

A Ray of Light

What is being young all about? SGI President Ikeda tells Soka University students at their entrance ceremony that it's about finding 'a ray of light amid struggles and lighting one's life with hope.'

Congratulations to all the new students! And congratulations to your families!

I respectfully ask the faculty and staff to do everything possible to support and encourage these young men and women, who are as dear to me as if they were my own sons and daughters. Please be strict with them in their studies, and look after them with genuine warmth.

On April 5, 1919, just prior to returning to China from his studies in Japan, the 21-year-old Zhou Enlai composed the following poem. He was gazing on the cherry blossoms in Kyoto's Arashiyama Park in the rain:

*The drizzle rustles in deepening mist.
Suddenly a sunbeam stabs the clouds,
The more enchanting for its unexpectedness.
Numberless truths
Lodge in the world's complexity.
The more I search, the more confused.
Then in the haze
I see a spark, bright and clear,
So much more beautiful for its suddenness.*

Here is the image of a youth seeking the truth underlying all phenomena. But the more he looks for it, the less clear it becomes. When amid the fog he suddenly perceives a point of light, he is struck by life's wonder. His experience is like a ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds.

Youth is a time of anxiety, a period of constant trial and error. It means to find a ray of light amid such struggles and lighting one's life with hope.

Learning is the quest for the light of truth.

Zhou Enlai once said: "As young people we should rejoice that we are living in these great and turbulent times. It is in such times that we make progress through learning and grow strong through tempering."

These are uncertain times for Japan and the world. As we go forward, the turbulence is likely to increase. And this is what makes life interesting.

Because Soka University is dedicated to peace promotion, it has to grapple with difficult challenges and the envy of others. But this is exactly what enables us to grow and develop. This is what will make us strong.

The cherry trees on campus are now in full bloom. Cherry trees are beautiful because they blossom in the way most natural to them. I hope all of you will likewise always stay true to yourselves and cultivate rich, enduring, wonderful lives.

The important thing is to hold firm to your beliefs without being influenced or swayed by what others do or say. Those who live this way are strong and free of regret. What matters most is how you lead your life — not what those around you are doing.

Today, you embark on your university life. Here is where your real studies begin, where

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the true challenge of learning and scholarship starts. While it is of course important that you take care of your health, I hope that you will devote yourselves wholeheartedly to your studies.

Victory or defeat comes down to tenacity and earnestness. It is impossible to succeed in this endeavor without steadfast effort.

Giving It All You've Got

I recently presented one of my books to my esteemed friend Dr. Qian Weichang, chancellor of Shanghai University, who is with us today. I intended to include in the dedication I wrote a saying by Confucius: "The wise are joyful; the good live long." While this can be interpreted in various ways, it basically means that a person of wisdom can live joyfully, unimpeded by changing times, and that a person of virtue and character will be calm and unwavering, this contributing to his or her longevity.

Before I could inscribe the dedication, however, I learned to my great surprise that Dr. Qian had chosen the exact same words for some calligraphy he wrote for me. So, instead of a passage from Confucius, I took the liberty of quoting Dr. Qian himself — the words that he used to conclude his autobiography: "Advance tirelessly." In other words, move forward without stopping. Give all you've got to the task at hand.

Dr. Qian, who is 85, has vigorously exerted himself throughout his life with just this spirit. He is still doing so today, serving as vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a position that carries heavy responsibility on a national level. Just the other day, in fact, a proposal of Dr. Qian's for the construction of a sports facility and other civic projects was reported in the People's Daily, China's largest newspaper.

Incidentally, Dr. Qian's wife, Madame Kong Xiangying, is a 75th-generation descendant of Confucius. And Dr. Qian's family can trace its lineage to Qian Liu, the first ruler of the kingdom of Wuyue, which was situated in the area of Jiangnan, just south of the Yangtse River. His grandfather and father were both educators, and his uncle, Dr. Qian Mu, was a great master of the Chinese Classics.

On account of the unstable political situation in China during his childhood and his family's meager resources, Dr. Qian had to change elementary schools four or five times and could only attend junior high school for two years. Moreover, immediately after he entered high school, his father passed away due to illness at age 39. The following year, Dr. Qian's younger brother also died. Consequently, there were many days when he was unable to attend classes.

Determined not to be defeated by such adversity, the young Dr. Qian studied with all his might and was admitted to Beijing's prestigious Qinghua University. Immediately after he began his university studies, though, the brutal invasion of China by the Japanese military commenced on Sept. 18, 1931, triggered by the Manchurian Incident.

Something Truly Sublime About Youth

A person of courage and justice, Dr. Qian's heart blazed with indignation. Deeply concerned, he asked himself what kind of knowledge was most needed to make his country strong, to protect and help his compatriots.

He determined to study science and technology. Once he reached this decision, he lost no time switching his major from Chinese studies to science and engineering, and was accepted to his school's highly competitive physics department.

His decision was based not on self-interest but on the desire to do something for his

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country. Many Japanese today are motivated almost exclusively by what they can gain for their personal benefit.

Together with Dr. Qian, Madame Kong, then also a student of Qinghua University in Chinese studies, dauntlessly threw herself into the student movement opposing the Japanese. There is something truly sublime about dedicating one's youth to achieving a noble mission.

In his late 20s, Dr. Qian studied abroad, spending a total of six years in Canada, where he earned his doctorate, and the United States. Working in applied mathematics, he developed a landmark theory known as the Qian Weichang Equation. At one point, he did research with Linus Pauling, and his work rocket engineering helped lay the groundwork for the Apollo space project.

His achievements are widely acknowledged. I hope each of you will create a similarly remarkable history with a courage and energy befitting youth!

A Roof, a Pillar, a Foundation

Dr. Qian could well have remained in North America and continued his research at the world's most advanced facilities, in a highly conducive environment. But he gave all this up and returned to China, which was then rife with turmoil.

He wanted to share in the sufferings and joys of his beloved compatriots while contributing to Chinese science and technology. He was not one to play it safe and seek favorable circumstances just for himself.

My spirit is the same. I don't give any thought to myself.

Withstanding all, I have striven to protect and support my fellow members and the common people — as a roof, a pillar, a foundation. That is the sole purpose of my existence. I hope you will remember this.

On his return to China in 1946, Dr. Qian found his homeland devastated almost beyond recognition. His former university, which the Japanese had turned into an army hospital, was in shambles. He quietly set to work cleaning the buildings and laboriously making repairs. So his struggles began.

What nobility! These days, how many people would go to such lengths? Back in China, his life was filled with suffering. Still, he never complained or felt any regret about his decision.

Dr. Qian exemplifies the saying "A great person is selfless." Premier Zhou Enlai also implicitly trusted Dr. Qian, frequently inviting him to his home in the Zhongnanhai area of Beijing and engaging him in lengthy discussions. Dr. Qian participated in a number of scientific projects directed by Premier Zhou and made invaluable contributions to China's artificial satellites and other advanced technology.

But those who make history are bound to meet persecution. When he was in his mid-40s, Dr. Qian was branded a counterrevolutionary and subjected to abuse and attack. He was suddenly stripped of his duties and banned from all public activity.

Meticulous Concern for Others

This was all reportedly due to the base scheming of those jealous of Dr. Qian's remarkable achievements and the trust placed in him by Premier Zhou.

Human society is wrought with jealousy. On every level. Despite — or rather, because of — his incredible honesty, integrity and diligence, Dr. Qian was persecuted. Such attacks are inevitably based on lies and spring from envy. This is a pattern that we see repeated

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time and again.

Einstein once commented on the hideously jealous nature of Hitler, describing him as “bursting with envy and bitterness against all whom circumstance and nature had favored over him.”

China was next ravaged by the storm of the Cultural Revolution. All told, the malicious persecution of Dr. Qian and his family went on for 26 years. Yet, even while enduring this unrelenting adversity, Dr. Qian, with the his wife’s support, carried on his research with an intrepid spirit, never growing pessimistic or despondent, always working for the people.

This shows his true greatness. His dignified countenance exudes virtue.

Premier Zhou encouraged Dr. Qian throughout his ordeal. I feel the deepest respect for them both. Out of sincere concern for the scientist, Premier Zhou would invite Dr. Qian, who was prohibited from participating in most public activities, to attend meetings he had with important foreign dignitaries.

The year before he died, Premier Zhou asked Dr. Qian about his research on making more efficient batteries. This was a project that Dr. Qian had mentioned to him three years earlier, yet Premier Zhou never forgot it. To the very last, he watched over and encouraged the beleaguered scientist.

Remembering things about a person is an expression of compassion and concern. Forgetfulness shows a lack of compassion, a lack of responsibility.

Premier Zhou, while battling the machinations of the notorious Gang of Four and struggling with illness, maintained his tremendous sincerity and continued to show meticulous concern for others. It was around that time that I met him. The date was Dec. 5, 1974.

How does one heart touch another? I saw with my own eyes Premier Zhou’s humanism. Haughty, arrogant people cannot win the hearts of others. Such people lack humanity. They have no hearts.

With an ardent spirit, Premier Zhou entrusted the future to the younger generation. My spirit is the same.

Dr. Qian once called out to a class of new students: “Study will give you a weapon; it will solidify your direction.... I hope that when you complete your studies, you will work to relieve the people’s hardships.” People usually say things like “Study hard, so that you can get into a good company.” Instead, Dr. Qian urged students to study toward helping suffering people. This is a sign of his nobility.

Studying is your tool, your key to the future. It is your right.

The Star of the Unconquered Will

In the Analects of Confucius, we also find the words “My doctrine has one single thread running through it.” This was the Chinese philosopher’s declaration that his life was dedicated to a single cause. Today, I say to all of you: Live your life with unwavering determination!

Members of the 28th class of Soka University and the 14th class of the Soka Women’s College: With this spirit, may you live true to yourselves, and advance along the path you have chosen to follow in your youth. Never cease moving forward!

Since we have with us today a number of guests from the United States, I present you with the poem “The Light of Stars” by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,

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Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.

•••

Oh, fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

I pray for the excellent health and longevity of Dr. Qian and Madame Kong, treasures of humankind, and for the eternal glory of Shanghai University.
Xie xie (thank you).

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