

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA UNITY STARTS WITH YOU

‘What is the key to unity?’ SGI President Ikeda asks. ‘It may seem at first like a contradiction, but the key is for each individual to stand up on his or her own. Each individual must pray earnestly and become strong.’

What is our aim? It is victory! This was the famous declaration made by the newly appointed British prime minister Winston Churchill in his maiden speech 61 years ago, in May 1940, as he took up the challenge to defend the country from Nazi Germany. “Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be,” he said. And he closed his speech urging the British people, “Come, then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”

From this moment began Britain’s fierce five-year struggle against the dictator Hitler. Evil quickly clusters together and proliferates like cancer cells. That is why good people must forge a core that is even stronger than these negative forces and work to expand a solidarity of truth and justice. This is the unchanging rule for victory in any age.

Come then, let us take on the great challenge of opening the door to glory in the new century! And if we are going to do so, let us fight to win! The key to victory — first, last and always — is our advancing with indestructible, diamond-like unity.



A certain person observes: “The Kansai members have a strong sense of unity. Whenever some area of Kansai is praised, all Kansai members rejoice as if their own area was being praised. Likewise, when an area of Kansai is criticized, they get as angry as if they were personally being criticized. And they will not take it sitting down!”

When the time comes to fight, the brave members of Kansai vow in their hearts: “We will not let a single person fall by the wayside. We are all going to win together.” That passionate spirit of unity among the Kansai members sends out ripples of victory beyond Kansai to Tokyo, all of Japan and the rest of the world.

If there are fellow members who are struggling amid adversity, the Kansai members hasten to their side to encourage them, no matter how difficult their own circumstances might be. They are far from cold and bureaucratic — they never dismiss others’ problems as something of no concern to them. This is Kansai’s strength. This is the humanistic world of Buddhism.



Buddhism is harmony, solidarity, the unity of many in body, one in mind. Everyone is a supremely worthy Buddha, a Bodhisattva of the Earth with a profound mission.

That is why a spirit of mutual respect and friendly support and assistance is so important. If we have this spirit, we are guaranteed to triumph both in life and in kosen-rufu. We will be absolutely unbeatable.

In an environment of animosity and discord, everyone suffers. It is a state of misery, destructiveness and hell.

Unity is strength. Unity is right. Unity is beautiful. Unity is enjoyable. Solid unity for kosen-rufu is always accompanied by the development of a more expansive state of life by

each individual.

This is because when we align our spirit with the advance of kosen-rufu, we can break through the shell of our selfish ego. When we have the spirit to advance together with the Soka Gakkai, together with our fellow members, together on the path of mentor and disciple dedicated to the cause of justice, we can climb the summit of our great human revolution.

Do not be self-absorbed! Be ready to go anywhere if it is for the sake of kosen-rufu! Stand up together with your friends who are valiantly struggling to win amid daunting obstacles! Create a new impetus in those areas that are facing the greatest challenges!

It is from this caring network that the Soka Gakkai derives its solid unity. That is why it is strong. That is why nothing can defeat the Soka Gakkai.



What is the key to unity? It may seem at first like a contradiction, but the key is for each individual to stand up on his or her own. Each individual must pray earnestly and become strong.

As long as we think, “Someone else will do it,” we can never build true unity. Depending on others and irresponsibly letting things take their course is certain to result in a weak gathering of mindless sheep.

“Youth, just one of you stand! A second and then a third will definitely follow!” In these words, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda revealed the formula for kosen-rufu.

Another factor that is especially important for unity is the dedication of the leaders—their passion, their consideration for their fellow members, their wisdom. It is also vital to have well-defined goals and to chant wholeheartedly toward them. Leaders must always have a clear vision of where we are going, why we are fighting and what we are fighting against. They must lead the way forward accordingly with confidence and precision.

Also, they must not lose sight of antagonistic forces. When the spirit to refute evil wanes among the leaders, the three obstacles and four devils take advantage and start to wreak their havoc. Leaders must not be cowardly and afraid to fight against evil. Nichiren Daishonin strictly warns: “An enemy will try to make you forget the danger so that he can attack” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 952).



In May 1956, I was in Kansai working on building an unassailable bastion of the people. With “Forward, ever forward!” as our rallying cry, a wave of joyous propagation spread through the towns of Kansai. In the very midst of this dynamic expansion, the insidious nature of state authority reared its ugly head in the form of persecution and obstruction, just as the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin’s writings predict.

The police arrested several completely innocent Kansai members on fabricated assault charges and began to investigate the Soka Gakkai’s internal matters. Malicious journalists came out in force to portray us as a “violent religion,” and traces of uncertainty, fear and hesitation began to show in members’ hearts.

The Daishonin writes, “The three obstacles and four devils will invariably appear, and the wise will rejoice and the foolish will retreat” (WND, 637). I therefore called out spiritedly to my fellow members: “Children of the lion, do not fear! Do not retreat a single step! Cut yourself loose from cowardice with the sharp sword of faith! Now is the time to bravely stand up and fight!” In a flash, everyone united and began a vigorous counterattack.

Courage is key to creating a unified force of lions. As the Daishonin teaches, “Slanderers are like barking foxes, but Nichiren’s followers are like roaring lions” (WND, 997).

And in that May of 1956, the Kansai members and I accomplished the towering achievement of 11,111 new member households joining in a single month—an achievement that will live forever in the history of kosen-rufu.



Even while I was exerting myself in Kansai at the time, I could not help but be deeply concerned about Tokyo. I wrote my heartfelt hope in my diary: “They [the Tokyo-area members] must not forget that only faith and unity will lead to victory.... I have decisively taken the lead in Kansai. Hoping for the members’ glorious victory in Tokyo as well” (*A Youthful Diary*, p. 296).

Today, I am resolutely taking the lead in Tokyo. My beloved Tokyo, my beloved Kansai and my beloved fellow members everywhere: Create an eternal monument of achievement based on unity! As an invincible unified force of lion kings, let us win and adorn the start of the Century of Soka with victory!

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