays dispel all darkness on this earth.*

Thank you very much.

SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 30th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held in conjunction with the conferral of an honorary doctorate upon President Ikeda from the University of Delhi, at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 7.

Title: A Civilization That Ensures Justice [mahatma Gandhi]
Subject: World Tribune 01/29/99 n.3227 p.1 WT990129p01 Hachioji, Japan 01/07/99
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 01/07/99 Activists Civilization Daisaku Ensures Gakkai Gandhi] Hachioji Headquarters
Ikeda Japan Justice Leaders Meeting Nonviolence People Soka Speech