

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 14 SPEECH—PART 2 THE PEOPLE ARE WAITING

‘People around the world are waiting for the vibrant sound of the bell of peace that will signal the dawn of a new century, a new millennium,’ SGI President Ikeda says.

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 52nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Kansai Toda Memorial Auditorium in Osaka, Japan, Dec. 14, 2000.

The German poet Schiller wrote the poem “The Song of the Bell,” which contains these lines:

*Come in, come in!
All comrades close your ranks,
We will christen and dedicate the bell,
Concordia shall be her name,
To gather the gentle community together
In harmony, in heartfelt unity.*

*And this henceforth shall be her calling.
Peace shall be her first sound.*

People around the world are waiting for the vibrant sound of the bell of peace that will signal the dawn of a new century, a new millennium. A weak, doleful sound will not rouse people. What we need are the clarion tones of the bell of philosophy, which will awaken all people to the supremely noble entity of life that lies dormant within them.

Where are the bells that will gather people together in harmony and unity, and lead them in the direction of peace, hope, happiness and prosperity? Where are the powerful, dynamic, thrilling reverberations of joy? Thinking men and women around the world have begun to seek them in the SGI’s resonant bells of humanism.

As you know, we have advanced over the years in the rhythm of the Seven Bells, ringing a new bell every seven years. The number seven corresponds to the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The first Seven Bells started in 1930—the year the Soka Gakkai was founded—and continued through 1979. And from next year, 2001, having passed the milestone of the Soka Gakkai’s 70th anniversary, we begin the second Seven Bells, which will continue through 2050.

At a representatives conference on May 17, 1997, in Kansai, I shared the following grand vision for our movement in the 21st, 22nd and even 23rd centuries:

- That, during the second Seven Bells in the first half of the 21st century, we will secure the foundation for peace in Asia and throughout the world.

I have prayed and continued to make steady, patient efforts to achieve this. My recent trip to Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong was another step toward realizing this vision for the 21st century.

- That, during the third Seven Bells in the second half of the 21st century, we will see

the philosophy of the sanctity of life established as the spirit of the age and the world.

- That, during the fourth Seven Bells in the first half of the 22nd century, an indestructible foundation for world peace will be laid.

- That, based on that foundation, during the fifth Seven Bells in the second half of the 22nd century, we will see the brilliant flowering of an age of humanism.

When that happens, we can move on to the sixth and seventh Seven Bells. From the middle of the 23rd century, when in 2253 we celebrate the 1,000th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching, a new phase in our movement will begin.

This is the great vision for the future that I shared—my heart filled with deep resolve, aspiration and conviction—with you, my Kansai friends.

The year 2001 will be a decisive one in SGI history.

The first seven years of the 21st century will be extremely important in determining the direction of the far distant future. In particular, 2001 will be a decisive year for the Soka Gakkai.

In 2001, we will celebrate the 130th anniversary of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's birth and see the long-awaited opening of the Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo campus in Orange County, Calif.

Other anniversaries next year include the 50th anniversary of my mentor's inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president and the 50th anniversary of starting the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper. In addition, the world's foremost gathering of women, the women's division, as well as the young men's and young women's divisions, heirs to the future, will celebrate their 50th anniversaries.

In 2002, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the start of the kosen-rufu movement in Kansai. Aiming toward that milestone, Kansai has announced a new goal of expanding the number of its districts to 15,000 by that time. I applaud your resolute determination.

And in 2005, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the SGI's founding. Our international organization started out with members in 51 countries and territories. In 1990, when the temple issue arose, this figure stood at 115. Today, our organization has seen further phenomenal development with SGI members now practicing in 163 countries and territories around the globe.

This is all due to your tireless efforts. Let us continue to steadily expand this network of peace, culture and education even more in the years to come.

The Daishonin writes: "Everything depends upon the country and the time. Those who practice Buddhism should understand this principle" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1579). The SGI has always followed this teaching. In whatever country and whatever age, we will always find a way forward, as long as we draw on the inexhaustible wisdom of Buddhism that functions in accord with changing circumstances. We will be able to blend harmoniously amid diverse cultures and societies, and make great contributions to people's happiness, social prosperity and world peace. This is the power of our faith as practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

In the year 2006, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the men's division, whose members blaze with fighting spirit, and in 2007, the 50th anniversary of the student division, a gathering of intellect and wisdom.

I especially congratulate the student division members today on the formation of several new university groups in Kansai.

Compassion means encouraging and inspiring others.

Albert Einstein had these words for his generation: “May this generation take the most important step that is known in the history of mankind. May it leave to those who come after, the invaluable heritage of a world from which the barbarity of war has been banished. We can do so, if all those who hate war have the courage to say that they will have no more war.”

Einstein also spoke in Kansai—his Osaka lecture was held at the Chuo Civic Hall in Nakanoshima. [This is the same venue where the famous Osaka Rally took place on July 17, 1957, to protest President Ikeda’s unjust detention by the Osaka District Prosecutor’s Office.]

I hope that next year all of you, my Kansai friends, as you ring in the second Seven Bells, will continue to speak out vigorously with courage and hope. Compassion ultimately means encouraging and inspiring others. Showing the world that nothing can ever defeat Kansai, please lead the way in uniting people in the cause of peace and humanism. I have the highest expectations for Kansai! I have faith in Kansai!

What are the greatest contributions to humanity? Based on his belief in the importance of focusing on worthwhile goals and elevating the people, Einstein said, “It is not the fruits of scientific research that elevate a man and enrich his nature, but the urge to understand, the intellectual work, creative or receptive.” This is the insight of a world-famous scientist.

The SGI is following such a spiritually creative path. You are all standing in the vanguard of the supreme spiritual undertaking that is kosen-rufu. The Daishonin is surely praising your efforts, while the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout time and space are without question protecting you.

Our SGI activities, our activities to promote friendship and our activities to uplift and enrich the human spirit anticipate the direction that the 21st century will move in. Please know that the ideals sought by leaders the world over are to be found in the very activities we are undertaking.

Your legacy will be the invincible fighting spirit that you leave behind.

I now want to share with you the words of some wise men and women in the hope that they may serve as a source of sustenance and inspiration for your efforts.

The Indian poet Rabin-dranath Tagore says, “It is the mission of civilization to bring unity among people and establish peace and harmony.” I believe that it will be the “third civilization,” an ideal we are striving to realize, that will achieve these goals. Neither spiritualism nor materialism alone is the answer. We have entered an age in which the world is seeking a third way, based on the philosophy of the nonduality of the spiritual and material, or the oneness of body and mind.

The French literary giant Victor Hugo writes, “You must remember / That a traitor always gets caught in his own trap.” This is the perfect description of the fate of those who betray others.

And the great French thinker and writer André Malraux declares, “Hope is the strongest force of a revolution.” Faith is eternal hope. I hope you will all possess great hope.

I was fortunate to meet twice with Dr. Malraux — once in Tokyo in 1974 and once at his

home in the suburbs of Paris in 1975. He had an extremely sharp mind. He was also, by the way, a good friend of John F. Kennedy.

Finally, let me share some words that the German composer Beethoven wrote in his diary: “There is much to be done on earth; do it soon!” This was Beethoven’s credo.

It is crucial that we immediately put our determinations into action. The speed with which we do can decide the difference between victory or defeat.

I also want to cite some passages from the Daishonin’s writings.

In the “Letter of Petition from Yorimoto,” which he wrote on behalf of Shijo Kingo, the Daishonin says, “He [the priest Ryokan] made endless false accusations against me in an attempt to have me executed” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 809). The pattern of persecution remains unchanged over the centuries — those who are envious of the just and righteous try to depict them as villains by hatching plots and making false accusations.

The Daishonin also warns his followers, “In general when Nichiren’s followers go to the imperial capital, Kyoto, though at first they seem to remember their original aspirations, they eventually become afflicted by demons and lose their minds” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1268). At the time, Kyoto was the center of the imperial court and the nobility, and certain disciples of the Daishonin who went there began to labor under the delusion that they had become important people just because they were in the capital. In other words, they gave in to self-conceit and snobbery.

We can see the same thing today in people who foolishly think they are great simply because they graduated from a good university or have high social position. Please do not live vain, shallow lives where you succumb to arrogance, lose your faith, and finally end up falling into a state of hellish suffering.

The Daishonin also says, “If any of Nichiren’s disciples disrupt the unity of many in body but one in mind, they would be like warriors who destroy their own castle from within” (WND, 217).

I hope that we of the Soka Gakkai, with even stronger unity of “many in body, one in mind,” will continue to expand our victorious network of humanism and accomplish great things in next 100 years of the 21st century. Not all of you may be alive 100 years from now, but the invincible fighting spirit that you leave behind as your legacy will live forever. And there will be the youth, including your children and grandchildren, who will follow in your footsteps.

Eternally attesting to the truth of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, eternally achieving victory, may you continue to accumulate the most brilliant good fortune.

I offer these poems to you, my Kansai friends, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the SGI’s founding.

*Great Kansai!
The great shining citadel
Of eternal victory
That you have solidly built
Will be indestructible for all time.*



*Acclaimed as unsurpassed in Japan,
No, unsurpassed in all the world,
In the realm of kosen-rufu*



*Since we are comrades
Who together made a vow
In the remote past,
We can achieve victory after victory,
Fearing nothing.*

I close my speech today with the fervent wish that you may all enjoy good health and long lives, and be strong in body and in faith. And I pray that you will demonstrate the great power of champions of life and champions of humanity, writing your own history of resounding victory, striving with determination and commitment each day.

Please give my kindest regards to those I could not meet today. Thank you for everything in 2000, and please have a wonderful New Year.

THE FIRST SEVEN BELLS

Seven Bells is a term used to describe cycles of seven seven-year periods in the Soka Gakkai's development. On May 3, 1958, shortly after President Toda's death (on April 2), SGI President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai chief of staff, introduced the concept of Seven Bells and announced development targets for subsequent seven-year periods.

The first Seven Bells comprise the following periods:

- 1) **1930–37:** The period from the founding of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (forerunner of the Soka Gakkai) in 1930 through to its formal organizational inaugural ceremony held in 1937.
- 2) **1937–44:** The period through President Maki-guchi's death in prison in 1944.
- 3) **1944–51:** The period through Josei Toda's inauguration as second president in 1951.
- 4) **1951–58:** The period through Josei Toda's death in 1958.
- 5) **1958–65:** The period of great advance on all fronts under the leadership of President Ikeda.
- 6) **1965–72:** The period leading to the completion of the Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple), during which time a membership of 7.5 million households was achieved.
- 7) **1972–79:** The start of the second phase of kosen-rufu, and the seven years leading up to President Ikeda's becoming honorary president of the Soka Gakkai.

On May 3, 1966, President Ikeda announced guidelines for the second Seven Bells, to begin from the year 2001. Also, in 1978, he announced a series of four five-year plans for the organization's development during the period from 1980 through 2000.

He later reconfirmed this rhythm of development at a 1984 leaders meeting in Shimane Prefecture, Japan. In so doing, he noted the mysterious correlation between the development of the Soka Gakkai in five- and seven-year periods and the five or seven characters of the Mystic Law.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS
THE COUNTRY AND THE TIME
FROM THIS SPEECH:**

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Everything depends upon the country and the time. Those who practice Buddhism should understand this principle” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1579). The SGI has always followed this teaching. In whatever country and whatever age, we will always find a way forward, as long as we draw on the inexhaustible wisdom of Buddhism that functions in accord with changing circumstances. We will be able to blend harmoniously amid diverse cultures and societies, and make great contributions to people’s happiness, social prosperity and world peace. This is the power of our faith as practitioners of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

1) What does Nichiren Daishonin mean when he says, “Everything depends upon the country and the time”? How do you think this passage applies to America in 2001?

2) When SGI President Ikeda speaks of “the inexhaustible wisdom of Buddhism that functions in accord with changing circumstances,” what does he mean by “inexhaustible wisdom”? What does he mean by “changing circumstances”? How do you think this point is important for the SGI-USA? Can you apply it to your own efforts to share this Buddhism with your friends?