

## **SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S FEB. 28 SPEECH FEARLESSLY ADVANCING INTO THE FUTURE**

**'Countless people have been persecuted because of their faith,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'The criticism that we face today pales by comparison. Therefore, no matter what hardship we encounter, we have to fearlessly advance until we have triumphed over it.'**

*SGI President Ikeda's speech at a nationwide conference for prefecture leaders in Japan, held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo, Feb. 28.*

I know that many of you have traveled long distances to attend this meeting. Thank you very much for your efforts.

In any struggle, it is the leaders who determine the outcome. Victory depends on their taking action with indomitable courage.

Nothing is more frightful than the complacency of a leader who is all talk, who supposes that everyone will automatically fly into action when he gives the word. Under such a leader, all efforts will be in vain. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, was extremely strict toward leaders who exhibited such bureaucratic tendencies.

In this day and age, it is not possible to move people on command. The people are wise—they carefully observe the actions of the leaders.

The role of a leader is not to make other people do things but to serve everyone. "I will boundlessly treasure everyone. I will absolutely never betray my comrades." This is the first tenet of leadership.

Buddhism is a struggle. Life is a struggle. And it is struggle that makes life interesting.

Since struggle is inevitable, we ought to enjoy it. Those who fight for kosen-rufu become healthy. Victory is itself happiness. All our efforts in faith return to us as eternal good fortune and benefit.

Yesterday, Feb. 27, was Women's Division Day in SGI organizations in the United States, Brazil and other countries. I understand that joyful meetings were held at sites around the world to commemorate this occasion.

In Washington D.C., members held a women's conference titled "Imagine Peace." The event, held at the World Bank, had some 3,000 participants, including the futurist and activist Dr. Hazel Henderson, who is a dear friend, and environmental activists from Canada.

What has enabled the SGI to spread and flourish around the world while maintaining its lifeblood of profound spirituality? Thoughtful and conscientious people around the world have expressed great interest in, and high expectations for, our movement.

The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China says, "One's body and mind at a single moment pervade the entire realm of phenomena" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 366). Our lives are fundamentally one with the universal life itself. All the treasures of the universe exist within each person. And each person is an infinitely respectable entity.

Therefore, through our mind of faith we can transform ourselves and our family, and we can lead our community, our country and the entire world in the direction of hope, happiness and peace. This is the practice of the ultimate Buddhist principle of 3,000 realms in a single life moment. It is a struggle to elevate the lives of all humankind.

Title: Fearlessly Advancing Into The Future

Subject: World Tribune 05/03/01 n.3344 p.4 WT010503p04 Tokyo, Japan 02/28/01

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 02/28/01 Advancing April Attitude Behavior Encouragement Fearlessly Future Guidance Ikeda

Ikeda Japan June Justice Messages Organization President Proposals Speeches through Tokyo Tribune Worl

When people are in the states of Hell, Hunger, Animality or Anger, the outcome is a society of jealousy and craving that is pervaded with incessant strife. But when, one by one, people begin to chant the Mystic Law and revolutionize their lives, manifesting the worlds of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood, it becomes possible to realize an ideal society blossoming with peace, culture and education.

Kosen-rufu lies in the unwavering struggle to carry out our human revolution and actualize a grand vision for world peace.

**Justice will definitely prevail in the end,  
despite the scheming of evil people.**

The other day someone presented me with a CD of *Fidelio*, the only opera that Beethoven ever composed. It tells the tale of a courageous woman who lives true to her convictions. The message is that justice will definitely prevail in the end, the scheming of evil people notwithstanding. *Fidelio* is set in 18th-century Seville, Spain, a city of rich history and culture.

The plot goes as follows: There is an upstanding youth named Florestan, who courageously reveals the crimes of Don Pizarro, the tyrannical jail warden. Florestan is framed and locked up in a fearful prison.

As Florestan's prospects turn from bad to worse, his wife, Leonore, courageously sets out to win his freedom. Disguised as a man, she becomes an apprentice to the warden and infiltrates the prison. The title of the opera, *Fidelio*, comes from the name that she assumes in male disguise.

Eventually, Leonore discovers that her husband is being kept in a dungeon. Her beloved husband, who is not given any food, is on the brink of starvation. Moreover, to remove any doubt about his fate, Pizarro is plotting to murder him.

With her husband in critical danger, Leonore flies forward and cries out: "Kill his wife first!"

"His wife?" comes Pizarro's startled response.

"I am his wife. I have pledged to comfort him. And to destroy you!"

Flying into a rage, Pizarro tries to kill both husband and wife with his dagger. "Fidelio" fiercely confronts Pizarro.

In the nick of time, Florestan's friend the minister Don Fernando, who knows the truth about everything, appears on the scene and saves the two of them. The wicked Pizarro is arrested and dragged off in a most pitiful state.

The opera closes with a chorus that repeats the refrain, "No praise is too high for a woman who saves the life of her husband."

Ten years ago when I visited Boston, America's intellectual capital, the SGI-USA Boston Renaissance Chorus performed a spirited adaptation of this piece. Through this song, they expressed their determination to resolutely battle evil.

They sang:

*We have made a vow and have a mission,  
to help all those who have suffered long,  
to seek the truth of our  
condition,  
clearing the clouds of doubt and wrong.  
No, no one should grovel*

*to another,  
the days of tyranny shall end!  
Let everyone seek out  
another  
and offer help as friend  
to friend.*

I praise the dignified, courageous women of Soka throughout the world. Also, I offer my deepest congratulations on the 50th anniversary this year of the formation of the women's division and young women's division.

**The pattern of persecution that people of justice must face is the same throughout history.**

Nichiren Daishonin praised a courageous female follower of his: "Could Shakyamuni Buddha and the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy, Medicine King, and Constellation King Flower be dwelling in your hearts? Surely this is what is meant in the passage of the Lotus Sutra that says that those in the land of Jambudvīpa who believe in this sutra do so because of the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy" (WND, 315).

Shakyamuni Buddha exists in the lives of all those who are struggling for kosen-rufu. The power of the bodhisattvas Universal Worthy and Medicine King, and the function of Constellation King Flower—these are all contained in our lives.

Therefore, our wisdom cannot fail to well forth. We cannot possibly be defeated by the devil of illness. We are naturally able to manifest great life force.

The Daishonin teaches that world kosen-rufu is accomplished by the power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy. In a broad sense, this means that kosen-rufu advances through the power of universal wisdom. [In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" the Daishonin says: "*Universal* refers to the principle of the true aspect of all phenomena, the essential, unchanging truth, as embodied in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra; and *Worthy* indicates wisdom that functions in accord with changing circumstances, as embodied in the essential teaching.... It is due to the transcendental power of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy that this Lotus Sutra is propagated throughout Jambudvīpa" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 780).]

In February, I received my 100th honorary degree. These are laurels that I have received as a direct disciple of Soka Gakkai presidents Makiguchi and Toda, and as the representative of all SGI members. "Universal wisdom"—as represented by leading academic institutions around the world—supports, trusts and has strong expectations for the humanism of the SGI. I am confident this is proof that the SGI is manifesting the wisdom of Bodhisattva Universal Worthy in perfect accord with the principles of the Lotus Sutra.

Goethe, who deeply pursued human nature, says: "There is nothing more disgraceful than depending on lies and idle fictions." Although the Daishonin was derided by people throughout the country as a "monk who transgresses the code of conduct" (WND, 42), this was based on nothing but lies and fabrications. The Daishonin was a "holy priest" who remained celibate throughout his life and did not eat meat. Nevertheless, people spread slanderous allegations about him that flew in the face of the truth. He was denounced as a priest who broke the precepts.

The Daishonin sent encouragement overflowing with sincerity to his followers, and they joyfully sought out his instruction. It may be that there were ill-intentioned people who

found cause for suspicion in his writing letters to women. This is despicable.

Elsewhere, the Daishonin says that these people “all join together to slander him to the ruler of the country, so that, after having been exiled to the province of Izu, he was also exiled to the province of Sado” (WND, 932). The Daishonin surmises that although he had not committed any wrong, crimes were assigned to him arbitrarily, part of a scheme to have him exiled. In short, these attacks were due to the jealousy of malicious individuals.

Doing away with a person of justice through lies and fabrications—this pattern of persecution is no different today. We have to see strictly, wisely, through the smoke screen of false accusations.

“Letter from Sado” says: “There are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers” (WND, 306).

### **Many religions have developed globally because they have had the spirit of martyrdom.**

The essence of faith is found in the spirit of martyrdom. This means maintaining your conviction in something you believe to be true even at the cost of your life. Many religions have developed globally because they have had this spirit. I want to briefly cite a few examples.

First of all, let us consider the case of Christianity. Jesus, betrayed by his disciple Judas, was crucified. Later, during the age of the tyrannical emperor Nero, Christians were blamed for a conflagration in Rome, with the result that many were put to death.

In Roman times, Christians were subject to the cruelest treatment, such as being fed to lions or burned alive as a public spectacle. But in the face of such fierce persecution, the faith of Christians grew even stronger.

Moreover, their courageous martyrdom moved the hearts of many others. Over time, Christianity was officially recognized by the emperor, with Rome eventually becoming Christian.

As the work of missionaries advanced, Christians were suppressed in the East, too. This was true in China and Korea. And in Japan, particularly under Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the Tokugawa regime, persecution of Christians reached horrible extremes.

As for the Jews: After the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century B.C.E., the Jews experienced a succession of persecutions and hardships. In Roman times, Jews who stood up to repressive rule were harshly suppressed. Their homes destroyed, many became wanderers.

In Europe, from the 11th century on, Jews suffered frequent persecution at the hands of the Crusades. Across the continent, wicked clerics stirred people up with unfounded rumors.

As a result, many Jews were suppressed and massacred. At the end of the 15th century, the Inquisition banished Jews from Spain en masse.

In Russia, during the second half of the 19th century, there were repeated, large-scale pogroms, or organized attacks, against Jews. During World War II, some 6 million Jews were robbed of their precious lives in the Holocaust.

What about Islam? The founder, Mohammed, taught a monotheistic faith. But since Arabs at the time were generally polytheistic, he was accused of having profaned the gods

of his forebearers.

Still, Mohammed's fiercely uncompromising words captured the hearts of youth. This in and of itself made him an object of jealousy and fear, the target of oppression. He was attacked with stones, forced to flee his native town and nearly killed. The attacks were also directed against his relatives and disciples.

In Buddhism, Shakyamuni underwent what are known as the nine great ordeals. His clan was decimated by a king named Virudhaka who "put hundreds...to the sword" (WND, 799). Shakyamuni was mocked as a person of great evil by the religious leaders of his day.

He was betrayed by his disciple Devadatta and an attempt was made on his life. Scandalous rumors were circulated about him, and he was showered with abuse. After Shakyamuni's death, his disciple Aryasimha was decapitated because of his devotion to Buddhism.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China was resented by the Buddhist establishment of his day—the so-called three schools of the South and seven schools of the North. The monks all gathered together like a pack of wolves, loudly vilifying and mocking him.

The Great Teacher Dengyo of Japan was hated by the six established sects of his day and was subject to an unending barrage of vilification and abuse.

The Daishonin boldly overcame many life-threatening persecutions. His followers were likewise imprisoned, banished and killed as a result of false allegations.

During the Atsuhara Persecution, 20 peasant followers were arrested and tortured. And three of them—Jinshiro, Yagoro and Yarokuro—were decapitated.

Because Soka Gakkai fought militarism, presidents Maki-guchi and Toda were sent to prison, where Makiguchi died.

These are just a few examples. Countless people have been persecuted because of their faith. We must on no account forget this. The criticism or calumny that we face today pales by comparison. It is like tiny ripples on the water's surface. Therefore, no matter what hardship we encounter, we have to fearlessly advance until we have triumphed over it.

At the same time, while we might speak of martyrdom, we definitely must not be reckless with our precious lives. Steadfastly struggling for kosen-rufu, making use of every available moment, is comparable to martyring ourselves for the teaching.

We must have the discerning eye to strictly distinguish between justice and injustice. The French thinker Rousseau says: "A person of genuine tolerance does not condone evil. He does not tolerate any dogma that vilifies people." Thomas Jefferson cries out, "If you enlighten the people...you will find that their oppressions of body and mind 'will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.'"

### **Unless young philosophers speak out for justice, there is no hope for the future.**

Before the unforgettable March 16, 1958, President Toda composed a message for youth: "When youth of the present age deeply ponder how they can bring peace to the confused political and economic conditions of the world, and how they can create security for the people of Japan and other countries, it is certain that all people, including those middle- and old-aged, will naturally join them in their efforts to elect upstanding national representatives.... Youth should be entrusted with vigilantly watching over politics."

That was Toda's testament. I want to present his words to youth. For unless young philosophers speak out for justice, there will be no hope for Japan's future.

This is the century of the youth division. I want you to stand up and take full

responsibility for kosen-rufu, struggling with all your might to construct your own golden tower of victory. Now is your chance.

Any area you choose is fine, but somehow create a history. Such efforts will bring you tremendous gain.

Even if no one is watching, the Gohonzon sees everything. And I am watching over you. Rack your mind, take bold action and tirelessly speak out for justice — 10 times, 100 times more vigorously.

I hope you will seek out difficult struggles, train and polish yourselves, and grow with ever-increasing speed. That is the most important thing. Your growth will determine the SGI's future.

Helen Keller writes: "It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel towards the distant goal."

Let us undertake a cheerful, joyful struggle, vowing to realize great victory during the first half of this year. I look forward to seeing you again soon.