

# SGI NEWSLETTER

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## **SGI President Ikeda's Poem**

*The following is an abridged version of a long poem SGI President Ikeda dedicated to the men's and women's district leaders, with profound appreciation and respect.*

### **An Ode to District Leaders—The Front-runners of Kosen-rufu <Part 1 [of 3]>**

By Shin'ichi Yamamoto<sup>1</sup>

We are filled  
with the deepest pride.

For we are building  
a magnificent citadel  
of hope and truth  
more splendid than that  
of any monarch or ruler.

We have an incomparable  
sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

Because we are living our lives  
in accord  
with the great law of the universe—  
a law that  
even the most brilliant scholars  
cannot fathom.

And because we are striving tirelessly  
for world peace  
and the happiness of humanity.

Those who lack a guiding purpose  
are easily swayed;  
unknowingly they may lose sight

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<sup>1</sup> Shin'ichi Yamamoto is a pen name of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

of the difference between  
right and wrong, good and evil.

Dedicated to a great vow,  
our lives always brim  
with shining joy!

For we are surrounded by  
the love and appreciation  
of hardworking, ordinary people  
and showered with  
eternal accolades  
from the heavens—  
all far surpassing the adulation  
enjoyed by celebrities.

O how noble you are,  
as you work and strive to realize  
the goal of kosen-rufu  
true to the Buddha's instructions!

The Great Teacher Dengyo  
hailed those who seek  
and courageously practice  
the correct teaching and doctrines  
as the "treasure of the nation."  
Likewise, he said,  
those who exert themselves  
in a single corner of the land  
illuminate a thousand miles,  
and this qualifies them also  
as the "treasure of the nation."<sup>2</sup>

This holds true  
even today.  
You are without a doubt  
the foremost "treasure of the nation"  
and "treasure of the world."

Worthy men's district leaders  
and noble women's district leaders!  
How beautiful and admirable you are

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<sup>2</sup> Dengyo, *The Regulations for Students of the Mountain School*.

as you earnestly emulate  
the Buddha's behavior!

True happiness  
is not found in wealth  
or gaining social status;  
nor is it found  
in the superficial trappings  
of popularity or celebrity.

“It is the heart that is important”<sup>3</sup>—  
this is the most essential truth of Buddhism.  
This is the fundamental principle  
of life and of human existence.

Nichiren Daishonin declared  
with affection and sternness  
to a disciple striving valiantly  
in Suruga Province<sup>4</sup>:  
“I entrust you  
with the propagation of Buddhism  
in your province.”<sup>5</sup>

He placed his confidence  
not in a priest  
but a lay leader.  
He put his faith  
not in a powerful figure far away  
but in a person of upright character  
residing in the local community.

Undertaking this mission  
set forth by the Daishonin,  
you are playing a pivotal role  
as district leaders.  
Your actions are those of Buddhas,  
praiseworthy beyond measure.

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<sup>3</sup> WND-1, 1000.

<sup>4</sup> Part of present-day Shizuoka Prefecture.

<sup>5</sup> WND-1, 1117.

All of you  
are Bodhisattvas of the Earth,  
who have been entrusted  
with “your province”—  
or, in today’s terms,  
“your district”—  
directly by the Buddha  
of the Latter Day.

The Daishonin also says:  
“In this defiled age,  
you should always talk together  
and never cease to pray  
[to attain enlightenment].”<sup>6</sup>

With strict compassion,  
he clearly states  
that the more turbulent and  
troubled the times,  
the more important it is  
for his disciples to gather together  
and talk with each other.

Encourage one another,  
he urges, and  
together triumphantly attain  
Buddhahood in this lifetime,  
together victoriously achieve  
kosen-rufu!

This is the essence  
of the harmonious body of believers,  
many in body but one in mind—  
so declared the Daishonin,  
solemnly leaving his words behind  
for posterity.

Our citadel of Soka  
perfectly embodies  
this fundamental teaching of Buddhism—  
a citadel in which

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<sup>6</sup> WND-1, 449.

our dependable  
men's district leaders  
and our beloved  
women's district leaders  
shine as the leading lights.

The German poet Goethe,  
who made such a fine  
and vibrant contribution  
to his own tempestuous times, said:  
“Stand firm where you are—  
a maxim . . . more  
necessary than ever.”<sup>7</sup>

I have loved this quote  
since my youth.  
When I shared it  
with my mentor Josei Toda,  
he declared that it resonated  
with the spirit of Buddhism.

Mr. Toda said:  
“We live in a tumultuous age,  
in do-or-die times.  
Those who build  
a solid foundation  
will succeed.  
Those who strengthen  
their local areas  
will triumph.  
This is an iron rule;  
it is the unvarying law  
for survival.”

He also said:  
“Without steady effort,  
nothing great can be achieved.  
Without steady effort,  
an invincible citadel cannot be built.”

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<sup>7</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, translated by Elisabeth Stopp, edited by Peter Hutchinson (London: Penguin Books, 1998), no. 549, pp. 72–73.

I, a youth at the time,  
fully agreed,  
and engraved his words  
in my heart.

Day after day,  
rain or shine,  
you continue to carry out the most  
essential and down-to-earth tasks  
of your mission.

Even if your efforts go unnoticed,  
even if you encounter slander and abuse,  
even if you receive no word of praise,  
you continue to brim with hope  
and staunchly press forward,  
one step at a time,  
actively advancing  
our movement for kosen-rufu,  
just as the Daishonin teaches.

The innumerable protective forces  
of the universe  
will definitely protect you.  
The Buddhas and bodhisattvas  
of the three existences and ten directions  
will surely laud you.  
That is the Daishonin's firm promise.

In this age of the Latter Day of the Law,  
an evil age defiled by the five impurities,<sup>8</sup>  
we are,  
you are,  
striving and practicing correctly,  
faithful to the Buddha's words.

It is no one else.  
Not priests  
nor slaves to status and prestige.  
It is none but you.

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<sup>8</sup> Five impurities: The impurities of the age, of desire, of living beings, of view, and of life span. They are mentioned in the "Expedient Means" (2nd) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

You are setting  
a shining example  
of the great Buddhist principle  
of faith manifesting in one's practice.

You are unerringly following  
the same way of the Law  
as the Buddha.

Benefit in faith  
is not determined  
by one's organizational position.

Benefit  
will clearly accrue  
to those who strive in faith  
correctly and steadfastly,  
courageously and earnestly,  
in accord with the Daishonin's teachings.

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Buddhism  
solemnly teaches us  
how to live correctly  
as human beings.  
It fully reveals  
the correct path—  
and, indeed, the law—  
of human life.

We must never stray from this path  
and lose sight of  
the most important human quality  
of recognizing and repaying  
our debts of gratitude.

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The people need  
to become wise  
and courageous,

and form an alliance  
dedicated to good  
that can eliminate  
all corruption and injustice.

“Since the Law is wonderful,  
the person is worthy of respect;  
since the person is worthy of respect,  
the land is sacred.”<sup>9</sup>

The priesthood,  
in wild delusion,  
arrogant and authoritarian,  
sought to cut off  
and destroy the Gakkai,  
which is propagating  
this great Law far and wide.

Exploiting Buddhism  
for impure ends,  
the priests degenerated into  
vile, money-hungry,  
Law-devouring demons,  
ruled by the world of Hell.

No matter what the times,  
our noble districts  
are a source of inspiration—  
the eternal starting point  
of all our victories  
for kosen-rufu.  
Our warm, friendly districts  
are ever-victorious families  
contributing positively  
to their communities.

Cuban independence hero José Martí  
stressed the vital importance  
of being thoroughly familiar  
with the area under one’s responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> WND-1, 1097.

<sup>10</sup> José Martí, *The America of José Martí: Selected Writings of José Martí*, translated by Juan de Onís (New York: The Noonday Press, 1954), p. 187.



We must care deeply  
about our local areas.  
Victory is impossible  
if we forget this point.

My long meeting  
and shared dialogue  
with Cuban President  
Fidel Castro  
remain with me  
a vivid memory.

Today, in Cuba,  
I am pleased to say,  
a new district has been born,  
dedicated to promoting  
peace, culture, and education  
based on the Daishonin's Buddhism.

David Rossi, hero of *The Eternal City*,  
a novel I studied with Mr. Toda,  
called for the establishment  
of a "Republic of Man . . .  
first here and then there."<sup>11</sup>

Striving for the continued  
positive growth of our Soka districts  
is the surest path to transforming  
the troubled history of the human race.

[*To be continued*]

(Translated from the February 22, 2007, issue of the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai daily newspaper)

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<sup>11</sup> Hall Caine, *The Eternal City* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), p. 177.

# SGI NEWSLETTER

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Published by  
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Friday, April 20, 2007

## **SGI President Ikeda's Poem**

*The following is an abridged version of a long poem SGI President Ikeda dedicated to men's and women's district leaders, with profound appreciation and respect.*

### **An Ode to District Leaders—The Front-runners of Kosen-rufu <Part 2 [of 3]>**

By Shin'ichi Yamamoto<sup>1</sup>

I, too, in my youth  
fought hard  
as a men's district leader,  
and my wife  
strove wholeheartedly  
as a women's district leader.

On that sunny May 3 of 1951,  
having triumphed over all obstacles  
through the shared struggle  
of mentor and disciple,  
Mr. Toda was inaugurated  
as the second president  
of the Soka Gakkai.

At that time,  
I, his disciple, was appointed  
the leader of Omori District,  
Kamata Chapter, in my hometown.

I vowed to achieve  
Mr. Toda's cherished goal  
of 750,000 member households.  
While continuing single-handedly  
to support his business enterprises,

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<sup>1</sup> Shin'ichi Yamamoto is a pen name of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

I launched a fresh groundswell  
for kosen-rufu  
from the front lines of my district,  
sharing my mentor's resolve.

I was utterly determined  
to be a district leader  
directly connected to my mentor.

As a young man,  
I wrote in my diary:  
“Sensei, . . . I will definitely  
make our district advance.”<sup>2</sup>  
“I keep worrying about Omori District.  
Will pray to the Gohonzon  
for it to become a perfect district.”<sup>3</sup>  
“Our district must also try its best. . . .  
In any case, I myself must strive,  
I must be responsible.”<sup>4</sup>

Day after day,  
I began to create a history  
of unforgettable struggle  
in the district  
for the sake of kosen-rufu.

I was fully aware  
that the district  
is the Gakkai's  
most crucial linchpin.

The district  
is the central foundation  
of the entire organization.  
I knew  
that the district,  
though ordinary and everyday,  
was all-important—

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<sup>2</sup> Daisaku Ikeda, *A Youthful Diary: One Man's Journey from the Beginning of Faith to Worldwide Leadership for Peace* (Santa Monica, CA: World Tribune Press, 2000), p. 109. (April 29, 1951)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113. (May 25, 1951)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109. (April 27, 1951)

that it was the place  
that we most earnestly  
needed to support and protect.

Mr. Toda also knew this well.  
As mentor and disciple,  
we were always perfectly in tune;  
we were deeply united.

In his *Orally Transmitted Teachings*,  
the Daishonin discusses  
the term “lion’s roar.”  
“Lion” is written  
with the Chinese characters  
for teacher and child.  
They respectively indicate the Mystic Law  
as it is passed on by the teacher and  
as it is received by the disciples.  
Thus the “lion’s roar,”  
is the sound of teacher and disciples  
chanting the Mystic Law in unison.<sup>5</sup>

Some senior leaders  
arrogantly disparaged  
the position of district leader.  
When Mr. Toda learned of this,  
he was outraged:  
“Aren’t our districts  
the vital core  
working hardest  
to support the Gakkai?!”

Both Mr. Toda and I  
deeply appreciated and  
often discussed the fact  
that districts,  
the unseen, unheralded  
pillars of the Gakkai,  
face the greatest challenges

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. OTT, 111.

of any level of the organization.

The districts  
are like the lower back of the body.  
They are the key foundation  
for our continued survival,  
for our continued activity,  
for our continued success.

Serving also as  
a group leader in Meguro—  
the equivalent of today's  
women's district leader—  
my wife devoted herself earnestly  
to Gakkai activities,  
taking along our three small children—  
two holding her hands  
and one strapped to her back.  
This is one of our family's  
everlasting "memories  
of our present life  
in this human world."<sup>6</sup>

I never gave any heed  
to those who were arrogant  
and filled with self-importance  
at being leaders.  
I just got on with my life;  
I fought tirelessly and won,  
making the spirit of Mr. Toda  
my own.

When leaders are domineering  
and authoritarian,  
it points to their lack of faith.  
Compassion  
and caring for others  
are the heart of Buddhism.  
Leaders should be such that  
members feel they can trust them

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. WND-1, 64.

and seek guidance from them  
with complete confidence.

Leaders must never  
berate or intimidate others,  
or adopt an unpleasant, haughty attitude.  
Such leaders are certain to incur  
the negative effects of their actions.

During the Gakkai's long history,  
those leaders who were  
supercilious and overbearing  
eventually departed.  
They experienced hellish suffering  
and later deeply regretted their actions,  
sadly trailing in our wake.

Even now,  
the fighting spirit  
of a men's district leader  
courses in my veins.  
At all times,  
the dedicated spirit  
of a women's district leader  
beats within my wife's heart.

My wife and I  
are always and forever  
one and united with  
the hardworking district leaders,  
who are the Gakkai's pivotal core.  
This is our greatest  
honor and pride  
in this lifetime.

During World War II,  
my four older brothers  
were drafted and sent to  
China and Southeast Asia  
to fight in the war.

My eldest brother

was sent to Burma,<sup>7</sup>  
where he died in the fighting.  
He was 29 years old.

When the war ended,  
discharged soldiers in Japan,  
shouldering heavy loads,  
made their way directly  
to their homes.

But another year or two passed  
before my three brothers,  
narrowly escaping with their lives,  
returned from across the seas  
to our family fold.

Viewed in light of  
the pain and wretchedness of war,  
how important is the presence  
of ordinary Gakkai members,  
who cherish an earnest wish for peace  
and make it their personal responsibility  
to realize that goal!  
Failing to value them  
represents a frightening degree  
of arrogance.

Ordinary Gakkai members  
are truly noble  
and precious.  
Leaders who look down on them  
or are arrogant toward them,  
are frauds who hold their positions  
under false pretenses;  
they demonstrate the spirit of  
the basest and most foolish sort of  
“robber of the Law.”

The English philosopher

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<sup>7</sup> Present-day Myanmar.

John Stuart Mill clearly stated:  
“Conduct, and conduct alone,  
entitles [one] to respect:  
. . . not what men are, but what they do,  
constitutes their claim to deference.”<sup>8</sup>

Your life,  
your faith,  
the strength of your practice,  
are not determined  
by your organizational position.  
Nothing is mightier or nobler  
than the fortitude of those  
exerting themselves on the front lines  
of the organization.

The reality  
of attaining Buddhahood  
shines there.  
There is no place  
in the Gakkai,  
or in the realm of Buddhism,  
for a high-handed, bureaucratic attitude.

Kwame Nkrumah,  
Ghana’s first president,  
who led his people  
in their struggle for independence,  
valued above all  
“the ability to communicate  
with the people.”<sup>9</sup>

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I always created  
an unstoppable momentum  
for kosen-rufu

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<sup>8</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1878), p. 157.

<sup>9</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 5.



from the district level.

This was true  
of the February Campaign  
of Kamata Chapter, too.  
I worked hard for kosen-rufu  
not only in the districts in Ota Ward,  
but also in the vibrant districts  
of Kawasaki across the Tama River.  
And I gave Gosho lectures  
in Kawagoe District,  
part of Shiki Chapter  
in Saitama Prefecture,  
setting in motion  
a new wave of progress.

The district was the catalyst  
for the remarkable advances  
we achieved in Bunkyo Chapter.  
Likewise, the tremendous strides we made  
in places such as Sapporo in Hokkaido  
and in Yamaguchi in the Chugoku region  
all followed this same formula.

The district is the starting point.  
The district is the driving force.  
The district is the main bastion.  
The district is the power source.  
The district is the lifeline.  
The district is the deciding point.

It was at the year's first  
district leaders meeting in 1956  
that I began to lead  
our great campaign in Kansai.

Taking to heart  
the Daishonin's injunction  
to pray "as earnestly as though  
to produce fire from damp wood,  
or to obtain water from parched ground,"<sup>10</sup>  
the Kansai members and I

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<sup>10</sup> WND-1, 444.

chanted daimoku at the Kansai Headquarters  
before the Gohonzon bearing the inscription  
“For the Prosperity of the Great Law  
and the Fulfillment of All Prayers.”  
We all united together  
on our fresh departure,  
determined to “employ  
the strategy of the Lotus Sutra  
before any other.”<sup>11</sup>

In the midst of our challenge  
that led to the golden achievement  
of introducing the Daishonin’s Buddhism  
to 11,111 new member households  
in a single month,  
one district held a kickoff meeting  
attended by 3,000 members  
at the Central Civic Hall  
in Osaka’s Nakanoshima area.

The men’s district leader declared:  
“The sleeping lion has risen!”  
Responding to that energetic spirit,  
I said: “The unity of lions  
is the greatest strength there is.”

Soka districts  
are gatherings of lions,  
are citadels of lions  
united in a shared cause.  
Their mission, therefore,  
is to strive, work, speak out, and win  
with lionlike courage.

In a letter to  
the lay nun Sennichi,  
who was striving earnestly  
on the front lines of kosen-rufu  
while supporting her comrades in faith,  
the Daishonin wrote that

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<sup>11</sup> WND-1, 1001.

when the lion king roars,  
his hundred cubs  
will feel emboldened,  
and the heads of all  
the beasts and birds of prey  
that seek to attack them  
will be split into seven pieces.<sup>12</sup>

The high-spirited voices  
of our district leaders  
have an invincible resonance,  
opening the way to victory  
in our struggle for truth.

You, our district leaders,  
have forged ahead valiantly  
through even the bitterest storms  
and most painful challenges,  
persevering undefeated.  
You have thoroughly protected  
the citadel of Soka,  
heir to the Buddha's decree,  
from the insidious  
“worms born of the lion's body.”<sup>13</sup>

Even after you hand over  
your positions to your juniors,  
the glorious history  
you have achieved  
during your time as district leaders  
will shine on forever  
as a brilliant badge of honor  
adorning not only your own lives  
but those of your descendents  
into the eternal future.

Buddhism is not some abstract theory.  
The principle of transforming places  
into Buddha lands  
is found in your determined efforts

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. WND-1, 949.

<sup>13</sup> WND-1, 302

to positively transform your communities.  
The principle of changing poison into medicine  
is found in your wholehearted encouragement,  
driven by the wish to bring happiness  
to those who are suffering.

Mr. Toda said:

“Thinking hard how best to spread the Law  
and help others become happy,  
pondering and racking one’s brains  
based on the correct teaching of Buddhism  
for the sake of the Law,  
for others’ welfare,  
and for kosen-rufu—  
there are no more wonderful concerns  
that could occupy one’s mind than these.  
They are the concerns of the Buddha,  
who seeks to lead all people to enlightenment.”

You are admirable humanistic leaders,  
treasuring each person  
and once again today taking  
thoughtful and careful  
action for the development  
of our movement.

Our sincerity and  
honest concern for people,  
our desire for their happiness  
and our belief in their potential,  
are what inspires people to action.  
This is Buddhism.

“What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s  
profound respect for people signify?  
The purpose of the appearance in this world  
of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings,  
lies in his behavior as a human being.”<sup>14</sup>

You, the district leaders,

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<sup>14</sup> WND-1, 852.

are the ones  
who are practicing  
the heart of this teaching.

Paying no heed  
to know-it-all opinions,  
undaunted by others'  
irresponsible indifference,  
I hasten to where I'm needed most,  
plunging into the midst  
of the fiercest struggle,  
fighting with joy and courage.

To transform the negative cycle  
of ordinary people  
suffering at the hands of destiny,  
to transform the history of the people  
oppressed by authoritarian powers—  
raise high the victory banner  
of kosen-rufu without fail  
in the place of your mission  
that you have sought  
since the eternal past!

[*To be continued*]

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# SGI NEWSLETTER

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Wednesday, May 9, 2007

## *SGI President Ikeda's Poem*

*The following is an abridged version of a long poem SGI President Ikeda dedicated to men's and women's district leaders, with profound appreciation and respect.*

### **An Ode to District Leaders—The Front-runners of Kosen-rufu <Part 3 [of 3]>**

By Shin'ichi Yamamoto<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Toda declared:

“The Soka Gakkai  
is an organization  
of the highest good.  
We must therefore win  
without fail.  
I'd like you to triumph.  
I'd like you to lead lives  
of eternal victory and glory.”

Our kosen-rufu movement,  
not only in Japan,  
but all around the world,  
is advancing dynamically,  
centered on the efforts  
of our district leaders.  
In countries everywhere,  
district leaders  
stand in the vanguard  
and open the way forward.

One women's district leader in Africa  
has served as a vice minister  
of the national government.  
Another elsewhere has served

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<sup>1</sup> Shin'ichi Yamamoto is a pen name of SGI President Daisaku Ikeda.

as her country's ambassador  
to the United Nations.  
And still another in America  
has served as the chair  
of a national association  
for public hospitals.

Also in America,  
a world-class jazz artist  
and a former sports star  
are active as men's district leaders.

The district  
is an oasis of equality and friendship.  
It is a realm  
without airs or pretensions.  
Buddhism teaches the innate  
dignity of our life—  
“inherent, unadorned,  
just as it originally is.”<sup>2</sup>

The French philosopher Montaigne noted  
that great-souled individuals  
are relaxed and approachable,  
which is most honorable  
and befitting.<sup>3</sup>

Truly noble are those  
who remain natural and sincere,  
sharing happiness and sorrow  
as well as the joy of victory,  
with the honest, down-to-earth,  
ordinary people.

In the “Expedient Means” chapter  
of the Lotus Sutra  
that we recite each morning and evening,  
there is the phrase “*ekka shushin*,”

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<sup>2</sup> GZ, 759.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, translated and edited by M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 1259.

meaning “able to delight  
the hearts of the assembly.”<sup>4</sup>  
When you fill everyone’s hearts  
with delight,  
charge their spirits  
with hope,  
and infuse them  
with vitality and enthusiasm,  
the momentum of our movement  
dedicated to highest good  
grows and multiplies.

The microbiologist René Dubos,  
with whom I conducted a dialogue  
at Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee’s suggestion, said:  
“Optimism and cheerfulness  
are true social virtues. . . .  
The best insurance against bad circumstances  
is to take life with a smile.”<sup>5</sup>

The smiles  
of the women’s and  
young women’s members  
are so important,  
so wonderful.

Women must be accorded  
the highest praise and respect;  
failing to do so hinders kosen-rufu  
and violates the spirit of Buddhism.

And the bright voices  
raised in song  
of the youth and  
future division members  
are very important, too.  
How inspiring is that sound!

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. LS2, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Translated from French. René Dubos, *Choisir d’être humain: essai* (Choices That Make Us Human: Essays) (Paris: Editions Denoël, 1974), pp. 204–5.



We must foster our juniors  
with the greatest respect;  
failing to do so will prevent  
the eternal perpetuation of the Law  
and put an end to the flow  
of the correct teaching of Buddhism.

The “Parable of the Phantom City” chapter  
of the Lotus Sutra states that  
as the Buddha was about to attain enlightenment,  
flowers rained down from the heavens,  
and a fragrant wind blew from time to time  
to sweep away the withered blossoms,  
whereupon new ones would rain down.<sup>6</sup>

The realm of Soka  
is always perfumed by the breezes  
of eternity, happiness, true self, and purity,  
which dispel all apathy and stagnation  
and promote the blossoming  
of vibrant flowers  
of happiness, creative talent, and victory.

It doesn't matter  
how many people  
come to a district meeting.  
There's no need to feel bad  
if attendance is low.

If you are able to form a strong bond  
of deep shared commitment  
with even one or two members who attend,  
it is the same as if hundreds  
or thousands had come.

If you treat the district level lightly,  
you're missing the most basic  
and crucial point.  
Only when you make  
the district your foundation

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<sup>6</sup> LS7, 119.

can you set forth  
into the realm  
of limitless possibilities.

Thinkers from around the globe  
who have attended  
our friendly, high-spirited  
district discussion meetings  
all express  
their sincere admiration.

Peace scholar  
Dr. Elise Boulding,  
who has been dedicated to  
building a culture of peace,  
highly praised  
the activities of Soka women  
contributing to their communities,  
saying: “I have long believed  
that a wholesome, peaceful world  
is possible if we devote all-out effort  
to the development of each member  
of the community.”<sup>7</sup>

You are beacons of hope  
breaking through  
the pervasive darkness of our times  
and illuminating your communities.

Sociologist of religion  
Dr. Bryan Wilson,  
with whom I published a dialogue,  
cited the positive attributes of the SGI as:  
liberation from clerical authority,  
ideals firmly rooted in daily life,  
a practice dedicated to the happiness  
of self and others,  
and the affirmation of benefit  
in this present existence.

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<sup>7</sup> From the dialogue between Dr. Boulding and President Ikeda, which has been published in Japanese under the title *Heiwa no Bunka no Kagayaku Seiki e* (Toward a Brilliant Century of a Culture of Peace). The dialogue has not yet been published in English.

He also observed that  
members living in the same community  
encourage and support each other  
through such gatherings as  
the discussion meeting,  
and that the SGI is open to society  
instead of closed  
in its own religious shell.

Our districts  
are creating and presenting  
an inspiring cutting-edge model  
of 21st-century communities  
to the world.

We are all human beings;  
no one is superior to anyone else,  
nor should they be.  
Our districts  
are places of hope  
where people can shine  
with true human dignity  
and happiness.

The joyful reverberations  
of our districts  
are spreading out  
powerfully and deeply  
from local communities  
to the global community,  
from neighbors and friends  
to the world's great intellects.

Mahatma Gandhi remained hopeful  
that the spirit of service to one's neighbors  
“would spread like the proverbial snowball  
gathering strength in geometrical progression,  
encircling the whole earth.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1995), vol. 87, p. 26.

The districts  
are openhearted families.  
The districts  
are the community itself.  
The districts  
are places of human solidarity,  
where friends and neighbors  
can also join in freely  
and unreservedly,  
sharing in conversation  
and our circle of mutual support.

When the districts  
advance vigorously and triumph,  
the community itself  
will also be enlivened,  
enjoying unfailing growth and prosperity.

I hope that you,  
our men's and women's district leaders—  
dealing with pressures from above  
and demands from below  
and confidently striving  
to spread understanding  
for our movement in society—  
will take pride in the fact  
that you are also carrying out  
the most important endeavor  
of your own personal human revolution.

The challenges are surely many,  
but please be confident  
that each day dedicated  
to positive change  
is leading you toward  
wonderful happiness and glory  
that will forever adorn your life.

Please be proud that  
your deep, persevering faith  
will become an eternal source of victory  
throughout the three existences.

I would like all of our members  
in every part of our organization  
to unite in a shared pledge  
that no individual  
who has never personally undertaken  
the struggles and challenges  
of a men's or women's district leader  
will ever be allowed to be appointed  
as a future top leader of kosen-rufu.

Ordinary, hardworking leaders  
of the people,  
not petty, conceited,  
arrogant leaders!  
Leaders who live  
and strive all out  
among the people!

These are  
genuine leaders of faith.  
These are  
our men's and women's  
district leaders,  
as well as our men's and women's  
chapter leaders,  
who support our organization.

If, as a top leader,  
you cannot value and respect  
these frontline leaders,  
you are not a true Gakkai leader  
dedicated to kosen-rufu.

I want everyone  
to remember this essential point.  
This is the spirit  
of first Soka Gakkai president  
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi  
and the stern view  
of second Soka Gakkai president  
Josei Toda.

Now is the time  
for all leaders  
to go out to the districts,  
to learn from the districts,  
to listen to the districts,  
to unite in action  
together with the districts,  
to stir up a groundswell of victory  
from the districts!

Talking self-importantly  
and offering guidance  
to great crowds of members  
at big meetings  
isn't what matters.  
That's just performing.

\*

Mr. Toda outlined the keys  
to a growing organization—  
first,  
“advancing with the unity  
of ‘many in body, one in mind’  
and a beautiful camaraderie,”  
and second,  
“each person overflowing  
with the Gakkai spirit  
based on unshakable pride  
and confidence  
in being a Gakkai member.”

United men's and women's  
vice district leaders!  
Noble frontline men's and women's  
group leaders!  
Young men's and women's district leaders,  
our brilliant successors!  
Launch a fresh advance  
with wonderful unity  
from your districts!

The day before  
my second address  
at Harvard University,<sup>9</sup>  
my wife and I visited  
the local center of district activities,  
situated near the house where  
President John F. Kennedy was born.

I bestowed the name  
“President District”  
on this community  
of SGI members.  
Everyone was happy.  
Deeply touched,  
they applauded  
and cheered.

You  
are the presidents  
of republics of humanity,  
each in the chosen place  
of your mission.  
You are brilliant conductors  
of symphony orchestras of happiness.

You are the foremost envoys  
of good-neighborliness.  
You are rectors  
of humanistic education.  
You are the bright builders  
of peace and prosperity  
throughout the land  
based on the Law.

In high spirits  
once again today,  
please forge your districts  
into eternal citadels,  
among the people,  
together with the people,  
for the sake of the people!

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<sup>9</sup> In September 1993.

Noble heroes of kosen-rufu!  
Monarchs of the people  
who possess a profound mission!  
Take care of your health!

Enveloped in immeasurable benefit,  
fulfill your vow of this existence!  
You are certain to enjoy the protection  
of the Buddhas and heavenly deities.

Champions of the people,  
wondrous and exalted,  
who chant and propagate  
the Mystic Law!  
How overjoyed  
the Daishonin must be!

Win victory after victory  
in your district,  
spreading Buddhism  
to the best of your ability  
and enjoying great benefit.

February 20, 2007

Mentor-Disciple Hall  
Soka Gakkai Headquarters

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