

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 27 SPEECH—PART 1 GIVING THE GREATEST GIFT: FRIENDSHIP

**‘We are connected and indebted to all other living beings, so we should care for and value them,’ says SGI President Ikeda. ‘Introducing Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings to others is the greatest gift of friendship.’**

*Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 3rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Feb. 27.*

Thank you for traveling such long distances, in such cold weather, to be here today. And a very warm welcome to our overseas members. Congratulations to you all on the remarkable advances you are making in our movement for kosen-rufu in each region!

During World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill led his country dauntlessly in the struggle against the fierce attacks of Nazi Germany. With his hallmark “V for victory” sign and unshakable faith that the Allied Forces would prevail, he was an inspiring, brilliant leader.

In a famous speech during the war, he called out to his fellow citizens: “You ask: What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory — victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.”

Victory at all costs! This is the Soka Gakkai spirit. Buddhism is all about winning. Only if we triumph, can we realize kosen-rufu. A brilliant path of victory will never open for those who are cowardly, cunning or underhanded.

### **We will now pass responsibility to youth in all spheres of our movement.**

The time for the youth to take center stage has come. We have entered the period when we will pass the baton to youth in all spheres of our movement.

Nichiren Daishonin writes to his youthful disciple Nanjo Tokimitsu: “The reason you must repay your debt of gratitude to all living beings is that [since life extends across the three existences] in the past, all men have been your father at one time or another, and all women have been your mother. In lifetime after lifetime, you have been indebted to all of these living beings, which is why you should wish that all will attain Buddhahood” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1527).

Viewed from the perspective of Buddhism, we are connected and indebted to all other living beings, so we should care for and value them. The supreme way of repaying that debt of gratitude is to share the supreme philosophy of Buddhism with them. Introducing the Daishonin’s teachings to others, then, is the greatest gift of friendship.

Please also respect and treasure your fellow members. I hope that our youth in particular, no matter what their position is in the organization, will treat all their elders as if they were their parents.

Please treat everyone you have a connection with, including your parents, with utmost respect. I hope you will work to broaden our network of friendship and trust with open, generous hearts. The more you do so, the greater the benefit you will receive, the further kosen-rufu will advance and the more expansive your state of life will become.

The Daishonin also strongly urges Tokimitsu to fight bravely, with all the spirit of youth,

against the attacks of evil authorities: “When those of rank reproach you for your faith, think of them as worthy adversaries of the Lotus Sutra. Consider it an opportunity as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara plant, or the blind turtle encountering a floating sandalwood log, and reply to them firmly and resolutely” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 800–01). While on the one hand the Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu to treat all living beings as his fathers and mothers, on the other hand he urges: “Fight back fiercely against evil. That is what it means to be young!”

### **Words of truth are the strongest weapon against injustice.**

The French writer and thinker Albert Camus was active in the Resistance, after the forces of Nazi Germany occupied his homeland. He helped found an underground paper, *Combat*, and used his pen to wage battle against the enemy. Words of truth and justice are a strong weapon. When we speak and write the truth, our lives shine with genuine value.

Camus writes, “We must affirm truth and justice in order to fight against interminable injustice, and create happiness to protest against a universe of misfortune.” Let us fight against interminable injustice! Let us protest against the unhappiness in the world! The passionate cry of this great philosopher finds an echo in our hearts, too.

Camus was killed in an automobile accident in January 1960. It was a terrible shame, as all accidents are. Fatal accidents are a misfortune for the victims, and they also bring deep sadness to the victim’s family and friends.

I hope you will constantly remind one another to be careful and strive to prevent accidents from occurring. Those who have been in an accident once sometimes have a life tendency to get involved in accidents again and again. I hope that such people will chant with the strong determination not to be involved in any more accidents.

As upholders of the Mystic Law, let us win for ourselves days that are free from mishap and misfortune, as we continually chant with the firm resolve to break through our negative karma, to avoid accidents and to work hard for kosen-rufu.

### **There is no reason to let your happiness be governed by popularity and fame.**

Congratulations to the arts division members on attending today’s meeting! Your 10 million fellow members are behind you. They are your fans. I am a big fan! Please know that you have fans all around Japan and the world.

Fame does not equal happiness, nor does it equal ability. Those who walk the supreme path of happiness known as faith are great artists of life. Compared to this distinction, fame and popularity are mere illusions—they are as fleeting as the images on a TV screen, which disappear when you turn off the set.

There is absolutely no reason for you to let your happiness be governed by popularity and fame. Ordinary people have no fame but are the noblest of all. For instance, full-time homemakers may not be famous, but they are great beyond measure. The same is true of farmers and factory workers. Their work may not be flashy, but their existence is indispensable to us all.

Religion, moreover, has nothing to do with popularity. While enduring misunderstanding and even persecution along the way, we devote ourselves to leading others to happiness. We exert ourselves in our Buddhist practice.

The essence of religion is selfless dedication, the willingness to give even our lives for our beliefs. It exists on a level completely different from fame or popularity. This is crystal

clear if we look at the Daishonin's life.

The Soka Gakkai is strong because it has continued to carry out its activities surely and steadily in spite of the malicious insults and slanders cast upon it. Like homemade salt pickles [made by salting and placing vegetables under a heavy weight to draw out their natural juices], we are plain, honest and have wonderful flavor!

You are all emissaries of the Buddha. Whatever your situation or circumstances, you have a mission. You will attain happiness without fail. I hope that, no matter what obstacles you face, you will continue to advance calmly, enjoying everything you encounter in life.

**If we do not follow what Nichiren Daishonin teaches, we cannot say we are practicing Buddhism.**

Nichiren Buddhism is the Buddhism of kosen-rufu. And kosen-rufu is the very essence of Nichiren Buddhism. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, had a profound recognition of this and gave their lives completely to this noble cause. They were both great individuals.

To become happy not only ourselves, but to enable others to become happy as well. To bring harmony to our local communities. And to help our nations flourish and bring peace to the whole world. The lives of those who pray and work to achieve these goals pulse with faith dedicated to realizing kosen-rufu. And it is the Soka Gakkai, an organization that has inherited the Buddha's will and decree, that has spread this faith throughout Japan and the world.

In contrast, those who have forgotten about kosen-rufu, as Nichiren Shoshu has, are not practicing Nichiren Buddhism, no matter how much they may chant to the Gohonzon. Unless one follows what the Daishonin teaches in his writings, one cannot be said to be practicing Nichiren Buddhism. I want to make this perfectly clear.

Further, Buddhism is the teaching that answers the fundamental question of birth and death. It teaches an absolute law. As a result, from the perspective of the eternity of life, we who uphold this teaching can savor the essence of human life in this world.

No organization has a more profound mission than the SGI.

**We have to watch out for internal enemies.**

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda said strictly: "It may appear that our enemies are outside, but the most insidious enemies are within. Members elected to public office or those of high social status lose their faith and grow filled with self-importance. They become possessed by demons, negative forces, and they themselves become devilish functions. They go on to exploit the pure Soka Gakkai, sow confusion and wreak destruction. Though they owe their positions in society to the support of the Soka Gakkai, they look down with contempt on their fellow members. They forget the debt of gratitude they owe the Soka Gakkai and, instead of protecting the members, exploit them to the hilt. Such people do not genuinely embrace the spirit of many in body, one in mind. They are not true Soka Gakkai members. Beware of enemies within!"

Mr. Toda was incredibly strict when he said this. Now I understand what he was saying.

Certainly, many illnesses also occur from internal causes within our bodies.

The external enemies are not the ones we have to worry about. What we have to watch out for are the internal ones. And in fact, just as Mr. Toda pointed out, at the innermost realm of faith, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood became our most virulent enemy. It is also

the case that many of the ex-members who betrayed the Soka Gakkai were attorneys, elected government representatives and others of relatively high social status. We must never allow ourselves to forget this harsh reality.

**Preparations for the dedication of SUA are proceeding rapidly.**

Let's change the subject, just like changing the channel. We have received some wonderful news from Governor Gray Davis of California. This coming May 3 has been designated "Soka University of America Day" in California. The official proclamation reads in part:

*WHEREAS, Soka University of America will become the first new private liberal arts college in California to open on a full campus in 25 years; and*

*WHEREAS, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of Soka University, and all of the faculty and staff are dedicated to helping their students meet higher challenges and higher academic expectations; and*

*WHEREAS, Soka University of America will join California's world-class educational institutions in building a brighter future for our students;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, I, GRAY DAVIS, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim May 3, 2001, as "Soka University of America Day."*

There are many world-class universities in California. I also have heard that if California were an independent country, its economy would rank 7th in the world.

In addition, Dr. Victor Kazanjian, dean of religious and spiritual life at Wellesley College, one of the leading women's colleges in the United States, has voiced in a recent interview the following expectations for the opening of Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo in Orange County: "I am excited about Soka University for several reasons. In basing its educational philosophy on value creation, on making meaning from education, it challenges the educational community in the United States with its own original purpose.... Inasmuch as SUA is a kind of beacon and reminder of the ancient role of education as a source of liberation, as a source of spirituality, as a source of enlightenment, ... it promises to have a significant impact on the discourse about the meaning of education in this country. That is a big task.... Like any time there is a shift in the system, it sends waves. It's like dropping a stone into a pond. It has ripple effects across the entire pond. That is what I think SUA is doing."

Preparations for the May dedication of the school are proceeding at a rapid pace. The first board of directors meeting was held recently, and the library is now complete. We are in the final stages of the university's completion.

*To be continued in the April 13 issue.*

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS  
YOUTH AGAINST EVIL  
FROM THIS SPEECH:**

**Nichiren Daishonin strongly urges Nanjo Tokimitsu to fight bravely, with all the spirit of youth, against the attacks of evil authorities: “When those of rank reproach you for your faith, think of them as worthy adversaries of the Lotus Sutra. Consider it an opportunity as rare as the blossoming of the udumbara plant, or the blind turtle encountering a floating sandalwood log, and reply to them firmly and resolutely” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 800–01). While on the one hand the Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu to treat all living beings as his fathers and mothers, on the other hand he urges: “Fight back fiercely against evil. That is what it means to be young!”**

1) Why do you think that Nichiren Daishonin encourages young people like Nanjo Tokimitsu to fight against evil authorities? Why is it especially important for young people to do this? If young people are passive in the face of evil, how will this affect the future of humanity?

2) The Daishonin encourages Tokimitsu in two seemingly contradictory ways—to treat all living beings with respect and to fight against evil authorities. Why do you think SGI President Ikeda is pointing this out to us? What is the common denominator that these two points of encouragement share? Where do they meet?

3) The SGI upholds religious tolerance but at the same time refutes the distortions of the Daishonin’s teachings that the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is promoting. What are the common factors that both of these stances share?