

SGI PRESIDENT'S ENCOURAGEMENT IN SINGAPORE WALKING THE LION'S PATH

On his third visit to Singapore, SGI President Ikeda attends two meetings with Singapore Soka Association and SGI-Australia members. 'The future of worldwide kosen-rufu will be secure,' he emphasizes, 'as long as we walk the lion's path.'

SGI President Ikeda's speech at a meeting commemorating 40 years of the SGI's worldwide kosen-rufu movement at the Singapore Soka Association Headquarters, Nov. 25.

Whether we like it or not, we have been born as human beings. Some in Singapore, some in Japan, some in Australia and so forth. We have to do our best and live out our lives wherever we are. This is an inescapable reality, our destiny.

What is the purpose of life?

We could live an aimless, hand-to-mouth existence. But there is no knowing when we might fall ill. And each of us, without exception, will die one day.

How do we solve the problems of the human condition — the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death?

No matter how impressive our academic credentials, how high our social status, how vast our material wealth—all these things are of no use to us in the face of death. If we pursue these things alone, we will only be left with a feeling of emptiness when we die. Buddhism describes this reality as “the impermanence of all phenomena.”

Where, then, is true happiness to be found? In a way of life that is “permanent, joyful, endowed with self, and pure” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 733), a way of life in which we strive to fulfill our mission, a way of life that makes our existence shine with purpose and value.

The Gohonzon enables all people to become happy.

Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon to enable us to transform a life bound by the “impermanence of all phenomena” into one “permanent, joyful, endowed with self, and pure.”

The Gohonzon is a “device” that enables all people to become happy. It is also the embodiment of the life of the original Buddha, the Daishonin. It contains all of the benefits of all the sutras taught by Shakyamuni, which are often referred to as “the eighty thousand teachings.”

The Daishonin tells us, “The seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo alone are the seeds for attaining Buddhahood” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1553). When we have faith in the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the state of Buddhahood wells forth in our lives, and we attain a state of immense good fortune and benefit. The Mystic Law is the fundamental law of the universe.

Just as we can instantly connect to people around the world, anywhere, anytime, through the Internet, we can instantly access the life-state of Buddhahood by chanting to the Gohonzon. We can move in an orbit in rhythm with the law of the universe.

And through the power of faith and the power of practice, we can freely tap our inner potential—we can draw out our ability to obtain financial security, our wisdom and

intellect, our character and humanity, and the ability to direct our lives toward happiness. It depends on our determination, on our actions and on the strength of our faith.

A Buddha is not a superhuman being.

Buddhism teaches that the state of Buddhahood resides within us. A Buddha is not some superhuman being. We practice the Daishonin's Buddhism to live wonderful, fulfilled lives, both as individuals and as members of society.

Grand temples and ornate priestly robes—outward trappings of this kind and a preoccupation with ritual and formality were not originally part of Buddhism. Over the centuries, the true spirit of Buddhism was perverted, and its priests came to think that people existed for the sake of religion, instead of the other way around. Nichiren Shoshu is the epitome of such thinking.

In such an environment, the SGI has been advancing on the correct path taught by the Daishonin—the path of a humanistic religion that exists for people's happiness and welfare. That is why we have achieved such tremendous growth and development.

I hope you will all resolutely continue to practice this Buddhism toward the realization of kosen-rufu, always striving together with the SGI.

The distinction between good and evil in Buddhism is strict. Only by thoroughly fighting against evil can we establish a life of genuine virtue and goodness, and bring forth great benefit. Please engrave this in your hearts.

Whatever happens, continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Think of the Gohonzon as a loving parent with whom you can share all your joys and sorrows. You can take everything to the Gohonzon. All is communicated.

Please continue to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism—the way to unsurpassed happiness—upholding faith that flows unceasingly like water, advancing with composure and in joyful unity with your fellow members.

From the depths of my heart, I pray for your health and longevity, and that you will enjoy lives filled with boundless good fortune. Thank you so much!



SGI President Ikeda's speech at a joint meeting with SGI representatives from Singapore and Australia in Singapore, Nov. 26.

That which continues to grow, to develop, is beautiful. In the five years since I last visited Singapore, this Jewel of Southeast Asia has grown even more stunning, graced with impressive new landmarks everywhere I look. Most beautiful of all, however, are the hearts of all of you, the Singapore members. Nothing is more noble than your vibrant, energetic endeavors to contribute to people's happiness and the welfare of society as a whole.

The Singapore Soka Association has become an indispensable pillar of hope, a pillar of trust, in society. You have achieved wonderful growth, and I am overjoyed to see this. It is all the fruit of your enormous efforts. Please rest assured that you will enjoy boundless and everlasting benefit as a result.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in his work *The Geography of Human Life*, identified early on that Singapore would serve as a global economic center, and he watched its future with great interest.

As a vital hub of Asia and the world, Singapore is the grand stage upon which you, the

SSA members, will play a leading role in promoting the kosen-rufu movement in the 21st century.

I declare that the curtain on a new century of hope has risen here from our beloved Singapore.

Having a mentor means having a model to live by.

It is well known that the name *Singapore* means Lion City. On this fresh departure, I want to reconfirm the significance of the lion symbolism that appears in Buddhism.

Incidentally, a Chinese-language translation of the *Gosho Zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) has recently been completed. Its publication is a historic achievement that crowns the 70th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding. The SGI will always advance based on the Daishonin's writings, always in exact accord with his teachings.

Returning to the lion, in Buddhism the Buddha is equated to a lion and his preaching of the Law to the lion's roar. The term *lion* is written in the sutras with the two Chinese characters for *teacher* and *child*, which the Daishonin expounds as encompassing the meaning of mentor and disciple. And it is the Lotus Sutra that teaches that the Buddha's disciples, when they live out their lives with their mentor, the Buddha, can attain the same lofty state of life as he.

Speaking of mentor and disciple—which is consonant with the bond that exists between teacher and student—I found the graduation ceremony of the University of Sydney held Nov. 24 inspiring and heartwarming. On that occasion, Australia's oldest and most respected university conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters upon me, which I humbly accepted as your representative. Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer, who, with a motherly affection and concern, took time to speak with each graduating student as she handed them their diplomas, particularly moved me. The exchange between educator and student, their gaze firmly set upon the future, was as uplifting as a beautiful painting.

The mentor-disciple, or teacher-student, relationship is a unique prerogative of human beings, given our high spiritual capacity. This relationship is found in all fields of human endeavor where people strive for excellence and higher achievement—be it in the arts, education or craftsmanship.

Having a mentor in life means having a model or standard by which we can live our lives. And, of all such bonds, none is more wonderful than the relationship where mentor and disciple work together for the lofty ideal of world peace and the happiness of all humanity.

The mentor-disciple relationship is the lifeline upon which kosen-rufu depends.

No epic undertaking can be accomplished in a single generation. Only when the mentor's spirit is inherited by the disciples and passed on continuously to successive generations can such an undertaking be achieved.

The humanistic movement of the SGI that now encompasses the entire world comes from the mentor's spirit being passed down over three generations—from Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to Josei Toda, from Josei Toda to myself. This struggle, in which mentor and disciple are engaged together and indivisibly united, is the lifeline upon which the eternal flow of kosen-rufu depends.

The task now falls to us to expand this movement into a huge river whose waters will

continue to nourish and benefit humanity throughout the next century, the next millennium and throughout the 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law.

Everything hinges on the disciples who inherit this mission. President Toda often said: "I have no reason to worry as long as Daisaku is here!" "So long as you are here, my mind is at ease!"

I, too, am confident that we have nothing to worry about, and that the future of worldwide kosen-rufu will be secure as long as you, the SSA members, are here walking the lion's path.

To live as a lion king means challenging each problem with all your might.

The Daishonin writes, "The lion king is said to advance three steps, then gather himself to spring, unleashing the same power whether he traps a tiny ant or attacks a fierce animal" (WND, 412). Here, the literal translation of the Japanese phrase "to advance three steps, then gather himself to spring" means a position in which the lion's front legs and one hind leg are cast forward, while the fourth leg is drawn slightly behind. It is a crouching position that lions are said to take when preparing to attack prey with full force.

To live like a lion king, therefore, means to challenge each problem or task at hand with all one's might and resolutely triumph over each one. Great progress and resounding victory can only come from the steady accumulation of such daily effort. Only by winning today, here and now, can we enjoy a bright, successful future and ultimate victory in life.

The Daishonin also writes: "Each of you should summon up the courage of a lion king and never succumb to threats from anyone. The lion king fears no other beast, nor do its cubs" (WND, 997).

What is the heart of a lion king? In a word, it is courage. And courage is not found outside us. It exists within. Nor is it something that only special people possess. Everyone has it.

However, far too many people keep this inexhaustible treasure locked inside them and spend their lives adrift on a sea of cowardice, timidity and delusion. What a terrible waste! We must "summon up" courage, as the Daishonin urges, and break through our cowardice.

In the courage to stand alone, we find victory in life.

Lim Bo Seng, the young Singaporean hero whose life and spirit I have spoken of in the past, was a true lion. He fought in the resistance movement against Japan's treacherous invasion of Malaysia and Singapore during World War II. He endured imprisonment and cruel torture by the Japanese military, yet continued to encourage his comrades to remain strong and resolute.

Knowing that it was likely he would be executed, Lim wrote from prison to his beloved wife, Choo Neo: "You must not grieve for me. On the other hand, you should take pride in my sacrifice and devote yourself to the upbringing of the children. Tell them what has happened to me and direct them along my footsteps."

The resistance leader further instructed his wife about their children's education, asking that she have them learn both Chinese and English, and, if possible, send them to university.

Lim died in prison at 35, heroically laying down his life for his beliefs. His wife followed his wishes and raised their seven children into fine adults. All three daughters became schoolteachers and contributed to the field of education, while all four sons graduated from university and went on to play active roles in their respective fields. Choo

Neo, like her husband, was a lion.

Today, the women's and young women's division members of Singapore are outstanding models of courage for the rest of the world.

Mr. Makiguchi, who gave his life for his beliefs, was fond of exclaiming, "Rather a single lion than a thousand sheep!" A lion is another name for a person who is brave enough to stand alone. It is within this courage to stand alone that we find the essence of faith and the key to victory in life.

The Daishonin writes, "I pray that my followers will be scions of the lion king, above the mocking taunts of packs of foxes" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1589). This was his dearest wish. Let us deeply recognize that we of the SGI are a gathering of lions who have inherited this royal legacy of courage.

Being youthful has nothing to do with your age.

Thirty-five years ago, on Aug. 9, 1965, Singapore proclaimed its independence. It was a start fraught with uncertainty, as many huge challenges still remained to be surmounted.

I was in Japan at a summer training course, devoting my energies to training the youth, the future leaders of our movement, when I heard the news.

The newly independent Singapore faced many harsh trials. I prayed that it would safely navigate the rough waters ahead and sail serenely into the vast open seas of prosperity.

In the years since its independence, I am sure that Singapore has experienced many, many arduous struggles, but the people of Singapore have united and advanced bravely to create a vibrant, prosperous country. This spirit of challenge, the spirit to boldly take on the daunting waves of difficulty, is the spiritual pillar that has supported this small, but great, nation of lions.

The SSA has seen tremendous growth. There are now seven SSA community centers, with an eighth soon to be built in the northern part of Singapore.

There is a saying that starting an undertaking is easy, but maintaining it is difficult. Human beings tend to lose the robust spirit to keep challenging themselves once a solid foundation has been established.

Instead, they move into the defensive, growing conservative and self-protective. But it is precisely when the foundation has been laid that the real struggle, the real challenge, begins.

No matter how ideal or comfortable the circumstances we may find ourselves in, we must never lose our vibrant, pioneering spirit and passion for challenging new horizons. We must stay on the offensive, always striving to take fresh initiative and to keep advancing.

Even when Mr. Makiguchi was in his 70s, he would punctuate his encouragement to young people with the words "We, youth...," including himself as one of them. In terms of his inner state, Mr. Makiguchi was a youth all his life. Being youthful has nothing to do with age. It is a matter of attitude, of how you live your life.

Youthful are those who stay true to the vows of their youth. Youthful are those who devote their entire lives to realizing the ideal of kosen-rufu alongside their mentor. Youthful are those who strive to break through present circumstances and challenge themselves to move forward, even one or two steps. Youthful are those who refuse to be idle spectators and are constantly active participants in things around them.

As long as this youthful spirit stays alive inside you, your growth and development will know no bounds.

I hope all of our Singapore members will stay forever young and live out their lives with vigor and passion.

The famous British author Somerset Maugham says with admiration that Singapore is an island where hundreds of different races intermingle. In our recent meeting Nov. 23, President S. R. Nathan characterized Singapore as a small nation but one that embraces a vast diversity of ethnic groups, religions and languages.

Singapore is a crossroads where East meets West. It is a microcosm of the world and a picture of the world's future. To be a citizen of Singapore is to be a global citizen. I hold the highest expectations for this country. I see the future of humankind here.

The development of SSA is synonymous with the development of the kosen-rufu movement worldwide. SSA's triumph is the triumph of the SGI movement in 163 countries and territories around the world. I wholeheartedly commend you.

Praise to Singapore, beacon of global harmony!

Praise to Singapore, standard-bearer of the 21st century!

Many thanks to the Australian members with us today for traveling all the way to Singapore.

It is my deepest prayer that both Singapore and Australia will achieve outstanding development in the coming century.

I am praying with all of my heart for your good health and happiness. Please convey my best regards to all the members I was unable to meet today.

The World Tribune will have full coverage of President Ikeda's activities in Singapore and other Asian countries in upcoming issues.