

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 7 SPEECH—PART 1 IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW WE LIVE

‘Everything depends on the kind of commitment and resolve with which we live our lives,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘Those who lack determination are vulnerable to defeat. Those who lack commitment lead sad, empty lives.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 1st Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Jan. 7.

Happy New Year! Congratulations on kicking off the new century with the 1st Headquarters Leaders Meeting! Everything depends on people. Buddhism is spread and history is created by people. Everything comes down to people. This is a fundamental point.

The Soka Gakkai has ushered in the 21st century with countless visitors calling on us to pay their respects and share their good wishes. Our wonderful alliance of Soka is more lively and high-spirited than ever.

I have received messages from more than a dozen world leaders, including former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, voicing their hope that we might meet and talk together in the near future.

The year 2001 will no doubt see even more distinguished guests from around the globe visiting us here at Hachioji.

A genuine Buddhist continues striving for kosen-rufu to the very end.

The famous 19th-century German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann once visited Hachioji. Schliemann is renowned for his discovery of the ruins of the ancient city of Troy in Turkey and many other important archaeological finds. Many of you may be familiar with his name.

Schliemann was determined to realize the dreams of his youth. He was resolved to achieve them without fail. And the world knows him as someone who did precisely that. His many significant archaeological discoveries rewrote the history books. [Schliemann, who was captivated as a young child by the story of the Trojan War, was 8 years old when he vowed to one day find the ruins of the ancient city of Troy. He suffered much hardship as a youth, including the death of his mother and poverty. Unable to continue formal education because of his circumstances, he went to work at a young age. In his spare time, he studied foreign languages on his own and became fluent in more than a dozen, including English, French, Dutch and Spanish. After the age of 40, he finally began his archaeological work and succeeded in proving that the civilizations of Troy and Mycenae actually existed.]

Schliemann visited Hachioji on June 19, 1865, during the period when Japan was undergoing its transition from the Edo Period to the Meiji Period. Schliemann later described his visit to Hachioji as having been particularly interesting. He wrote his impressions of this area: “Beautiful fields stretched in all directions. And the view from the hills was even more lovely.”

Six years after that visit, in 1871, Schliemann began excavation work on the ancient site of Troy. That was the same year that first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi

was born.

People around the world applauded Schliemann on the realization of his lifelong dream. However, among the scholars of his homeland, Germany, there were many jealous of his success, and they launched a storm of criticism and attack upon him. Such is human nature. Though he made wonderful discoveries, he was criticized. This is the way of the world.

The attacks also extended to his wife, Sophia, who assisted him in his work. The criticism took such a toll on her emotionally that this strong woman finally fell ill and took to her bed.

Her husband supported and encouraged her: “You must not let our present difficulties get you down.... These wretched attacks will vanish like chimney smoke. It is the work of the jealous scholar, the closed, established circle! To the public, in all countries, we are heroes, revered, leading the most exciting and adventurous lives.”

His words implied: “What do scholars who are cloistered in a closed, narrow world know? They’re just strutting around on ground where they stand unopposed! Let’s not be concerned by their criticisms! Isn’t the world applauding us?” In this way, Schliemann strove to cheer up his wife.

Everything depends on the kind of commitment and resolve with which we live our lives. Those who lack determination are vulnerable to defeat. Those who lack commitment lead sad, empty lives.

Schliemann never rested for a moment while alive. This no doubt was the creed by which he lived.

“I will strive without rest! Others can do or say what they like! I will never stop moving forward! Those who wish to stop and rest can do so! I will continue to advance to the very end! Those who want to complain can please themselves! I will walk the path I have chosen, no matter what!” A person who possesses this kind of unshakable conviction is a true practitioner of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Faith lies not in simply reciting the sutra. Nor does it lie in eloquence or being skilled at giving guidance. A genuine Buddhist, no matter what happens, pursues the way of faith, practice and study as taught by the Daishonin to the very end—a person who continues striving earnestly for kosen-rufu. Such conduct is the essence of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

The outcome of our lives is determined by the final chapter. Therefore, it all comes down to whether the last phase of our lives is free of regrets and shines with magnificent brilliance like a beautiful sunset. Just as a lovely sunset portends a sunny day tomorrow, our life’s closing chapter will determine the nature of our next existence.

Only the SGI is practicing Buddhism exactly as the Lotus Sutra teaches.

The sunsets in Hachioji are glorious. “The sunset glow fills the sky and nightfall descends...” goes the famous Japanese children’s song “The Sunset Glow.” This song is said to be about Hachioji sunsets. I have visited Ongata, the area closely connected to the song. [Ongata in Hachioji City is where Uko Nakamura, who wrote the lyrics, hailed from. Today it is renowned as “Village of the Sunset Glow.”]

Once, during one of our discussions, Vice Chancellor Arthur K. C. Li of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and his wife, Diana, asked me about the most beautiful sunset I had ever seen. While the sunsets over Manila Bay in the Philippines are famous, there is a place in Japan that has magnificent sunsets, too. I replied without hesitation, “Not

everyone may agree with me, but I find the sunsets in Hachioji, the site of Soka University, the most beautiful of all.”

Hachioji is a wonderful name. Though this may not directly have anything to do with the origin of the city’s name, the Chinese characters for Hachioji, meaning eight princes, also appear in the Lotus Sutra. I have spoken of this before.

A Buddha called Sun Moon Bright is mentioned in the “Introduction” chapter of the sutra. This Buddha, endowed with wisdom that illuminates all living beings like the sun, the moon and a bright light, had eight princely sons. [According to the sutra, there were 20,000 Buddhas, appearing one after another, named Sun Moon Bright. The last of these Buddhas was a king before he left the secular world and had eight sons.]

The eight princes had deeply meaningful names—each corresponding to different kinds of wisdom: 1) Having Intention (wisdom); 2) Good Intention (excellent wisdom); 3) Immeasurable Intention (boundless wisdom); 4) Jeweled Intention (priceless wisdom); 5) Increased Intention (superior wisdom); 6) Cleansed of Doubt Intention (doubt-freeing wisdom); 7) Echoing Intention (eloquent wisdom); and 8) Law Intention (Dharma wisdom).

Let us, too, demonstrate these outstanding virtues of the eight princes, as we dance onto the stage of the new century.

The Lotus Sutra states, “Dignity and virtue came easily to them [the eight princes], and each presided over a four-continent realm” (p. 15). The eight princes, if you like, ruled the world. Together with their father—the heart and mind of parent and child uniting as one—they renounced their royal positions and honors in society and earnestly and humbly devoted themselves to Buddhist practice. They made many good causes in the company of countless Buddhas. [The sutra states, “They [the eight princes] ... planted good roots in the company of a thousand, ten thousand Buddhas” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 15).]

In the present age, only the SGI is practicing the Buddhist teachings exactly as the sutra teaches. It is important to advance on the path of growth, the path of happiness, by working together with our fellow members in the SGI organization, as we each strive to develop and polish ourselves. Being on our own might seem very free, but it can lead us to becoming selfish and complacent, and ultimately straying from the path that is in rhythm with the law of life.

You can tap your wisdom freely and fully through courage in faith.

In Buddhism, eight means to open. The nuance is to tap, to reveal, to develop.

The wisdom of the eight princes resides within each of us. Please tap those functions of wisdom freely and fully through courageous faith. Please develop your wisdom, your good fortune and inner state of life. And please foster an endless flow of capable people, opening up the path of kosen-rufu. This is the focus of our “Hachioji Revolution.”

The Daishonin writes, “Names have the virtue of never failing to be substantiated” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1274). I ask our leaders to stand up with fresh resolve and, in a manner that is worthy of the name Hachioji, show such splendid actual proof that this area’s presence will be known throughout the world.

Here in Hachioji, there are a total of 21 universities, including our Soka University. When we first established Soka University here 30 years ago, there were only a few universities. Some people ridiculed us for building a university “out in the sticks.” Now, however, Hachioji has become a university town, one that will lead the way for the world in the 21st century.

I am confident that Soka University—this oasis of Soka education—will produce more and more bright, talented people filled with promise who will make their way into the wide world.

To be continued in the Feb. 16 issue

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS
WORKING TOGETHER
FROM THIS SPEECH:**

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- 1) Why is it important to our happiness to work together with other SGI members? Why can't we just become happy practicing on our own?
- 2) The SGI membership is extremely diverse. What does it mean to the world that we are able to work together and create amazing things in this organization?
- 3) How does working with other members help us to polish ourselves? Are we able to polish ourselves in ways we would otherwise not?
- 4) How has your practice with your district or with the SGI organization in general helped you to grow as a human being?
- 5) How can practicing on our own lead us to become "selfish and complacent"?