

HIGHLIGHTS AND INSIGHTS

Never Give Up On Your Dreams

SGI President Ikeda's comments excerpted from a recent message to the Nurses Group in Japan.

- On June 16, 1963, at 12:30 in the afternoon, Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel into space.... Before becoming an astronaut, Ms. Tereshkova was an ordinary young woman who worked in a textile mill. Only by courageously challenging all the hurdles before her and enduring the rigorous physical training was she finally able to become an astronaut and realize her dream of flying into outer space.

A weak, defeatist attitude of simply giving up if things didn't work out was alien to her. She confessed that she was never one who could bear to sit on the beach waiting idly for good weather; she believed that you had to fight for the future and bravely overcome all difficulties.

- I am certain that all of you face many challenges in your daily lives.... However, I am confident that all of your present hardships and exertions — though perhaps many times in excess of those of the average person — will all definitely become a source of compassion and strength that will enable you to warmly embrace and work for the happiness of many others.

- When you perform morning and evening gongyo, you access a vast and lofty life-state of freedom — one that could be likened to traveling unhindered throughout the universe and commanding a breathtaking view of its infinite expanse. By working together harmoniously with your fellow members dedicated to realizing the Buddha's will and decree, you are all moving along the great orbit of eternal happiness and tranquillity, for yourselves, for your families and for all humankind.

Empowering the People

- Kosen-rufu is a movement to awaken and empower the people, and to make them the protagonists of society. It is a truly democratic movement. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai once remarked, "The reason I place such importance on the Soka Gakkai is that it was born from the people and makes the people its foundation."

The people must watch over and direct the actions of their leaders. If they cannot unite and act together for the good of the country, democracy will most definitely come to an end. In other words, the development of the people holds the key to everything.

- In the letter "The True Entity of Life," Nichiren Daishonin writes: "When praised, one does not consider his personal risk...Such is the way of common mortals" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 92). In another letter, he states, "The more one praises the blessings of the Lotus Sutra, the more his blessings will increase" (MW-5, 203).

Encouraging others is especially important, since Buddhism teaches that "the voice does the Buddha's work" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 708).

- In his book *The System of Value-Creating Education*, President Makiguchi declared, "The root of every deadlock in society and all spheres of endeavor comes down to a lack of

capable people.” The same can be said about the confused state of the world today.

- In “The True Entity of Life,” Nichiren Daishonin writes: “There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku. Only I, Nichiren, at first chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, but then two, three and a hundred followed, chanting and teaching others. Likewise, propagation will unfold this way in the future. Doesn’t this signify ‘emerging from the earth’?” (MW-1, 93)

Infinite numbers of new, talented individuals joyfully appear in order to work together to propagate the Law — literally, as if they were “emerging from the earth.” In accord with this principle of the Lotus Sutra, let us continue to build an indestructible path for our SGI movement with courage and pride, never allowing ourselves to be swayed by anything.

The Flaw of Apathy and Indifference

- In a [recent] speech, Philippine President Fidel Ramos referred to the belief of his country’s national hero, Dr. José Rizal, that the development of the government depends greatly upon the development of the individual citizen. Mr. Ramos quoted the freedom fighter as saying: “People and governments are correlated and complementary: a fatuous government would be an anomaly among the righteous people...*Tal Pueblo, Tal Gobierno.* (Like people, like government.)” In other words, everything is determined by the people.

Just as Rizal asserts, unless the caliber of the people themselves changes, nothing will change.

- At the end of World War II, the phrase *they deceived us* was suddenly in vogue in Japan. Everyone declared that they had been deceived. Private citizens felt they had been tricked by the military and the bureaucracy. At the same time, the military and bureaucracy felt they had been deceived by their senior officers. If one were to speak with those senior officers on this matter, they would answer that they had been duped by those above them.

However, the well-known Japanese screenwriter and film director Mansaku Itami, objected to this state of affairs. To paraphrase an essay he wrote, Itami asserted to the effect: No matter how many deceivers there may have been, if nobody had let themselves be deceived, this war would never have happened. To allow oneself to be deceived is in itself already blameworthy.

So profoundly had people lost their power of judgment, their ability to think for themselves, and their own personal convictions that they were led astray as easily as they were. They simply blindly followed whatever orders they were given like so many mindless cattle.

The fundamental fault lies with the cultural flaws of the entire nation, which are characterized by apathy, indifference, irrepentance and irresponsibility....

This is also closely related to the slavish mentality of the Japanese people who allow their rulers to oppress them. This is an insult to the dignity of the individual, an abandonment of the self, and a betrayal of the human spirit. It is indicative of an indifference to questions of morality and an absence of outrage toward injustice.

Without seriously reflecting on this weak national character and just calmly saying, “We were deceived!” without doing anything about it, the Japanese will probably be deceived again and again in the future....

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