

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 29 SPEECH—PART 2 BECOME A STRONG, CAPABLE PERSON

‘Please become the kind of person who will fight and win amid the harsh realities of society while always upholding and championing justice, and always developing your character,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Please become a strong, capable person.’

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 2nd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka International Friendship Center in Sendagaya, Tokyo, Jan. 29.

Congratulations on today’s meeting also being the Shikoku General Meeting! Our members in Shikoku, Japan, are making wonderful efforts on all fronts. I am confident that the foundation of our kosen-rufu movement in Shikoku is rock-solid.

It is important to win in all endeavors. Winning is a joy, a source of benefit and happiness. A person who is easily defeated does not have the strength or capacity to make others happy. Please become the kind of person who will fight and win amid the harsh realities of society while always upholding and championing justice, and always developing your character. Please become a strong, capable person.

Shikoku has had remarkable success in promoting subscriptions for the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. For five years in a row, Shikoku has increased the number of subscriptions.

At the end of last year, our Shikoku organization crowned the 20th century with a truly magnificent achievement—the *Seikyo Shimbun*’s circulation in Shikoku exceeded those of such top national dailies as *Yomiuri*, *Asahi* and *Mainichi*. Shikoku is truly No. 1 in Japan when it comes to promoting our organizational newspaper.

Josei Toda, second Soka Gakkai president, always took the lead.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda first shared his vision of publishing a newspaper in August 1950. This was in the midst of great hardship for my mentor. His business was in serious trouble, and he was being attacked from all sides. I alone stood by him.

In these circumstances, Mr. Toda felt impelled to take some action to ensure the development of kosen-rufu into the distant future. Two days after his business was declared bankrupt, on Aug. 24, 1950—which was the anniversary of my embracing faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism—Mr. Toda said to me: “For an organization to have a newspaper of its own is an incredible asset. The Soka Gakkai ought to have its own newspaper, too, as soon as possible. Daisaku, please put your mind to work on it.” This is how the *Seikyo Shimbun* was born—from a mentor–disciple exchange between Mr. Toda and myself.

In December of that year, over a meal at a cheap restaurant near Shimbashi Railway Station in Tokyo, Mr. Toda and I began to get into the specifics of the newspaper. Mr. Toda declared: “From here on, we have entered the age of mass media. Let’s boldly open the way for kosen-rufu by using the power of the press.”

And in February 1951, he said: “It’s time for us to launch a paper. I’ll be president, and you be vice president!” Mr. Toda always took the lead. He was a true warrior, a kosen-rufu

fighter. [The first issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun* was published on April 20, 1951. It started out as a two-page broadsheet, published once every 10 days, with a run of 5,000 copies. In his diary entry on March 17, 1951, President Ikeda wrote, “Sincerely resolved to develop it into the greatest newspaper in Japan—no, in the world” (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 99). It was also President Toda’s cherished wish for people throughout Japan to read the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Today, it has a circulation of 5.5 million copies. This April 20 will mark its 50th anniversary.]

We live in a world where irresponsible media reports are rampant. We have to refute defamatory and destructive “reporting” with reasoned arguments based on truth and justice. This is as true now as it was then—this is an unchanging reality.

Nichiren Daishonin can see all our efforts for kosen-rufu.

Shikoku’s advance is leading the way for the 21st century. January’s “small group” women’s division general meetings in Shikoku spread a wave of friendship in the community, with a total of more than 500,000 members and guests participating. I heartily thank the Shikoku women for their tremendous efforts.

The Daishonin observes all your noble efforts for kosen-rufu, even if unseen or unrecognized by others.

The Shikoku young women’s division’s campaign to engage friends in dialogue has reached more than 55,000 people this month, a wonderful achievement. The Shikoku young men’s division, meanwhile, has increased the number of members active in the organization by 3,000 this month. This is splendid.

Shikoku’s student division also achieved outstanding results last year—with its young women ranking No. 1 in Japan in propagation and the young men ranking No. 1 for the highest average result scored in the nationwide student division study exam. The efforts and growth of the Shikoku youth are phenomenal, an example for all. The Shikoku members have also made remarkable strides in their Soka Spirit and temple disassociation activities. [In January alone, more than 170 temple members in Shikoku disassociated from Nichiren Shoshu. Over the past decade, more than 7,000 people in Shikoku have left the temple organization.]

I applaud with all my heart the efforts of our fellow members in Shikoku, who have fought earnestly, no matter how remote or challenging the area.

Our Shikoku members have also been making steady efforts to promote friendship in their local communities and to contribute to society in meaningful, practical ways. As a sign of how highly valued these activities are, I have, as your representative, received a number of significant awards from public bodies in Shikoku. All of this is the result of your struggles and your great capability. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Next year, a new Soka Gakkai cemetery, the Shikoku Memorial Park, will open. That is wonderful.

This year will be 20 years since the beloved Soka Gakkai song “Song of Crimson” (“Kurenai no Uta”) was born here in Shikoku. It was a little more than two years after I had stepped down as Soka Gakkai president and had come to Shikoku to launch a fresh offensive together with the Shikoku members. Over the years, we have striven hard together to forge today’s great path to worldwide kosen-rufu. It all started in Shikoku.

In January 1980, a thousand members from Shikoku came to see me in Yokohama, traveling all the way from Shikoku by ferry. This, too, is an episode that will shine eternally in the annals of kosen-rufu.

Together, the Shikoku members and I have written a history of justice, left behind a history of struggle and blazed a history of triumph. This I wish to state clearly for the record.

I want our Shikoku members to lead the way in joyously ringing the bells of victory in the 21st century — until one area after another follows, and the bells of victory ring out in every corner of the land.

On Jan. 22, 1955, Mr. Toda visited the city of Kochi, Shikoku, for the first time. I accompanied him. Mr. Toda held a Q-and-A session, and one of the Kochi members asked, “What about the Soka Gakkai having its own schools?”

Mr. Toda smiled and said: “Don’t worry. The Soka Gakkai will have its own schools before too long. We are committed to establishing an integrated school system from kindergarten through the university level. We will build the best schools in Japan!”

As my mentor’s disciple, I fulfilled all the promises Mr. Toda made that day to those immensely capable Shikoku members. And it is my greatest joy to report this to you today.

On May 3 this year, on the other side of the Pacific from Kochi, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, in Orange Country, Calif., will at last be dedicated. In the future, I want to invite Shikoku representatives to visit the new campus.

To strong people, the bitter winds of adversity feel like spring breezes.

The great French writer Romain Rolland was born on this day, Jan. 29, 135 years ago, in 1866. He was five years older than first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who was born in 1871.

I present the following words from Rolland to you, in commemoration of today’s meeting: “It was not only peace that we needed but the strength to face the assaults of destiny that assailed us. The foremost energy, the source of all, was faith.” The source of spiritual strength is faith. Faith is the ultimate strength in life.

Rolland also wrote: “Ah, how good it is to be strong! How good it is to suffer when a man is strong!” Again, faith is spiritual strength—a wellspring of power and energy for living our lives strongly. Weak faith is not true faith.

To strong people, even the bitter winds of adversity can feel like a joyous spring breeze. To weak people, every problem or obstacle is a source of hellish suffering. And seeing things that way is giving in to defeat.

I hope you will always advance with composure, fighting against injustice and evil for the sake of your friends and fellow members, and for the sake of kosen-rufu. And I hope that you will have the spirit to enjoy even the hardships and problems you may encounter along the way.

Rolland cried: “Bring on the struggle! It can only make my life better.” This is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

He also declared: “He who does not hate evil cannot love good...” This is the same spirit as Mr. Makiguchi’s. It resonates with the teachings of Buddhism. You will often find that the words of the world’s great thinkers embody the essence of Buddhism.

It is vital that we fight against evil. When we do, we become a force for good. When we do not, we become a party to evil. Moreover, if we do not fight evil or injustice, no great benefit will be forthcoming in our lives. The Daishonin writes of benefit (Jpn *kudoku*), “*Ku* [of *kudoku*] means to extinguish evil, while *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). To eliminate the impurities in one’s life and allow one’s pure spirit to emerge—this is benefit. We obtain this benefit by denouncing

and rebuking evil and injustice. Let us fight! So that good prevails!

This year again, I am determined to blaze new trails for kosen-rufu, with all of Japan and the entire world as my stage. I am fervently praying each day for your good health, longevity and victory in all things. Take care!

Thank you for traveling such long distances to be here today. I appreciate all your efforts.

See you again soon!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS BRINGING ABOUT GOOD FROM THIS SPEECH:

It is vital that we fight against evil. When we do, we become a force for good. When we do not, we become a party to evil. Moreover, if we do not fight evil or injustice, no great benefit will be forthcoming in our lives. The Daishonin writes of benefit (Jpn *kudoku*), “*Ku* [of *kudoku*] means to extinguish evil, while *doku* refers to the virtue one acquires by bringing about good” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762). To eliminate the impurities in one’s life and allow one’s pure spirit to emerge—this is benefit. We obtain this benefit by denouncing and rebuking evil and injustice. Let us fight! So that good prevails!

- 1) What do you think SGI President Ikeda means by saying “it is vital that we fight against evil”? What is the evil that we are fighting against? And how can we best fight against it?
- 2) How do we become a “party to evil” by not fighting against it?
- 3) Why do you think Nichiren Daishonin viewed benefit as extinguishing evil and bringing about good? Why is extinguishing evil a benefit? How does extinguishing evil bring about good? And what kind of good does it bring about?
- 4) Have you had your own experience of extinguishing evil and bringing about good?
- 5) Why does President Ikeda use language like “denouncing and rebuking evil and injustice”? Why do you think he feels so strongly about this? How would you explain this spirit to someone who is not familiar with what President Ikeda is talking about? How do you apply this spirit to your own practice?