

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 6 MESSAGE WHERE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE BEGINS

'We create hope,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'For hope exists inside of us. Faith is boundless hope.'

SGI President Ikeda's message to a nationwide prefecture leaders conference, held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Sept. 6.

Thank you for gathering from throughout the country for this prefecture leaders conference. My heartfelt congratulations to the members across Japan, including the youth, on their fresh, hope-filled departure.

*Sharing suffering and joy
Over the present and the future,
Our bond
Is most profound.*

Fifty years ago, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda composed this poem for me. As Soka Gakkai members, we share the sufferings and joys of the struggle for kosen-rufu over past, present and future, transcending life and death. I sincerely applaud and eternally praise your efforts and wonderful achievements.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote to a follower whose husband had passed away: "When he was alive, he was a Buddha in life, and now he is a Buddha in death. He is a Buddha in both life and death" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 456). The lives of those who strive in accord with the Mystic Law, who struggle on behalf of the Mystic Law and who are devoted to the Mystic Law even in death merge with the life of the Daishonin and the world of Buddhahood pervading the universe.

Such people experience joy in both life and death. And their journey over the three existences of past, present and future is free of fear and sorrow.

Freedom, hope, and eternal happiness are found in those who uphold correct philosophy.

What is a correct way of life? What is a life of value? Let us look to the wisdom of past philosophers for answers to these questions.

The American thinker John Dewey suggested that human beings innately possess an inexhaustible strength to pursue love, compassion, justice, equality and freedom. And the famous Russian author Leo Tolstoy declared, "One ought to learn and acquire the joy of doing good."

The Roman orator Cicero warned, "The great majority of people...when they fall prey to ambition for either military or civil authority, are carried away by it so completely that they quite lose sight of the claims of justice."

I also recall that Plutarch, the Greek biographer known for his work *Parallel Lives*, said of the Roman politician Camillus, "He had achieved far greater actions in war along with them [the people] than in politics with the patricians."

What is most important? The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus declared, "My friend,

you must serve philosophy, for then you will be given true freedom.” Freedom, hope and eternal happiness are found in those who uphold a correct philosophy.

The Ukrainian poet Lesya Ukrainka sang: “That’s right! Even in sorrow, I will never forget verse. Even on gloomy nights, I will gently smile. Where there is no hope, I will find hope. I will live! Sadness, be gone. Be gone with you.”

We create hope. For hope exists inside of us. Faith is boundless hope.

Persecutions that befall the votary of the Lotus Sutra originate from envy.

Why do persecutions befall the votary of the Lotus Sutra, a champion of ultimate truth and justice? It is because of envy.

The Daishonin addresses this in “The Actions of the Votary of the Lotus Sutra”: “Because venison is tasty, the deer is hunted and killed; because oil can be obtained from the turtle, the turtle loses its life. If a woman is beautiful, there will be many who envy her. The ruler of a nation has much to fear from other nations, and the life of a man with great wealth is constantly in danger. One who abides by the Lotus Sutra will inevitably attain Buddhahood. Therefore, the devil king of the sixth heaven, the lord of this threefold world, will become intensely jealous of anyone who abides by the sutra. This devil king, we are told, attaches himself like a plague demon to people in a way that cannot be detected by the eye. Thereafter, like persons who gradually become drunk on fine old wine, rulers, fathers and mothers, wives and children gradually become possessed by him and are filled with jealousy toward the votary of the Lotus Sutra. And that is precisely the situation we face today in the world around us” (WND, 779).

People are envied for their beauty, talent or good fortune. Or because they are happy or just. Even the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law was envied.

Actually, it is precisely because he was the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law that the Daishonin was so resented and persecuted. But he endured everything and left behind the great teaching of ultimate happiness and peace for all humankind.

We must continually strive to develop ourselves, regardless of what others do or say.

One cause of the terrible persecutions that befell Shak-yamuni was the envy of Devadatta. [He was a disciple of Shakyamuni who later turned against his mentor. His future enlightenment, however, is predicted in the “Devadatta” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.] The Daishonin described Devadatta as “a man who cared deeply about fame and personal profit” (WND, 342), who was “driven by...intense jealousy” (WND, 342). President Toda was also strict when he described Devadatta’s true nature as that of jealousy, particularly of the kind often seen in men.

In “Letter to Horen,” the Daishonin said: “All heavenly and human beings looked up to him [Shakyamuni] with admiration, and the four kinds of believers honored and revered him. Devadatta, however, did not command such respect from others, so he began to consider whether there was not some way he could gain worldly fame that would surpass that of the Buddha” (WND, 506).

The machinations of the cunning Devadatta succeeded for awhile. He managed to dupe the people to such a degree that they believed him to be far greater than Shakyamuni. As his arrogance swelled, Devadatta attempted to kill Shakyamuni. He also conspired to usurp the offerings made to Shakyamuni and to take control of the Buddhist Order. In addition, he befriended King Ajatashatru [the most powerful ruler in India at that time], and together

they committed acts of the worst treachery. In the end, Devadatta fell into hell for his terrible offenses.

The Daishonin described the arrogance and presumption of the priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple [who made false accusations against the Daishonin and plotted to have him executed] in light of the sutra. He said that although Ryokan was revered as a priest who upheld the precepts, he was in fact slovenly and self-indulgent. He further described Ryokan as a person consumed by selfish desires, envy, erroneous views and licentious behavior, and he declared that these tendencies summed up Ryokan's true nature (see *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 350).

The Daishonin also stated, "The priests of the Hinayana schools of the Dharma Analysis Treasury, Establishment of Truth, and Precepts will be the flames of anger that burn with jealous hatred of the Mahayana schools" (WND, 578). He warned that the "flames of jealousy" burning in people's hearts threaten to destroy the true Law.

Envy is the reverse side of arrogance. In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin cited a passage from Miao-lo's *Annotations on Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* that states, "'Inability to self-reflect' means an inflated sense of self-importance" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 718).

We must continually strive to develop ourselves, regardless of what other people do or say. Unfortunately, jealous and arrogant people lack the modesty to do this.

Lies can easily destroy the beautiful bonds that link people.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: "The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence."

Lies and slander destroy the beautiful bonds that link people. They undermine the healthy growth of society. Spreading lies is a favorite ploy of the envious.

Scandalous rumors about Shakyamuni were also circulated widely. At the instigation of fellow Brahmans, a woman publicly slandered him by placing a pot underneath her robe and claiming that she was carrying his child. This act, known as the Slander of Chinchu, was a most despicable lie intended to invite shame and disgrace upon a person of true honor and integrity.

Rumors that the Daishonin was a "monk who transgresses" were also spread. [The Daishonin wrote, "Though I have neither wife nor child, I am known throughout the country as a monk who transgresses the code of conduct" (WND, 42).] Malicious rumors and slander were behind the persecution of the Daishonin.

In "Rebuttal of the Claims by Gyobin," he wrote: "Nichiren has suffered wounds and as many as several hundred of his disciples have been killed. This is entirely due to the great lies spread by Ryokan, Nen'a, Doa and other [priests who are revered as] sages" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 182).

The Daishonin also clearly indicated that women who were deceived by erroneous teachings had made false allegations against him to powerful figures. He said of these women: "Because they look upon Nichiren, who is trying to save them, as a deadly enemy, these women 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 pattern of persecution against the Soka Gakkai has been the same. This is testimony that we are carrying on the Daishonin's legacy.

In another of his writings, the Daishonin stated: "Although the age in which the Buddha

lived was certainly a defiled one, the five impurities had only just begun to manifest themselves; in addition, the devil stood in awe of the Buddha's powers. Yet, even in a time when the people's greed, anger, foolishness, and false views were still not rampant, a group of brahmins of the Bamboo Staff school killed the Venerable Maudgalyayana, who was known as the foremost in transcendental powers; and King Ajatashatru, by releasing a mad elephant, threatened the life of the only one in all the threefold world who is worthy of honor. Devadatta killed the nun Utpalavarna, who had attained the state of *arhat*; and the Venerable Kokalika spread evil rumors about Shariputra, who was renowned as the foremost in wisdom. How much worse things became in the world as the five impurities steadily increased! And now, in the latter age, hatred and jealousy toward those who believe even slightly in the Lotus Sutra will be all the more terrible. Thus the Lotus Sutra states, 'Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?' When I read this passage for the first time, I did not think that the situation would be as bad as it predicts. Now I am struck by the unfailing accuracy of the Buddha's words, especially in light of my present circumstances [in exile]" (WND, 42).

It is because we are resolutely advancing kosen-rufu in accord with the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin's writings that we have been the target of jealousy, envy and slander. Facing persecution is proof that we are upholding the highest cause of good.

The Daishonin thought of Japan as a land "filled with jealousy" (WND, 873). The Soka Gakkai, which is engaging its struggle for good in this "land of jealousy," has been hailed by many of the world's leading thinkers, who understand and support its cause.

President Toda once said to me: "Nothing is more frightening than human jealousy. Nothing is more fearful than the evil and destructive forces that reside in the human heart. For that reason, you must become strong. You must live with such conviction that you have no regrets!"

I present these words to the youth, whom I cherish deeply. I call on you: "Uphold the banner of truth and justice!" "Always be courageous!"

Kosen-rufu can definitely be achieved—and now is the time!

Once again, I want to quote the Daishonin: "In this entire country of Japan, I am the only one who has been chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. I am like the single speck of dust that marks the beginning of Mount Sumeru or the single drop of dew that spells the start of the great ocean. Probably two people, three people, ten people, a hundred people will join in chanting it, until it spreads to one province, two provinces, and all the sixty-six provinces of Japan, and reaches even to the two islands of Iki and Tsushima. Those persons who have spoken slanderously of me will in time chant in the same way; and everyone from the ruler on down to the multitude of common people will, as described in the 'Supernatural Powers' chapter of the Lotus Sutra, chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a single voice" (WND, 672).

These words are unchanging. Kosen-rufu can definitely be achieved. Now is the time to realize dynamic advancement.

Life is a struggle. Buddhism is a struggle. Only by surmounting great suffering can we appreciate life's depth and joy.

That is why we must continue to move forward. We must take action. This is what the philosophers of the world teach.

The French philosopher Alain [Emile-August Chartier] said, "Every good action is in

itself beautiful and shines on a man's face." Indeed, a person of action is beautiful.

The British author Emily Bronte wrote, "With the humble I will be; / Haughty men are nought to me." Let us advance with the same spirit.

The Czech philosopher-statesman T. G. Masaryk was revered as a mentor by President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic and Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, father of the European Union, both of whom I had the opportunity to conduct dialogues with. Masaryk said, "Our democracy must consist of ceaseless reformation, ceaseless revolution; it must be revolution of the mind and heart." Revolution of the mind and the heart—in other words, human revolution—will create a new age of the people.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the towering leader of the Civil Rights Movement, solemnly declared, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

The insights of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore are also thought provoking. He said, "The most important lesson that man can learn from his life is not that there is pain in this world, but that it depends upon him to turn it into good account, that it is possible for him to transmute it into joy."

Lastly, the Ukrainian poet Ukrainka sang, "Oh Words, I wanted to cultivate you like a flash of lightning, like a sharp sword.... Fight! Cut! Crush! Oh Words, don't smolder, but burst into flame."

I hope you will face and overcome all the challenges you encounter and dedicate yourselves to taking action and engaging others in dialogue toward the realization of kosen-rufu, the great hope of humanity.

**Each day, let us cheerfully meet with our fellow members,
who are working so hard.**

The 21st century is a century of life, a century of health.

This is the time of year when exhaustion from the hot summer months catches up with us. Please take care to get sufficient rest and restore your energy.

The "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra that we recite each morning and evening contains the line "[Such is the power of my wisdom] that its sagacious beams shine without measure. This life span of countless kalpas [I gained as the result of lengthy practice]" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 231). With this conviction, I hope you will live long and enjoy good health as you cause wisdom and vitality to well forth from your lives and guide the rising tide of kosen-rufu ever forward.

Each day, let us cheerfully meet with and encourage our fellow members, who are working so hard for kosen-rufu. Let us foster capable successors, who will carry on our struggle. And let us vigorously enact a drama of continuous expansion.

Please convey my warmest regards to the noble members in your respective areas.

Let's carry on resolutely and with dauntless composure!