

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ACCEPTANCE SPEECH PEACE IS FOUND IN THE HEARTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Receiving an honorary degree from Cheju National University in South Korea, President Ikeda emphasizes the cultural debt Japan owes Korea. If Japan 'behaves arrogantly toward Korea, failing to acknowledge its great debt to Korea, it will decline,' he says. The hope for continuing peace, he says, is educating youth wisely. He requests that all of us 'work tirelessly to inculcate in young people's hearts a humanistic philosophy and value system based on respect for life.'

I am honored to receive this honorary doctorate from Cheju National University, which shines as a bright sun of the New Renaissance of the coming century. I accept it with inexpressible gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility.

Embraced by your sincerity and friendship, which is warm and accepting as the seas that surround Cheju Island, I have now fulfilled my dream of visiting this fine university that is an "older brother" to Soka University in Japan.

Tucked in the foothills of the island's commanding peak Halla-san, what an ideal capital of learning this is! The bright azaleas in bloom on your campus are stunning, and the vivid green of the avenue of cherry trees leading from the university's front gate particularly was a delight to behold. It is believed that Japan's cherry trees originated in Cheju, an indication of just how is the connection between Cheju Island and Japan.

Japan has repaid its debt to Korea only with the most barbaric acts.

The cultural contributions that Korea has made to Japan are too numerous to mention. Even Japan's transformation from a martial society to a civil society in the Edo Period can be traced to the wise teachings of Korea. During Japan's indefensible, immoral invasions of Korea, which occurred in 1592 and 1597, the eminent Korean scholar Kang Hang was taken prisoner. Through dialogue with him, Japanese scholars opened their eyes to the philosophy of a peaceful civil government.

Eventually, Japan's military government of that time was swayed in that direction. And, with the added help of cultural ambassadors invited to Japan from Korea, Japan underwent a major transformation.

Yet in recent history, we Japanese have repaid this debt only with the most barbaric acts, causing great suffering to the Korean people. Toward the end of World War II, the Japanese military stationed 60,000-70,000 soldiers on Cheju, and in their typical authoritarian manner, they conscripted the people of Cheju for forced labor. They were planning to make your lovely island of "three beauties" and "three treasures" a last fortress for the defense of Japan, as they did with Okinawa.

Let's work tirelessly to open young people's hearts to the true path of humanity.

If Japan reaches out to Korea in friendship and respects Korea if Japan learns from the Korean spirit it will proceed toward peace and prosperity. On the other hand, if it behaves

arrogantly toward Korea, failing to acknowledge its great debt to Korea, it will decline. It will suffer ruin. This view of history must be forever engraved on the hearts of our people. This is the path of humanity.

It is thus very important to work tirelessly to inculcate in young people's hearts a humanistic philosophy and value system based on respect for life. I am determined to carry out sincere communication and exchange between our two countries so as to open the way for solid understanding and trust between the younger generations of our countries.

Humanistic education is the supreme art, the most sacred of professions.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president and the originator of Soka education, was a fierce opponent of Japanese militarism and died in prison resisting military authorities. He was also a geographer with many unique ideas. He had a strong interest in islands, believing that island residents, because they face so many natural hardships, can make astounding progress in their lives. He also was convinced that because their spirits are as open and free as the ocean surrounding them, they can radiate a new light of civilization, all the way to distant shores. Mr. Makiguchi always stressed the infinite possibilities of island life and island cultures.

Cheju Island has endured the harsh trials of the 20th century and triumphed. I know that in the 21st century, Cheju, this island jewel of the East, will shine with unequalled hope, happiness and glory. Cheju has much scenic beauty and, I am sure, will become a popular tourist destination. At the same time, it is a crucial hub of Northeast Asia, linking Korea, China and Japan.

Cheju National University, under the superb leadership of President Cho Moon Boo, is the driving force for establishing Cheju as a great center for peace in the 21st century while preserving and making the most of its bountiful natural gifts.

Today, I have become a member of your worthy institution. I vow now to devote myself with my fullest energies to working alongside you in the spirit of your inspiring school anthem, which asks us to be "seekers of truth," "pioneers of culture," "creators of history" and "leaders of the people."

Humanistic education, which brings the highest luster to the treasure of life found in both oneself and others education that creates limitless value is the supreme art, the most sacred of professions. I pledge with my whole heart to join forces with the Cheju National University faculty and all the teachers of Korea to create a song of human solidarity and a painting of the unity of our peoples. And then to pass these on to later generations.

Let me once again express my great respect and appreciation to those who have made this wonderful ceremony possible and to all who have attended today despite your busy schedules. I pray for the vigorous health of all of you and, with a hope-filled vision of the brilliant young graduates of this school taking their place in the world as leaders of the new century, I conclude my acceptance speech.

Kamsahamnida! (Thank you very much!)

SGI President Ikeda's acceptance speech on receiving an honorary doctorate from Cheju National University, Cheju City, South Korea, May 17.