

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

Toward a Century of Life

Happy New Year! I'm delighted to see all of you, my beloved fellow members in 192 countries and territories, who are filled with fresh vitality and united in a shared desire for world peace, embarking on a new year of positive contribution to your communities and societies.

The foundation for worldwide *kosen-rufu*—the cherished wish of both Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Daishonin—has now been solidly secured. This has been achieved through the dedicated efforts of you and all our fellow members throughout the globe—noble Bodhisattvas of the Earth who have fought hard and triumphed over countless obstacles along the way.

The year 2010 is a profoundly significant one, marking many major milestones in our *kosen-rufu* movement. It is the 110th anniversary of the birth of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, who sought to eradicate misery from the face of the earth. It is also the 80th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding and the 35th anniversary of the SGI's establishment.

The Daishonin writes: "What a joy it is for us to have been born in the Latter Day of the Law and to have shared in the propagation of the Lotus Sutra!" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 1026). How fortunate we are to be alive at this auspicious time! With this as a source of even greater joy and inspiration, let us exert ourselves bravely and vigorously and lead unsurpassed lives dedicated to fulfilling the noble vow for *kosen-rufu*.

The Daishonin declares: "Can there be any doubt that...the great pure Law of the Lotus Sutra will be spread far and wide throughout Japan and all the other countries of Jambudvīpa [the entire world]?" (WND-1, 550). It is the mentors and disciples of Soka who have boldly embarked on this undertaking in the modern day, venturing forth to share their conviction and beliefs with others through one-to-one dialogue.

Ultimately, worldwide *kosen-rufu* begins with encouraging the person right in front of us. This is because the fundamental spirit of the Lotus Sutra is to enable all people to awaken to the supreme nobility of their own lives and allow them to freely tap the wisdom and power of their innate Buddhahood.

Among the members I met on my first visit to the United States in October 1960, five decades ago, were numerous Japanese women who married American men after World War II. The endless challenges and hardships of life in a new land left many of them so weary and disheartened that they longed to return home. I listened intently to their troubles and encouraged them wholeheartedly: "Don't envy others or belittle yourself. You have a great mission. From the perspective of Buddhism, you are more noble and important than any queen. Through faith, please bring the brilliant sun of happiness to shine in your heart." Many of these women responded by challenging themselves earnestly. Realizing the profound mission they had, they stood up resolutely. As Nichiren writes, "Then two, three, and a hundred followed, chanting [Nam-myoho-enge-kyo] and teaching others" (WND-1, 385). These women, Bodhisattvas of the Earth who were joined together by deep karmic ties, became the noble pioneers of worldwide *kosen-rufu*.

That first overseas trip in 1960 took me to the United States, Canada and Brazil over a period of 24 days. During that time, 17 districts were formed, along with chapters in Brazil and Los Angeles, as well as a general chapter for North and South America. These events were like tiny pebbles tossed into the vast ocean and went unnoticed by the world. But the first small ripples they created were the starting point for the countless waves now taking shape as a mighty groundswell for world peace based on Nichiren Buddhism.

In the half-century that has passed since then, we have built a vast network of rich diversity transcending national and ethnic boundaries and encompassing people from all walks of life. We have done so in the respectful and persevering spirit of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging, engaging in dialogue and offering encouragement to one person after another.

The remarkable growth and positive energy of the youth division in particular are a great source of joy and hope for members everywhere. The bright unity of our young women's division SGI Ikeda Kayo-kai is also beautiful and inspiring to see. Active in every part of the world—Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America, Oceania—the young men and women of the SGI are walking the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple with confidence and joy.

The Brazilian astronomer Dr. Ronaldo Mourão, with whom I have published a dialogue, remarked that an individual's innate potential can blossom in a much more vigorous form through the mentor-disciple relationship, and he said that he considered this the most correct "orbit" for human beings to travel.

The life-to-life bond we share with our mentor in faith and the character building we gain through putting our mentor's teachings into practice enable us to grow, break out of the narrow confines of our ego, transform our karma and achieve brilliant victories in our communities and societies.

For many decades, through my annual SGI Day peace proposals and in various other forums, I have continuously urged the importance of eliminating nuclear weapons—my mentor's fervent wish and final injunction. Today, there is a new global momentum for peace, for a world free of nuclear weapons. I believe this is a sign that our planet is beginning to move in the direction of making this a century of life and peace—a goal that the SGI has long worked toward.

There are still many challenges facing humankind, but the key to solving all our problems—whether it be building a secure and lasting peace, protecting our environment or overcoming economic difficulties—is to cast off apathy and preconceived notions that lead us to view a situation as unsolvable or unavoidable. It is my firm belief that problems caused by human beings can be solved by human beings.

We need to tap and develop the infinite potential within our lives and put it to use for the happiness of humanity. The philosophy of the SGI is a philosophy of hope and courage that makes this possible. It is a philosophy of compassion that offers a way to genuine happiness for all people.

It is important that we foster the youth. While doing our utmost to raise young successors, let us all take on every challenge with a fresh, vibrant, ever-youthful spirit and achieve an expansive, confident life-state of complete fulfillment.

My wife and I pray with all our hearts that each of you, our precious fellow members, will be protected by the heavenly deities, enjoy boundless benefit and good fortune, and be safe and secure in the coming year.

Our proud mission as members of the SGI is the realization of *kosen-rufu* and world peace. With that in mind, let's make each day one of "dynamic development" and "total victory"!

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