

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA A POEM INFUSED WITH MY PRAYER

*‘I was suddenly seized by the thought “Now the time has come for me to present the youth with new guidelines,” President Ikeda writes, as he explains the state of things that led him in 1981 to write the poem ‘Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!’*

How wonderful it is to advance, living each day to the fullest, with our Soka family, our fellow members in faith! Together let us rejoice on our victory again today. Those who possess a vibrant, untrammelled spirit are truly champions of freedom.

February 1979 — just over two decades ago — I set off for India on a journey of kosen-rufu from Kagoshima Airport in Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan’s four main islands. I was determined to realize the westward transmission of Buddhism that Nichiren Daishonin had prophesied in his writings. And I began that deeply meaningful endeavor from Kyushu.

A little more than two months later, I stepped down as Soka Gakkai president and became honorary president. The next time I called on Kyushu was on my return from another journey of exchange with Asian neighbors — my fifth visit to China, in April 1980. At that time, our Kyushu members were buffeted by the crosswinds of all sorts of despicable plots and schemes, as were members in other parts of Japan. In this storm of persecution, I was not allowed to give speeches or guidance freely at our meetings.

The attacks on me and the Soka Gakkai were an insane performance orchestrated by unscrupulous priests and several corrupt ex-Gakkai members in league with them. Their actions only proved their essential lack of human decency.

All the trials we have encountered accord perfectly with the Daishonin’s teachings. The Daishonin writes, “The three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice while the foolish will retreat” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 244).

Refusing to be intimidated, I rose up on my own and began to give guidance once more to our members. I launched a new struggle.

After arriving in Fukuoka from Nagasaki, I called out to my comrades: “No matter how harsh the winds or how turbulent the seas, do not forget kosen-rufu! Do not let the banner of propagation fall! Do not extinguish the flame of faith!”

The Kyushu members responded to my intrepid call to hold fast to our cause and strove with all their might, encouraging each other to keep fighting for justice.

On Dec. 8, 1981, I finally visited Oita in northeastern Kyushu, where the members had long been waiting to see me. It was my first visit in 13 years. The Oita members had also undergone indescribably bitter suffering, all because of the malicious schemes and attacks of self-serving priests, who had betrayed the Daishonin’s teachings.

These priests formed an unholy alliance aimed at controlling and destroying the Soka Gakkai, and they unleashed their hateful intrigues and cruel abuse in Oita, too. But our

Title: A Poem Infused With My Prayer

Subject: World Tribune 04/16/99 n.3238 p.5 WT990416p05

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: Daisaku Essays Ikeda Infused Poem Prayer President Tribune World

admirable Oita members were absolutely determined to protect their beloved Gakkai at all costs, and they bravely pursued the path of kosen-rufu. Although a number of cowardly individuals pitifully revealed themselves for what they were, in the end our members won.

The youth division's activities in this effort to uphold the truth were especially noteworthy. In the face of all kinds of persecution, they kept the banner of justice aloft and saw the struggle through to a triumphant finish.

Youth — youth are the key! Crucial are the youth who will carry on the work of kosen-rufu.

These events took place in the year that marked the 30th anniversary of the youth division's establishment and the publication of the "Precepts for Youth" of my mentor, Josei Toda.

At that anniversary, I was suddenly seized by the thought "Now the time has come for me to present the youth with new guidelines."

On the third evening of my visit to Oita, Dec. 10 — a day I will never forget — an Oita youth division leaders meeting was to be held. Before the meeting began, I was in the caretaker's office at the Oita Peace Community Center. A powerful fighting spirit, fueled by a myriad of emotions, already blazed in my heart. The youth whom I loved so dearly were waiting for me.

Youth division representatives told me that they wanted to have a new poem to inspire the members as they set off on their resolute march into the 21st century.

I responded to their seeking spirit: "All right! Let's do it!" In a flash, the tiny six-mat room was transformed into a poet's battleground.

"Why do I climb mountains? / Because they are there!"

For 40 minutes, words poured from my heart like an unstoppable torrent, like an eruption of burning flames.

With intense concentration, pencils working furiously, five young men and women gamely tried to keep up with me and take down my words as I spoke.

After they had copied a clean version, I made a number of revisions. But before they could recopy it, the time for the meeting arrived.

The poem was presented in this version, still filled with the red marks of last-minute corrections. That was the birth of "Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!"

The entire poem is infused with my fervent prayer:

*You must win, no matter what,  
Where you are right now!*

\* \* \*

*You must never let your faith  
Be destroyed!*

Buddhism is a struggle to be victorious. It is a battle between the Buddha and devilish forces, a war between good and evil.

That is why I constantly stress the powerful mission that the youth have — the mission to lead humanity and bring peace of mind and security to all, based on their ability to clearly see through devilish functions and defeat evil and injustice.

My heart filled with a thousand hopes, I called upon the youth:

*May 3, 2001 —  
Let us make that the glorious day  
That we together reach the summit!  
Please remember  
That this day will decide  
The outcome of our struggle  
In the second chapter of kosen-rufu.*

That profoundly significant time is fast approaching.

I am confident that today, too, my young disciples are advancing toward that goal with a bright, vibrant spirit, joining hands with new friends and comrades along the way in fresh unity, making each and every day one of supreme value.

Shortly before that memorable Oita youth division meeting, I had been notified by the World Art and Culture Academy of its decision to bestow upon me the title of Poet Laureate. “Youth, Scale the Mountain of Kosen-rufu of the 21st Century!” was the first long poem I composed after receiving the news.

Because I had to race against the clock to finish it in time, I did not have the opportunity to contemplate or weigh my words with the care and thought I would have liked, so I hope you will forgive me for now having taken the liberty to slightly revise the poem.

On a cold, windy day during that 1981 visit to Oita, I stood with the youth at the famous ruins of the Taketa Clan’s Oka Castle, in southwestern Oita. Together we sang a rousing rendition of the beloved Japanese song “Moon Over the Castle Ruins.” The youth’s eyes sparkled, and their hearts blazed with passion. I sang at the top of my voice with these heroes of the people, these heroes who had borne relentless storms and had triumphed. These young people, standing straight and proud, their faces radiating trust and openness, together made a deep, silent pledge of eternal, solemn commitment.

With their lofty spirit, vibrant and fresh as the new day’s dawn, they rose high above the raucous, slander-spewing rabble. With their clarion call, they set in motion a powerful tide that spurred all of Kyushu to action. A great roaring tidal wave of joyous victory cheers spread from Oita to Kumamoto, Fukuoka, the rest of Kyushu and eventually all of Japan and the entire world.

Every area of Kyushu won — Saga, Miyazaki, Nagasaki and Kagoshima. Our Kyushu members have proudly built an invincible fortress of justice, a brilliant palace of the people’s triumph.

Today in Kyushu, we have a strong, determined force under the tried and tested leadership of such capable individuals as Kyushu General Leader Akira Yoshihashi and Kyushu Leader Takeshi Yamamoto, who have fought hard and striven to protect our members through countless onslaughts. I behold with deep respect and admiration the towering citadel our members have built in Kyushu.

The 21st century — the goal that we set back on that distant day — is now dawning. The summit of May 3, 2001, is right before our eyes. Let us, you and I, reach it together and there raise the Soka Gakkai’s tri-color flag of victory, glory and happiness!

An Asian Youth Peace and Culture Festival, at which 100,000 young people will sing Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” is scheduled to be held in Kyushu in that momentous year.

Kyushu members: Savoring the sunlight of happiness, with a strong pledge to advance

our movement, let us once again embark from Kyushu's great summit of victory on a new journey as emissaries of Buddhism with a supremely noble mission!

Title: A Poem Infused With My Prayer  
Subject: World Tribune 04/16/99 n.3238 p.5 WT990416p05  
Author: Daisaku Ikeda  
Keywords: Daisaku Essays Ikeda Infused Poem Prayer President Tribune World