

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S OCT. 7 SPEECH TO FIGHT INJUSTICE—THIS IS BUDDHISM

SGI President Ikeda says, ‘To fight passionately against injustice, to rebuke, attack and condemn it to the end—this is Buddhism and the correct path of humanity.’

The following is part one of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 38th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Japan, Oct. 7.

Next year will be the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding. The fact that we will proudly celebrate this momentous milestone is thanks to the earnest efforts of each of you.

It was announced earlier in the meeting that the Soka Gakkai's theme for 2000 will be “Raising the Curtain on the 21st Century—The Year of Youth.” Next year also marks the centennial of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's birth, the 40th anniversary of President Ikeda's inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president and the 25th anniversary of the SGI's founding.

A leading intellect has remarked that the Soka Gakkai has achieved in 70 years what it would normally take 500 years to accomplish.

The SGI's development is toward worldwide kosen-rufu, toward lasting peace. We are working to make this world “safe and tranquil” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 230). There is no more noble organization than ours.

You are truly emissaries of the Buddha; each one of you is diligently pursuing the bodhisattva way. How mystic is your presence! Otherwise, we could never have accomplished the amazing development of the kosen-rufu movement that we see today.

Possessing a lofty mission, we of the SGI have charged ahead and striven tenaciously to achieve kosen-rufu, just as Nichiren Daishonin taught. There can be no doubt that we will enjoy the eternal protection and praise of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the 10 directions. Please have absolute confidence that inexhaustible benefit will flow forth from your lives throughout eternity as a result of all your hard work for kosen-rufu.

Today, many people around the world have a true appreciation for our activities. Many praising and supporting those activities and helping to publicize them. The SGI has gained widespread trust even in Korea, a country that has a long history of anti-Japanese sentiment, due to the barbarous acts perpetrated against its people by the Japanese in former times. And the same can be said of China and in Russia.

Our preparations for the 21st century are now complete.

A little while ago, I received a notice from Brazil announcing that the municipal assembly of Pindamonhangaba—a city of wonderful history and scenic beauty in the state of São Paulo—has passed a resolution, signed by the mayor and assembly president, naming one of the city's main roads Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Boulevard and another street nearby Josei Toda Avenue. Both thoroughfares, I understand, are located in a quiet, new residential area.

Incidentally, last June, the city of Pindamonhangaba presented me with a Certificate of Commendation.

On that occasion, City Councilor Noriaki Odan said, "This commendation contains our wish for the further flourishing of the SGI's peace and cultural activities in our city and for Dr. Ikeda's philosophy to spread from our city to the rest of the world."

There are now roads named after Mr. Makiguchi in four Brazilian cities and roads named after Mr. Toda in two.

In Brazil, there is also a Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park in Curitiba and a Josei Toda Park in São Jose dos Campos, while a Daisaku Ikeda Peace Park is under construction in Londrina.

Internationally, the SGI has many friends and supporters. But in Japan, the majority of people still have a grossly distorted view of our movement. In Japan, we are envied, attacked, maligned and abused—exactly in the same way described in the Daishonin's writings. The Japanese lack the capacity to discern what is of immediate, vital importance for humankind and for their own humanity. They remain forever stuck in their insular mind-set.

Nevertheless, out of his deep compassion, the Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, chose to be born in Japan—a land populated by the most base, perverse of people, where persecution of the Law would be its harshest. Even in this land steeped with the five impurities [of the age, of desire, of the people, of thought and of life itself], close to 10 million Soka Gakkai members, Bodhisattvas of the Earth, have built a solid base for kosen-rufu.

Our preparations for the 21st century are complete.

For our countries, for peace, for the eternal Law and for our own happiness, let us get in solid rhythm with the universe and boldly give our all, as we head toward the 21st century. Let us fight intrepidly and lead lives of utmost meaning and value.

A leader's job is to bring happiness and joy to others.

In *The Pathway of Life*, Tolstoy declares: "When a man comes to know the true faith, he is like unto a man lighting a lamp in a dark chamber. All things become clear, and joy enters his soul." The great Russian writer stressed the importance of "true faith," keenly aware that the world teemed with people of counterfeit faith—nowhere more so than in the clergy.

All things become clear, Tolstoy says, when we base ourselves on true faith. We can see what is good and bad, what is happiness and misfortune, what it is we must do; everything becomes clear, as if illuminated by a bright light. This way of thinking strikes a chord with Buddhism.

The Daishonin writes: "When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated. Similarly, when one knows the Lotus Sutra, he understands the meaning of all worldly affairs" (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 82).

When you know true faith, Tolstoy states further, joy enters the depths of your being.

Your heart shines brightly, becoming light and carefree. You are kind to others. You bring comfort and peace of mind to all you meet. You brighten their spirits.

In contrast, a leader who is always gloomy, depressed and unsmiling, who behaves arrogantly and lashes out at people emotionally, is not a person of true faith.

As leaders in the SGI, we meet with our members and juniors to be of service to them, not to ourselves. A leader's job is to bring happiness and joy to others. Wisdom wells forth when we chant with the determination to do our best to bring joy to the members, to instill in them enthusiasm and help them become happy. Such compassion increases our good fortune.

If you offend and turn people off, you are only making bad causes for yourself. Unfortunate indeed is the organization that is led by self-centered leaders.

Let us advance with the wisdom and joy in our hearts that befits people of genuine faith.

In *The Laws*, the Greek philosopher Plato declares, "When you have to deal with complete and unmanageably vicious corruption, you must let your anger off its leash." To launch our anger at the incorrigibly corrupt and evil—this is also the Soka Gakkai spirit. It resonates with Plato's philosophy.

The Daishonin writes, "Anger can be either good or evil" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 584). Being fired up with anger toward evil and injustice constitutes good. When we no longer have this blazing anger toward iniquity, it is a sign that we have lost our commitment to justice and truth. It signals our spiritual death.

There is no benefit, no joy, no happiness in the hearts of those who are spiritually dead. To fight passionately against injustice, to rebuke, attack and condemn it to the end—this is Buddhism and the correct path of humanity.

In the pioneering days of our movement, our members eagerly went out and fought pitched battles of words with unjust, corrupt individuals. They brimmed with fighting spirit. Someone commented to me the other day: "Our youth division has grown extremely subdued and passive of late, and we have people among the top women's division leaders who act as if they're royalty. By comparison, the pioneer members of the Many Treasures Group are far more lively and vigorous. They are like youth in the very best sense!"

As we move into the 21st century, let us make our organization blaze afresh with the true Soka Gakkai spirit!

The only way to succeed is to be patient and persistent.

Today is also the Tohoku General Meeting! Many members have made the long way from the Tohoku region [in the northeastern part of Honshu, the largest of Japan's four main islands] to be with us today. Thank you very much for coming.

Seventy-seven years ago, in December 1922, the world-famous physicist Albert Einstein visited the Tohoku area. [He visited Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, and delivered a lecture at Tohoku University.] The previous month, he had given a lecture at Keio University in Tokyo, which first and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda attended. Mr. Toda spoke about that occasion many, many times.

Of the Tohoku people, Einstein writes in his journal: "Excellent people. Bright, modest, with a love for nature and the arts. I'll never forget them." Trust Einstein to perceive so astutely the virtues of the Tohoku people!

Tohoku is full of people who, from the moment you get to know them, you never for-

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get. It is home to many people of outstanding character and warm humanity.

Tohoku boasts an illustrious past: Gold was mined there, and it was a leading cultural center in ancient times. Its prosperity, however, made it a constant target of would-be invaders.

That which is successful and prosperous is targeted and attacked—this same principle is at work in the onslaughts against our organization.

In any event, the Tohoku people have persevered again and again through difficulties and hardships. [Tohoku is a region where deeply entrenched traditions, customs and prejudices persist.] That is why I fervently pray for a new era of prosperity for Tohoku.

Einstein once said: “It is...not astonishing that the struggle against prejudices cannot have a quick success. But we can work for a slow success in expressing truth in our daily life whenever occasion arises” (*Einstein: A Life*, p. 367). He acknowledges that the fight to overcome prejudice is difficult indeed. He says that the only way to succeed in this endeavor is to be patient and persistent, seizing every opportunity to speak out for justice.

This is precisely what we are doing in our SGI activities. We are exerting ourselves with patience and persistence.

Tohoku members, I have heard in great detail about your noble efforts. I want to share some of those achievements with all who have gathered today.

Koromogawa Village in Iwate Prefecture is famous as the place where the noted 12th-century Japanese warlord Minamoto Yoshitsune met his death. In Koromogawa, where our Light of Friendship District is located, more than 60 percent of the households currently subscribe to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily paper.

Kamiiso Chapter, situated on the Tsugaru peninsula, Aomori Prefecture, regularly maintains the *Seikyo Shimbun* readership at more than 20 percent of local residents. The town mayor and many other citizens are long-standing readers.

Odate Sunshine Chapter in Odate City, Akita Prefecture, is a new chapter formed just last month. In one month, every block organization in the chapter has already introduced one new member to the Soka Gakkai. Congratulations!

Members in the town of Yamanobe, Yamagata Prefecture, centering around the women’s division, have been conducting an energetic dialogue campaign with temple members to great effect. I understand that through their efforts, the former chief lay representative of the Hokkeko in their area decided to leave the temple organization.

In the town of Naruko, Miyagi Prefecture, each block has introduced one new member to Buddhism. Yumoto District, in particular, has expanded readership of the *Seikyo Shimbun* to more than 50 percent of local residents in the area.

And the members in Iwaki City in Fukushima Prefecture—in just the last month—have succeeded in bringing 48 households away from the Hokkeko organization.

The phenomenal development in each area is the result of the members’ efforts to confront injustice.

The phenomenal development we are seeing in each area is the result of the great good that has followed from the members’ efforts to confront and denounce injustice.

The Daishonin writes, “The *ku* [of *kudoku* (benefit)] means to extinguish evil, and *doku* means to bring forth good” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762).

Good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously; it includes fighting evil and injustice. By rebuking evil, we expiate our negative karma and bring forth good fortune and benefit. This is the meaning of benefit in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Happiness is born when we fight injustice.

The pioneer members of the Many Treasures Group all over Tohoku are truly hale and hearty, their lives radiant. The efforts of the youth division members have also been noteworthy; they are all standing up splendidly.

In the last two months, the Tohoku young men's division introduced 500 new households to the Daishonin's Buddhism. And in the last month, the Tohoku young women's division increased the subscriptions of the Seikyo Shimbun by 1000 copies.

I express my deepest respect to the Tohoku members, who are striving so hard in one of the most challenging regions in Japan.

I wholeheartedly praise Tohoku's magnificent advance!

(To be continued)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Good Fortune and Benefit

From This Speech:

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The *ku* [of *kudoku* (benefit)] means to extinguish evil, and *doku* means to bring forth good" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). Good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously; it includes fighting evil and injustice. By rebuking evil, we expiate our negative karma and bring forth good fortune and benefit. This is the meaning of benefit in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Happiness is born when we fight injustice.

1. Why do you think the Daishonin taught that benefit has two parts: extinguishing evil and bringing forth good?
2. Why does President Ikeda say that "good is not simply a matter of doing charitable deeds or living piously"? Is this different from what you were taught growing up?
3. Why does extinguishing evil expiate our negative karma? How does that work?
4. Have you had your own experience of fighting injustice that made you happier?

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