

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA A GREAT WAVE ARISES

Sharing excellent examples of Korean leadership, SGI President Ikeda reflects, 'If a single wise person stands up and takes the lead, a great wave forward in kosen-rufu always arises.'

The sky shone. The sea sparkled. Both nature and city glittered. The foothills of Halla-san Mountain, rising in the middle of the island, were gowned in green, composing a poetic picture of light.

I found Chejudo to be a beautiful jewel of an island. It was an island of poetry, an island that makes people into poets. It was an island of peace, linking one beautiful heart to another, as serene as the endless, clear skies that unfold after surmounting storms of bitter suffering.

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On May 16, I arrived at Chejudo for the first time. After a long-awaited memorial to Korea–Japan friendship was unveiled at the Fukuoka Training Center in Kyushu, May 15, I was on my way to Korea for the third time, my first visit there in a year.

This time, I came at the invitation of Cheju National University, which conferred an honorary doctorate upon me, May 17. I want to reiterate my deep gratitude for this tremendous honor to dynamic President Cho Moon Boo and all at Cheju National University, their warm friendship as expansive as the sea that surrounds Chejudo. In addition, Chancellor Choue Young Seek of Kyung Hee University and President Chung Jong Taeck of Chung Cheong College were kind enough to travel to Chejudo to attend the ceremony despite their busy schedules. This sign of their deep friendship moved me profoundly.

In the past, an arrogant Japan immorally trampled on this nation that has been our great cultural benefactor and mentor. I am therefore aware of the deep significance of receiving this great honor from Korea.

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Also present at the ceremony were Chejudo SGI members and SGI-Korea representatives, who shared with me the joy of this event. In addition, three representatives of the Osaka Local Main Office of the Korean Residents Union in Japan joined us.

The links between Chejudo and Japan are deep. When Chejudo was known as the kingdom of Tamla, in the 7th century, exchange with Japan was already taking place. Today, approximately 20 percent of Korean residents in Japan are from Chejudo.

Links to the Kansai region are especially close, and many people who trace their roots to Chejudo live in Osaka's Ikuno and Higashinari wards, near our Kansai Culture Center. Large numbers of them are active as wonderful members of Ever-victorious Kansai, the SGI organization there.

In 1922, a direct sea route linking Chejudo and Osaka opened, and that is one of the reasons so many people originating in Chejudo now live in Kansai. Of course, this took place against the backdrop of Japan's colonial rule of Korea, and one can only imagine the ter-

rible pain and hardships these Korean residents of Japan endured over the years.

I share this honor from Cheju National University with our SGI members in Korea and those of Korean descent living in Japan. They have suffered more than words can express.

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A riot of beautiful flowers is now blooming on Chejudo, but one must wait until the height of summer to enjoy the elegant blooms of the national flower of Korea, the Rose of Sharon — or, as it's called in Korean, the Immortal Flower (*mugunghwa*).

What a noble appearance it has — enduring the scorching summer heat to bloom proudly, as if wishing to cheer people's hearts! And though its blossoms only last one day, opening in the morning and withering at dusk, the plant produces new flowers each day, from summer all the way to autumn. This is why the Rose of Sharon symbolizes the hearts of the Korean people: strength of spirit, perseverance, hard work and enterprise.

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The Rose of Sharon, the Immortal Flower — a perfect symbol of our beloved Korean members, who have this history of enduring persecution and triumphing over all. What a long, hard winter they have weathered! How they have gritted their teeth, put down roots in society and patiently continued planting the seeds of trust and happiness!

*Having endured the long winter
I am reborn like the grasses.
O happy lark
From every ridge
Soar joyously into the sky!*

Our Korean comrades have triumphed, just as spring triumphs in this poem, "Spring," by Yun Tongju. With their invincible spirit, they have become a flower garden of hope for SGI members around the world.

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Today, a statue of the hero of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi, adorns the Headquarters of SGI-Korea. There is a person who is often called the Korean Gandhi: An Ch'ang-ho, a great champion of Korean independence. When An founded a group to promote independence in 1913, one of the qualities he emphasized most heavily was unity. He urged the forging of an unchanging, indestructible unity aimed at achieving justice, calling this a "sacred unity." This corresponds to the unity of many in body, one in mind (*itai doshin*) that we speak of in Buddhism and to the indestructible unity in faith we have directed toward realizing our great goal of kosen-rufu.

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An Ch'ang-ho also taught the importance of practical action, declaring: "It is more effective to demonstrate something once than explain it a hundred times. One person who

actually makes an honest effort has more power to effect change than a hundred people talking about making an honest effort.”

There are people who talk wonderfully about what needs to be done, but then leave the doing to others. They don't act themselves. Nothing destroys people's trust and unity more than this kind of false leadership.

On the other hand, if a single wise person stands up and takes the lead, a great wave forward in kosen-rufu always arises. This is the principle of human revolution.

The Gakkai is as strong as it is precisely because brave lions have stood up, joined forces and accepted the challenge. The tremendous development of SGI-Korea is the crown of victory that our heroes, led by General Director Park Jae Il, have won. They have triumphed by persevering in their activities with sincerity while enduring the storms of adversity. I praise them from the bottom of my heart as a model for all the world.

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Nichiren Daishonin says that “if the minds of the people are pure, so is their land” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 4). As I gazed up at the bright skies of Chejudo, which seemed to be smiling with the joy of victory, I could not help but offer a silent prayer: May my beloved fellow members be happy, successful and make endless progress! No matter how rough the waves may be, may an indestructible rainbow bridge of peace and friendship between Korea and Japan span joyfully across the skies of the 21st century!

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