

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 6 SPEECH—PART 2 THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BOND

**‘In the realm of human beings,’ SGI President Ikeda says, ‘there is nothing as beautiful or strong as the bond between mentor and disciple.’**

*The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 41st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 6.*

In the bitterly cold winter of 1941, as air and artillery shelling rained down relentlessly on Leningrad [now St. Petersburg], a grand celebration was held to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of the great Uzbekistan poet Alisher Navoi. The organizer of the event was Iosif Orbeli, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the director of the Hermitage Museum. He fought bravely to protect the museum’s priceless treasures from the ravages of war.

His eyes with an animated brightness that not even the subzero temperature could dampen, Orbeli spoke proudly of “Leningrad’s brave spirit, its unquenchable will, the humanism of Soviet science.” As he was speaking, a huge explosion rang out nearby. But Orbeli remained unruffled.

Without any change of tone, he called for calm and continued the deeply significant gathering with the unshakable serenity and composure of an emperor of the spirit. This great champion of culture is none other than the venerable mentor of Dr. Yuri Petrosyan [vice president of the St. Petersburg Scientific Center at the Russian Academy of Sciences], who is with us today.

When we met four years ago, Dr. Petrosyan declared with pride, “My greatest happiness in life is that I had a great mentor.” I will never forget the solemn expression with which he said this. In the realm of human beings, there is nothing as beautiful or strong as the bond between mentor and disciple. I hope you will always remember this.

Fifty-five years ago, in January 1945, Josei Toda, the Soka Gakkai’s second president, ushered in his second New Year’s Day in prison, where the authorities had placed him for his opposition to Japanese militarism. In his unheated, freezing prison cell, Mr. Toda prayed fervently with just one wish: “I am young. Please let me bear the brunt of all persecutions, so that my elderly mentor, Mr. Makiguchi, can be released from prison and return home safely to his family as quickly as possible.”

On Jan. 8, 1945, however, Mr. Toda was brusquely informed by one of the preliminary court judges, who had come to the prison to question him, that his mentor had died in prison [on Nov. 18, 1944]. When he heard this, Mr. Toda cried out: “Who was it that abused, tormented and murdered Mr. Makiguchi?! I’ll never forget what you’ve done to him! I will avenge my mentor’s death!”

Mr. Toda constantly admonished, “Do not leave a single enemy of the Buddha undefeated!” In other words, we must resolutely vanquish the enemies of the Buddha. This is the spirit of Mr. Makiguchi and the spirit of Mr. Toda. It is also my spirit. Those who fail to understand this are not truly following the path of mentor and disciple.

From that day, from that time on, Mr. Toda launched his struggle as an invincible warrior for truth and justice.

Mr. Toda was also passionately determined to widely communicate the greatness of Mr. Makiguchi's philosophy of value-creation to universities and academic institutions around the globe. I dedicate to my mentor the prestigious academic honor I have received today in this Makiguchi Memorial Hall from St. Petersburg State University, one of the top educational institutions in the world. It is a wonderful way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Mr. Toda's birth, which will be Feb. 11.

### **We must speak out for justice tirelessly.**

Incidentally, St. Petersburg State University Rector Ludmila Verbitskaya is a leading authority in the fields of linguistics, phonetics, phonology and the teaching of the Russian language. My wife confides to being particularly charmed by the lovely cadences of the Russian language.

The power of our voice is incalculable. Our voice reveals a lot about us. The beauty of Rector Verbitskaya's voice today is like the gentle ripples of St. Petersburg's Neva River.

In the struggle against the Nazi invasion of Leningrad, poetry readings and expressions of encouragement broadcast over the radio offered comfort and hope to the people, inspiring them to keep on going. The famous poet Anna Akhmatova declared on the radio during the siege: "All my life is connected with Leningrad.... I, like all of you now, live with one unconquerable belief—that Leningrad never will be Fascist."

It was voices such as this woman's, filled with a powerful resolve not to bow to the aggressors, that saved the citizens of Leningrad. No matter how many bombs or threatening leaflets the enemy planes dropped on the city, ordinary Russian citizens, working together at the grass roots, rose up in resistance, addressing their fellow citizens with voices ringing with optimism, courage and conviction. That is why they weren't defeated, why they won.

It is the voice—the voice is important. As someone pointed out, while the youth of recent times may talk a lot, the large majority lack the moral strength to speak out for what is right. It is crucial that, with dignified, pleasant-sounding voices, we create in people's hearts an awareness of justice and truth.

Nichiren Daishonin states, "The voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708). He also says, "Words manifest through sound to convey the sentiments in our heart" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 563). Our lives are sublime musical instruments that produce wondrous sounds reverberating with great power and resonance. Our lives are weapons with which to triumph over all enemies. A voice that is sincere and earnest can profoundly touch people's lives, shaking them to their very depths. So it is important that we speak pleasantly, in a way clear and to the point. Please do not be the kind of leader whose words are so incoherent that no one has any idea what you're talking about.

We must also remember that this age of great confusion and social disorder—the Latter Day of the Law—is described in Buddhist scriptures as "an age of conflict and dispute." Hence, those who speak out for justice and champion truth vigorously and fearlessly will prevail. To remain quiet and meek in the face of injustice will lead only to defeat.

It is crucial that we continue to speak out for justice tirelessly, that we win over evil and injustice. It is also important that we condemn writings that violate human rights. Ours is a struggle to establish in society a firm commitment to peace and a refusal to tolerate militarism. Let us speak out with all our might for the sake of justice!

## **One strong woman can transform history.**

I understand that both of Rector Verbitskaya's beloved parents were tragic victims of the dictator Stalin's purges. People of outstanding talent, people who had made great contributions to their homeland, who had risked their lives defending it, were arrested on false charges.

There is nothing more frightening than the jealousy of those in power. The only defense is to empower the people, so that they can keep the authorities in check.

Undaunted by this cruel persecution of her parents, the young Ms. Verbitskaya continued to pursue her worthy studies. Her experience of studying amid great hardship and deprivation is the source of the deep love and compassion she has for the students of her university today. Embracing the next generation of brilliant leaders in the noble light of humanistic education, she is fostering many talented individuals for the new century.

On Jan. 4, I met Mayor Le Lam of Auburn, Australia, the site of the main stadium for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. A woman of great integrity and character, Ms. Lam is working to serve the people in her community. Her own experience as a refugee in her youth has motivated her to help others suffering similar hardships.

You will not be defeated in life, no matter what happens, if you develop strength and cultivate wisdom. Strength and wisdom are prerequisites for happiness.

And the strength of one strong, wise woman can change society and transform history. Everything is determined by the human revolution—the inner transformation—of a single individual.

The 19th-century poet Nikolaj Njekrasov, who studied at St. Petersburg State University and had a profound love for the people, writes:

*Only the names of those  
Who work for the grand cause of our age,  
Who give all of their being  
To the struggle to defend their compatriots,  
Their fellow human beings,  
Will be remembered.*

I pledge today that we of the SGI, while working together even more closely with St. Petersburg State University, will strive to increase the scope and momentum of the great humanistic struggle moving the world from a century of war and repression to one of peace and humanity. I also offer sincere prayers for the ongoing development and prosperity of St. Petersburg State University, as it marches toward the historic milestone of the 300th anniversary of its founding, in 2024.

I am also praying with all my heart for the continued good health and success in the coming year of our distinguished guests, Rector Verbitskaya, Vice President Petrosyan, Dean Ivan Steblin-Kamensky and all those present today.

To all of our leaders here from different parts of Japan and the world: Please convey my very best regards to your fellow members when you get home. Let's launch a determined struggle and win! I will fight in the vanguard. I will fight single-handedly. And I hope my true disciples will follow my lead.

*Spasiba!* (Thank you in Russian.)

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS PRESIDENT TODA'S CONSTANT ADMONITION**

From This Speech:

Josei Toda constantly admonished, "Do not leave a single enemy of the Buddha undefeated!" In other words, we must resolutely vanquish the enemies of the Buddha. This is the spirit of Mr. Makiguchi and the spirit of Mr. Toda. It is also my spirit. Those who fail to understand this are not truly following the path of mentor and disciple.

- 1) Why do you think President Toda constantly admonished his disciples to defeat the enemies of the Buddha? What was he thinking about?
- 2) Who are the enemies of the Buddha?
- 3) Why do you think that the Soka Gakkai had this spirit to defeat the enemies of the Buddha from its very beginning?
- 4) If defeating the enemies of the Buddha is the path of mentor and disciple, how can each of us follow that path? What can each of us do to become true disciples?