

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 27 SPEECH — PART 1 THE SUPREME REVOLUTION

In Kansai, SGI President Ikeda says that 'kosen-rufu is the supreme revolution. Consequently, a life dedicated to this cause is one of supreme nobility.'

Welcome! Thank you so much! Let's have an enjoyable meeting!

Many thanks to those of you who have traveled from as far as the Chubu, Chugoku and Shikoku regions and from overseas to join us today.

Today, May 27, is the anniversary of the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India. He passed away 35 years ago, in 1964.

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda often said that he'd like to meet with Nehru, confident that they would develop a quick rapport. Unfortunately, Mr. Toda was not able to meet him — but his wish was, in a curious way, realized many years later. Here we see the precise, wondrous workings of Buddhism: I, President Toda's disciple, developed a friendship with the grandson of Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, former Indian prime minister, and his family.

After our meeting at the State Guesthouse in Tokyo in 1985, Rajiv Gandhi exclaimed with delight that he had met a truly genuine Japanese. After his tragic assassination in 1991, I have maintained close ties of friendship with his widow, Madame Sonia Gandhi, and their family, including their daughter Priyanka.

Prime Minister Nehru visited Japan in October 1957, at which time he traveled to Kyoto. Records of his visit report that he was deeply impressed by the beauty and exquisitely proportioned design of traditional Japa-nese gardens.

Enduring cruel criticism is part of being a revolutionary.

During his youth, Nehru was imprisoned for his involvement in a revolutionary struggle to change India's destiny. Imprisonment is the hallmark of a true revolutionary. Those who stand up to fight in a revolution expect that they may be killed in its course. Trials such as being jailed and having to endure cruel criticism and defamation are part and parcel of being a revolutionary. Not encountering attacks or persecutions means one isn't fighting hard and is just getting by with the least amount of effort.

Nehru spent many long years in prison. [He was jailed nine times and imprisoned for a total of close to nine years.] Despite his confinement, however, he wrote letters to his young daughter, Indira, and taught her about the world. I believe that he did so wishing that his daughter might grow into a leader of world stature.

Some people may ask, "How can a child understand such grown-up subject matter?" In reality, children are adult. Words spoken with great earnestness cannot fail to be understood by them.

This applies to the families of SGI members. It is important to teach our children the aims and history of the SGI and meaning of kosen-rufu from a young age.

For the 13-year-old Indira Gandhi, her father's imprisonment was the catalyst that led her to participate in India's independence movement.

Indira Gandhi later served as India's third prime minister and was the mother of Rajiv Gandhi.

The time has come for every youth division member to strive in the vanguard of kosen-rufu.

In a letter he sent to his daughter from prison, Nehru writes, "We must sweep away the dirt and the poverty and misery from our country." President Toda also cherished a deep wish to rid the people of Kansai of poverty and sickness.

The formula was the same. The spirit was the same. Both were concerned with practical measures to relieve people of suffering. What they said was not abstract theory or mere intellectualizing.

In the same letter, Nehru continues: "We must also clean up, as far as we can, the cobwebs from the minds of so many people which prevent them from thinking and cooperating in the great work before us. It is a great work, and it may be that it will require time. Let us, at least, give it a good push on — *Inqilab zindabad!* [Long live revolution!]"

Kosen-rufu is also "a great work." We must clear from people's minds "the cobwebs which prevent them from cooperating" in this sacred endeavor.

"I will do whatever I can, no matter how small my contribution! I will give it my best!" — this is the revolutionary spirit, the spirit of kosen-rufu. Kosen-rufu is the supreme revolution. Consequently, a life dedicated to this cause is one of supreme nobility.

The 21st century is now within sight. The time has come for every youth division member to strive in the vanguard of the kosen-rufu movement.

With the awareness and conviction that Kansai is the driving force in this great struggle, please create, stir up and power a dynamic wave of change from this region into the new century. Even when the ocean's surface is calm and rippled by gentle waves, in its depths there are strong, powerful currents flowing and spreading widely.

I want Kyoto and all of Kansai to be like that. Please be a proud fighting force of the Mystic Law like Kyoto's once-famous group of elite swordsmen, the Shinsengumi. Stride forth boldly, leading people to happiness and helping them realize their potential.

The Buddha is known as One Who Can Forbear.

"The strong are persevering, and the persevering are strong." These are the words of Inazo Nitobe, a world-famous Japanese scholar and close friend of founding Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

People of fortitude are strong. They have great character and courage. The Buddha is also known as One Who Can Forbear.

In contrast, those who are weak and cowardly are unable to endure hardship. This was the case with many who left our organization. They were extremely skilled in the art of self-justification, always making excuses for themselves and studiously avoiding hard work and difficulty. They were not prepared to personally undergo persecution for the sake of the Law.

The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca says, "There is no greater evil in covetousness than its ingratitude." The ungrateful are unaware of the immense debt of gratitude they have incurred and instead seek to receive ever more, thinking only of satisfying their own ambitions and desires. This aspect of human nature exists today just as it did centuries ago

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in ancient Rome.

I talk about many subjects in my speeches, my reason for doing so being to broaden your knowledge and deepen your understanding. The wisdom and keen insights of scholars and heroes, past and present, all resonate profoundly with Buddhism. I want you to learn as much as you can from them. When such study is combined with daimoku, you will find yourself walking the path of justice and truth that you have studied.

Take a rocket launch, for instance. The mathematical calculations can be correct down to the minutest detail, but if the engine thrust is weak, the rocket won't make it into orbit. The power of daimoku provides the unlimited lifting force that enables our lives to take off like rockets.

In "The American Scholar," the American thinker Emerson says, "He who has put forth his total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom." These words apply to all of you. When you give your all to SGI activities, your efforts quite naturally come to accord with the highest wisdom. You do your human revolution and accumulate good fortune. Everything benefits your own lives.

Action is crucial.

One of America's leading popular poets, Longfellow, was acclaimed and celebrated for his work throughout the world. He was also a professor at Harvard University. In his poem "A Psalm of Life," he writes:

*Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.*

It is just as he says: Action is crucial. We must lose ourselves neither in enjoyment nor sorrow.

A handwritten manuscript of Longfellow's poetry is among the treasures of Soka University of America. And there are many other important treasures of humankind there. They are being held in safekeeping for you and for posterity. They are all your treasures.

At present, 300 SGI-Taiwan members are visiting Japan as part of a cultural exchange delegation. They will watch the proceedings of this meeting via satellite broadcast at the Okinawa Training Center. My warmest welcome to each of you!

The SGI-Taiwan members have put down solid roots in their local communities and society at large, and have demonstrated most commendable actual proof of their Buddhist practice. Out of some 2,700 social organizations and groups in the territory, SGI-Taiwan has won the distinction of being named the most outstanding people's organization for seven consecutive years, as of the latest awards presented last year by Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior. No other organization in Taiwan has ever achieved this feat. My deepest congratulations! Minister of the Interior Huang Chu-wen has lauded the SGI for displaying the infinite strength of ordinary people.

If we exert ourselves for the happiness of our friends, we will remain forever in their hearts.

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As interest in writing and the written word continues to decline in Japan, the monthly magazine *Ushio* [a Soka Gakkai-affiliated publication] is looked to as a journal of serious journalism. A dialogue on the life and ideals of José Martí being conducted between me and Dr. Cintio Vitier, a leading expert on this great hero of Cuban independence, is now being featured in the magazine.

Cuban President Fidel Castro has sent a message saying that he is watching the dialogue's progress with much interest. And he has also extended me an invitation to visit Cuba a second time, saying that he looks forward to talking with me again.

May is the month when Martí laid down his life for his cause. He died in action on the battlefield on May 19, 1895, at age 42. On May 27, today's date, he was buried on a coastal region of Cuba. Therefore, today I want to speak about him.

Martí died in the midst of Cuba's struggle for independence, in the midst of a revolution. He was a key person in the struggle, a person who would have become the country's future leader. He was indispensable, someone whom the cause could not afford to lose.

His colleagues had urged him to stay away from the fighting on the battlefield. But brushing aside their advice, he resolutely fought on the front lines. There, he was struck by three bullets.

The enemies carried away his body as a trophy of war. In death, his body was desecrated by his enemies — but Martí had always believed that even if his body were destroyed, his ideas would never disappear. He declared that those who dedicate their lives to humanity will live on in the hearts of humanity.

If, in the course of the revolution that is our kosen-rufu movement, we exert ourselves for the happiness of countless friends, then we will remain for-ever in their hearts. For all eternity they will become people with whom we have close connections. They will become protective functions, safeguarding us from harm. Such is the state of life we will attain.

If we propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism widely, throughout the world, the SGI and all SGI members will be protected and supported by people around the globe. This is an unchanging formula of Buddhism. This is why I constantly stress the importance of dedicating our lives to kosen-rufu and the immense benefit that accrues to us as a result.

Even now, more than a hundred years after his death, Martí continues to be an object of admiration and deep veneration. His noble ideals of human advancement shine with an ever-increasing brilliance.

As a martyred hero, the life of Martí resonates deeply with that of President Makiguchi. The name José Martí is perhaps not well known in Japan, and for precisely that reason, I especially want you, the youth division members, to know about him. I want to teach you about his life.

And I want you to hungrily study all manner of subjects in your youth, to absorb all kinds of knowledge, so that you can hold your own in future conversations even with the world's leading scholars. Otherwise, you cannot become leaders of world caliber, and kosen-rufu will not advance.

What was Martí's conviction? He says: "Those who cultivate themselves and raise themselves by their own efforts are far loftier than kings. They can gaze down upon the vain and vacuous individuals who were unable to conquer themselves. This is my creed." What is royalty!? What is worldly honor!? A person who has stood up by his or her own efforts is far superior! This was his assertion.

How much more this applies to people who propagate the Mystic Law! They are the noblest of all.

All we need do is stand up tall, with confidence and conviction. No matter what those of shallow understanding say or do, we can just gaze down on them from our lofty height with imperturbable composure — as if from the majestic summit of Mount Fuji.

We either fight to the very end or wind up abandoning our faith.

In a play written by Martí, *Fatherland and Liberty*, are the lines “Friends, have courage! Victory is in our hands!”

“Friends!” he starts. In other words, we need to work together as friends, as comrades; we cannot achieve kosen-rufu alone. This is the correct path.

Buddhism expounds that the practitioners of the Mystic Law always appear together with those with whom they have a profound connection. It also teaches the principle of mentor and disciple.

Martí continues in this play: “The die has been cast. The choice is either a life of infamy or gaining lasting glory. No other outcome is possible.”

The struggle has begun. You of the youth division have already embarked on the real-life drama of your mission. You have no course but to press forward, ever forward, to win this “lasting glory.”

If you run away from the struggles at hand, you will doom yourself eternally to a “life of infamy.” We either fight to the very end or stop midway and abandon our faith.

There is only one choice: Let’s keep challenging ourselves to keep advancing!

Without personal effort, Buddhism does not exist, kosen-rufu cannot be realized, and there is no true glory.

Action is the key. One deed surpasses a hundred words. Debate without action is just empty intellectualizing. It produces no results.

It doesn’t matter whether you have a leadership position or not, or whether your position is higher or lower than someone else’s. It all comes down to whether you are taking action. Without personal effort, Buddhism does not exist, kosen-rufu cannot be realized, and there is no true glory.

At the same time, it is important to respect those who are wholeheartedly dedicating themselves to SGI activities, to thank and praise them for their efforts, saying, for example: “Thank you so much for your hard work.” “Thank you so much for coming.”

Anyone, no matter who they are, who fails to be respectful toward you who strive so earnestly for kosen-rufu, will incur negative effects. However, when people show you respect, then both you and they will receive benefit.

Those who can sincerely encourage others are genuine practitioners of Buddhism.

Martí declares that a great undertaking is “lost or saved by small things.” He calls out: “Think of me who bears incredible suffering and heavy responsibility. Think of how difficult it is to encourage people sincerely, without using exaggeration or flattery. Think of how even more difficult it is to prevent those one has encouraged from becoming dis-

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heartened or depressed.”

Those who can sincerely encourage others are true leaders of people, true leaders of the SGI and genuine practitioners of Buddhism. They are bodhisattvas.

Martí cries: “How the nature of human ambition and vanity can be a great obstacle for the highest virtue. But no matter how insurmountable the difficulties, nothing can stand in the way of those of us who blaze with the spirit of redemption. Nothing can dominate us, for we are a great army of light.”

Base individuals are invariably jealous toward the highest virtue and try to obstruct and hinder it. The Daishonin was treated the same way, and so was his successor, Nikko Shonin. In more recent history, this pattern of persecution was also experienced by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and myself.

However, we of the SGI are “a great army of light”! Faith is intangible, yet it is a light that no darkness can smother. We are the forces of the Buddha. We have nothing to fear.

We only live this lifetime once. Therefore, I pray that you will lead lives shining with the glorious, indestructible light of the sun, lives of victory free of the slightest regret and lives of eternal triumph, fueled by the determination to always win in the end. Let us all lead lives like this.

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 34th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Soka Gakkai’s Kyoto Peace Auditorium in Kyoto, Japan, May 27. Part 2 will appear in an upcoming issue.