

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 2 MESSAGE GIVING RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUTH

‘Hope for the 21st century lies in giving responsibility to youthful successors and allowing them to freely take action,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘Where young people are raised with the utmost care and respect, victory is assured.’

SGI President Ikeda's message to a nationwide prefecture leaders conference, held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Aug. 2.

Thank you for all your efforts to attend this nationwide prefecture leaders conference, despite the intense heat.

As I said at the 8th Headquarters Leaders Meeting (see the Aug. 31 and Sept. 14 issues of *World Tribune*), you have all fought hard. Thanks to your sincere efforts, each prefecture and region of the country shines with benefit and victory.

Moreover, the wonderful unity of this conference of prefecture leaders has become the driving force for total victory throughout the country. This is most commendable. There is beauty and strength in maintaining harmonious relations with others. This is the world of the SGI.

The “Devadatta” chapter contains the passage “Of great wisdom and virtue, brave and stalwart, / you have converted and saved immeasurable beings” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 186). This means that the Buddha instructs infinite numbers of living beings and guides them toward enlightenment with great wisdom, benefit, courage and with bounding life force.

A leader of kosen-rufu must always be healthy and have strong life force. Doing gongyo with my wife this morning, I strongly, deeply prayed for the excellent health and brilliant life force of all you leaders.

All our struggles for kosen-rufu return to us 10 million-fold as joy.

The German poet Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin sings, “All joy is born of hardship.” All our struggles for kosen-rufu are Buddhist practice and contribute to our attaining Buddhahood. They return to us 10 million-fold as joy. That is the principle of cause and effect. All our efforts for kosen-rufu become our own happiness.

The great French thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau says, “The source of true happiness is within us.” The essence of this wellspring is the Mystic Law. Therefore, someone who accepts and upholds the Mystic Law is an entity of happiness.

The American philosopher Henry David Thoreau opines: “It is wholesome advice,—‘to be a man amongst folks.’ Go into society if you will, or if you are unwilling, and take a human interest in its affairs.” This is the way of the SGI.

We must connect each new victory with yet another victory down the road.

More than 2,000 years ago, there was a hero who set out toward the East with the aim of unifying all humankind. That was Alexander the Great of Macedonia.

A distinguished general, Alexander always stood at the front of his troops, without the least concern for his personal safety. However, the true brilliance of Alexander's leadership

only became apparent after the battle.

When you have won, the important question becomes how you can connect that victory with yet another victory down the road. After a battle, with lightning speed Alexander would take the necessary measures to do just that. No matter how tired he was, no matter how deep the wounds he had sustained, starting the day after a battle he would throw himself into meeting with his soldiers.

For soldiers who had distinguished themselves on the battlefield, he would offer unstinting praise, justly rewarding each for his achievements. He also went to see the wounded soldiers who had risked their lives in battle. He would speak with them one by one, offering praise and encouragement. He also lost no time seeing to it that funerals were held for those who had died. And he would generously provide for their survivors.

Alexander was also quick to make new appointments, reshaping his organization and readying his forces for the next campaign. When you have won—that is when you must further strengthen your unity, refresh your spirit to struggle even harder and tighten up your forces of capable people for future campaigns.

The following episode took place immediately after Alexander's victory over the forces of his mortal enemy Persia. Alexander dispatched someone to politely deliver a message to the mother of his foe. He explained that her son, the king, was alive and safe, putting her worries to rest.

After a victory in battle, Alexander would seek to further expand his forces, turning even former enemies into allies.

The next day, Alexander, accompanied by only one guard, paid a visit to the king's mother. When they approached, because the two wore similar attire, the mother, not knowing who Alexander was, approached the guard and dropped to her knees in a show of respect. As soon as she realized her mistake, she shrank back in shame.

But Alexander calmly told her: "You were not mistaken. For this man is also Alexander." As far as he was concerned, anyone who fought with the same sense of responsibility was every bit his equal. He did not feel above or superior to others. This anecdote well illustrates Alexander's conviction that everyone is a hero.

When his soldiers seemed to be growing discouraged from the fierce fighting amid the hardships of the Eastern campaign, Alexander stood before them and cried out, "What great or noble work could we ourselves have achieved had we thought it enough, living at ease in Macedon, merely to guard our homes?"

In our great march for peace and justice, let us advance with indefatigable courage and joy toward victory after victory, burning with still greater passion.

Refuting evil and propagating the true teaching is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

Next, I want to read from Nichiren Daishonin's writings. During the Daishonin's lifetime, the priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple was the chief instigator, who out of jealousy, spread slanderous rumors about the Daishonin, causing him to be exiled and nearly beheaded.

This was the same Ryokan who caused so much trouble for disciples of the Daishonin such as the Ikegami brothers and Shijo Kingo. In a writing to the younger of the Ikegami brothers, Munenaga, the Daishonin denounces Ryokan as follows: "But deluded by the Nembutsu priests, he [Hojo Shigetoki, who held several important posts in the Kamakura government] treated me with enmity, and as a result, he and his entire clan have been all but ruined.... You may think that those who believe in Priest Two Fires [Ryoka-bo, a play

on the name Ryokan, alluding to large fires that broke out at his temple and in the neighboring shogunate building] are prospering, but you should see what has become of the Nagoe clan [Hojo Tomotoki's family, earnest Nembutsu believers; all six of Tomotoki's sons met tragic deaths] (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 638).

This is the Daishonin's strict warning. The same can be said of those who, in collusion with Nichiren Shoshu, have harassed the Soka Gakkai, an organization acting in complete accord with the Buddha's will and decree. Among those who have turned against the Soka Gakkai, which upholds supreme justice, I doubt there is even one who has led a fulfilling life as an upstanding individual. From this alone, right and wrong are only too apparent.

The Daishonin further instructs Munenaga as follows: "From this point forward, no matter what might happen you must not be swayed the least in your faith. You should admonish the enemies of the Buddhas even more strongly" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1090). This spirit of refuting evil and steadfastly propagating the true teaching is the essence of the Soka Gakkai spirit.

True democracy only exists when the people become the sovereigns.

I next want to present you with a number of wise sayings. The American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. says, "When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied." The Soka Gakkai is battling head on this "emptying" of democracy.

The Czech philosopher-statesman T. G. Masaryk declares, "Suppression of religious freedom naturally wreaks havoc on morality; and this has great social consequences."

And the revolutionary German poet Henrich Heine says: "My countrymen, you are the true emperors of the state, the true sovereigns.... My countrymen, your will is the sole legitimate wellspring of all power."

True democracy only exists when the people become the sovereigns. Conscientious intellectuals are justifiably concerned by the seeming lack of awareness on the part of the Japanese about the meaning of democracy. The people are the true emperors of society — let us always maintain this confidence and pride.

Commitment and compassion, when combined with courage, can change the world.

On the eve of the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I have completed a new dialogue titled *Choose Hope* [not yet available in English]. In this work, I discuss the outlook for a peaceful 21st century that is free of nuclear weapons with David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, an American peace organization.

I am grateful for the assistance of the publisher, Kawade Shobo Shinsha, in realizing this volume. The same company published my dialogue with the German philosopher Josef Derbolav, *Search for a New Humanity*, and my dialogue with former Chilean president Patricio Aylwin, *Dawn Over the Pacific*.

As a token of my gratitude for his assistance, I presented the firm's president, Mr. Shigeo Wakamori, with a copy of the book that I had dedicated with a saying from a classical Chinese text of Zhuang-zi. The saying consists of four Chinese characters that mean "The wings to fly over the Southern Sea." The image of the flapping wings of an enormous bird climbing high in the sky symbolizes a great project to be achieved.

This calls to mind a poem that I received from Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, in July 1953:

*Live like a phoenix
Soaring through the sky
Over a thousand generations.*

“Live like a great bird serenely, joyously soaring through the sky. Live long and wholeheartedly exert yourself for peace.” This was President Toda’s spirit.

On the eve of the anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I have respectfully offered prayers for the repose of the victims.

As suggested by the title, Dr. Krieger and I had a wide-ranging discussion on “choosing hope.” This refers to the hope that—in an age of nuclear weapons, when humankind is continually faced with dangers of all kinds—we definitely can change the world, that we absolutely can defeat evil.

Where, then, does the “hope power” even stronger than “nuclear power” reside? On this point, Dr. Krieger and I were in complete agreement. It lies within the lives of human beings.

The ultimate expression of this philosophy of hope is found in the Buddhist doctrine of 3,000 realms in a single moment of life. For this reveals that the spirit or determination of one person can change the world. Dr. Krieger expressed deep understanding for and agreement with this view.

What, then, is necessary to free and manifest the immense power contained in our life? Mr. Krieger stressed that it is courage—namely, the courage to steadfastly uphold one’s convictions, the courage to stand alone. He argues in *Choose Hope* that commitment and compassion, when combined with courage, can change the world.

In recent struggles, you all have fought earnestly. You have fought with tenacity and commitment. Burning with a spirit to refute misconceptions, you said what had to be said. You united with your comrades with mutual concern. And as a result, you manifested enormous strength, and you realized great victory.

Our dialogue resounds with the conviction that hope is another name for youth. Dr. Krieger affirms this, saying: “Young people have played an active part in all historical transitions. Never before has the challenge to the young been greater than the one confronting them today. Never has the need for courageous action been more compelling.”

I completely agree.

In the SGI, too, everything will depend on the present members of the youth division. In the recent campaign, the youth fought admirably. These are young people with a truly profound mission.

Hope for the 21st century lies in giving responsibility to youthful successors and allowing them to freely take action. Where young people are raised with the utmost care and respect, victory is assured.

To expand the solidarity of young Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to expand hope.

On July 31, a research institute announced the results of a survey it conducted of junior and senior high schools in countries around the world. Asked whether they felt hopeful about the 21st century, 86.2 percent of respondents in the United States responded in the affirmative. In South Korea, the figure was 70.6 percent, and in France, it was 63.6 percent.

By comparison, only 33.8 percent of Japanese youth said they felt hopeful about the new century. Overall, Japanese junior and senior high school students were pessimistic about the future.

This is not the fault of the students themselves—adult society is to blame. In light of these findings, our efforts to foster the growth of youth take on increasing importance.

My heartfelt gratitude for the noble activities of all the members of the 21st Century Mission Group in Japan, youth leaders who are responsible for taking care of the younger members.

Dr. Krieger asks in *Choose Hope*: “How many bodhisattvas will it take to change the world? How much altruism will it take? We cannot answer these questions. We can only say that it will take more of both than currently exists.”

He stresses that he will continue to embrace hope and steadily, resolutely take action toward this goal. As Dr. Krieger affirms, to expand the solidarity of young Bodhisattvas of the Earth is to expand hope.

The *Analects of Confucius* contains the passage “It is Man who is capable of broadening the Way. It is not the Way that is capable of broadening Man.”

Let us put all our effort into expanding and strengthening the youth division. With profound emotion and expectation, I say to the youth: “My friends, I am counting on you for the 21st century! It will be your age! It is the stage for all of you!”

A Buddha is a person of absolute happiness, a victor of supreme justice.

A sutra passage says that a person experiences 804,000 states of mind in a single day (see *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 471). In the course of one day, it is true that many different thoughts occur to us. People’s hearts change from moment to moment in response to various external relations. How can we still our minds, which are always changing?

The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which we recite in gongyo, contains the closing lines “At all times I think to myself: / How can I cause living beings / to gain entry into the unsurpassed way / and quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?” (p. 232). This is the Buddha’s constant thought for the enlightenment of all people.

We need to continually fight on, focusing our thoughts on what we can do for the Mystic Law, for kosen-rufu and for the SGI. That is the path to becoming a Buddha.

A Buddha is a person of absolute happiness, whom nothing can disrupt, and a victor of supreme justice. Becoming such a person is your supreme mission and glory in life. To accomplish your own great history of human revolution, each day please do everything you can to lead the kosen-rufu movement in your region based on a steady practice of strong, resonant gongyo and daimoku.

During the hot summer months, please take care to stay healthy, managing your time wisely to get adequate sleep.

After you return home, please convey my warmest regards and heartfelt thanks to all my beloved fellow members.

And please continue cheerfully, vigorously advancing toward one victory after another, maintaining your high spirits and taking great care not to cause any accidents.