

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 27 SPEECH — PART 2 WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET CHEERFUL!

SGI President Ikeda shares his recollections of the optimistic Madame Deng Yingchao. He says that ‘the people around Madame Deng were always amazed: The tougher the going got, the more cheerful she became!’

Eighty years ago this year, a young man departed for China from the port of Kobe in Kansai. It was at the beginning of April 1919 — the season of the cherry blossoms. The young man was 21-year-old Zhou Enlai, future prime minister of China. He had been studying in Japan, but he had decided to return to China to dedicate his youth to a revolution and to save his troubled homeland.

Before his departure, Zhou Enlai viewed the cherry blossoms in Kyoto’s Maruyama Park. When we met many years later, he said to me, “Fifty years ago, I left Japan when the cherries were in bloom.”

Knowing the tireless efforts Premier Zhou made to foster China–Japan friendship, I feel certain that the cherry blossoms of Kyoto were always in full bloom in his heart.

“Please come visit Japan again in the cherry blossom season,” I invited.

At that time, Premier Zhou, who was already gravely ill, responded, “I want to very much, but it is impossible. My body no longer obeys my wishes.” President Ikeda’s meeting with him took place a little more than a year before his death.

Several years later, Zhou Enlai’s widow, Madame Deng Yingchao, traveled to Japan in her husband’s stead. I met her at the State Guesthouse in Tokyo on April 12, 1979. It is already 20 years ago. How fast time flies!

During her brief sojourn in Japan, Madame Deng visited Kyoto’s Arashiyama Park, where there is a memorial plaque in tribute to the well-known poem “Arashiyama in the Rain” that Premier Zhou wrote as a youth:

*My second visit
To Arashiyama in the rain.
Green pines line the banks
With cherries in between.
At the end of the path a hill,
And a stream of jade green twists
Among the rocks, glistening, reflecting.
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.*

Title: When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Cheerful! (2) [madame Deng Yingchao]

Subject: World Tribune 07/02/99 n.3249 p.4 WT990702p04 Kyoto, Japan 05/27/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 05/27/99 Attitude Behavior Cheerful Daisaku Deng Gakkai Gets Going Headquarters Ikeda

n Kyoto Leaders Major Meeting People Political President Soka Speech Speeches Spouses their Tough Trib

A youthful seeking spirit and pledge are fused here in a description of nature.

With a firm resolve to return to China and devote himself to helping the Chinese people, Zhou Enlai made his departure from Kobe. It was thus from Kansai that he embarked on his full-fledged struggle to save his country.

The following month, after returning to China, Zhou Enlai plunged into the May Fourth Movement, which greatly advanced the cause of the Chinese Revolution.

I, too, launched a momentous struggle of my youth in Kansai.

It was also here in Kyoto that I received the news of the Chinese premier's death. I remember the day, Jan. 9, 1976. [Zhou Enlai died on Jan. 8, but the news was officially announced the following day.] I immediately sent my condolences, and together with the Kyoto members prayed for his eternal happiness.

Premier Zhou and Madame Deng's ties with Kyoto are inexpressibly profound.

Those who are weak in times of crisis can never hope to achieve great things.

I want to talk a little about Madame Deng's mother. I wish to do so in part to pay tribute to both women.

Before the Chinese Revolution was won, Madame Deng's mother was targeted and arrested for being "the mother-in-law of the revolutionary leader Zhou Enlai." She spent three years in prison, though innocent of any crime.

While imprisoned, the officials threatened her, demanding that she write a letter to her daughter and son-in-law ordering them to abandon their revolutionary activities. But she bluntly refused. She endured cruel torture, boldly declaring to her captors: "My daughter is her own person, and so am I. I cannot compromise her beliefs. Besides, I am proud of my daughter, who is working for the revolution. If you wish to kill me, go ahead!"

What tenacious spirit! What indomitable conviction! It is magnificent.

Those who are weak and fainthearted in a time of crisis cannot hope to achieve great things. During the war, when Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and a number of other top Gakkai leaders were arrested, the wife of one of the leaders came to visit her husband in prison. She showed him her palm, on which she had written "Please get released quickly." That leader promptly abandoned his faith.

Madame Deng's mother taught her daughter to be a strong individual. She declared: "You are not Mrs. Zhou Enlai. You are Deng Yingchao, an independent woman, whose husband is Zhou Enlai. People no doubt will treat you well because you're Zhou's wife. There will even be those, I'm sure, who will flatter you and make a big fuss about you. But I ask that you study and strive with all your might to become a person who will be respected, not for being the wife of Zhou, but for your own self, as Yingchao."

It was a stern admonishment that women with famous husbands should not let their status go to their heads. There is much to learn from these words. No matter what her husband's position, a wife is her own individual. Important is what kind of a person the wife is in her own right — and what she has done or achieved. This is how we view people in the world of Buddhism.

Madame Deng's mother always said to her: "Be a strong woman! You mustn't depend

Title: When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Cheerful! (2) [madame Deng Yingchao]

Subject: World Tribune 07/02/99 n.3249 p.4 WT990702p04 Kyoto, Japan 05/27/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 05/27/99 Attitude Behavior Cheerful Daisaku Deng Gakkai Gets Going Headquarters Ikeda

n Kyoto Leaders Major Meeting People Political President Soka Speech Speeches Spouses their Tough Trib

on others. You have to think for yourself and decide your own destiny.”

President Toda also often said: “I ask women to be strong. They must also be morally upright. If they allow themselves to be led astray by men, they will ever be unhappy.”

Madame Deng’s mother further urged her daughter: “Be an independent person, an independent woman!” “Study, increase your knowledge and continue studying throughout your life.” “Don’t cry! Crying won’t change anything. As a woman, you must keep striving hard, even gritting your teeth if you have to, so that you won’t be called a crybaby.”

In the case of our young women’s division members, Deng Yingchao’s call to women to strengthen themselves by studying — increasing their knowledge and continuing to learn throughout their lives — includes gaining a thorough grounding in Buddhist study.

Leaders should be gentle and compassionate toward others, and make diligent personal efforts.

The name of Madame Deng’s mother was Yang Zhende. Her life was one of great hardship and privation. When she was an infant, her family fell into ruin upon the death of her grandfather.

Then, when she was 14, her parents died, and she was left to fend for herself. Using the knowledge of Chinese medicine that she had acquired from childhood, she worked as a doctor. But hardly anyone was willing to put their faith in such a young doctor. She could scarcely eke out enough to feed herself, and she lived in great destitution.

At age 25, she married a widower with three children. Her husband, though a respected local figure, was brought to trial for a work incident and banished, dying in his place of exile. Yang Zhende was left penniless with her young infant daughter, Yingchao, to care for.

Because of their extreme poverty, Deng Yingchao had to work in a textile factory from age 7. She labored 10 hours a day for a pittance of a sum, which she dutifully handed over to her mother. In the evenings, she studied with her mother. Mother and daughter lived humbly, supporting and sustaining each other.

Where did Deng Yingchao get her incredible strength? From her mother.

The people around Madame Deng were always amazed: The tougher the going got, the more cheerful she became! Even when things looked dark for the revolution, and there was no glimmer of hope on the horizon, a bright smile never left her face. She declared: “I am an optimist at heart. Besides, if we are gloomy, it will infect everyone else. These are really hard times, but I believe we must show in our attitude that our revolution will lead to a bright future. I want everyone to have confidence in our victory.”

There are some SGI leaders, who, if the results for some event or activity are not so great, immediately start to panic and get annoyed, their grim faces seeming to lay the blame at the members’ door. But it’s usually the leaders fault!

At precisely such times, when the outcome is less than expected, the leaders should try to reassure everyone, saying for instance: “It’s all right. Don’t worry. The Latter Day of the Law spans ten thousand years and more! Everything’s fine.” That way, everyone will feel encouraged and strive to do their best the next time.

Leaders should be gentle and compassionate toward others, and to make diligent personal efforts.

Title: When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Cheerful! (2) [madame Deng Yingchao]

Subject: World Tribune 07/02/99 n.3249 p.4 WT990702p04 Kyoto, Japan 05/27/99

Author: Daisaku Ikeda

Keywords: 05/27/99 Attitude Behavior Cheerful Daisaku Deng Gakkai Gets Going Headquarters Ikeda

n Kyoto Leaders Major Meeting People Political President Soka Speech Speeches Spouses their Tough Trib

They should be committed to producing results themselves, no matter the circumstances. They should work hard themselves and be determined to achieve victory in the end. This is the Gakkai's ever-victorious spirit.

There is not one of us who isn't needed for the kosen-rufu movement.

Deng Yingchao was constantly encouraging those around her. She would say: "Let's do our best. We have the conviction and ideals of our revolution. We refuse to be defeated. If we give in to fear, all is lost."

We of the SGI possess the ideal of kosen-rufu. Who but we are working with burning commitment for such a noble ideal?

Madame Deng declared: "We are right, and right is never defeated. Even if we should fall, others will keep advancing, moving on over our dead bodies. So therefore, let us save as many of our comrades, our soldiers, as possible."

Because Deng Yingchao was such a strong woman, the young Zhou Enlai chose her as his life's partner. He thought, "This woman has what it takes to give her whole life to the revolution." He knew that dedicating himself to the revolution meant that he might be killed or imprisoned. It was highly unlikely that he would never lead a quiet, relaxed life. But if his wife were Deng Yingchao, she would be undaunted by such circumstances, taking everything in stride.

Yet, as strong as she was, there was one time when Deng Yingchao thought that she could go no further. She was suffering from tuberculosis and coughing up blood — while enemy forces were closing in all around. I also had tuberculosis in my youth and coughed up blood, so I can relate to the pain she must have gone through.

She was in no condition to take part in the Long March, traversing mountains and rivers, but unless she left with the others, she would be captured by the enemy. And if she were caught, she would either be killed or tortured.

Madame Deng prepared herself to meet her death. But her mother's words roused her to keep fighting. Her mother said: "Yingchao, you mustn't give up! It's not like you. You must live to the end. The revolution needs you. Enlai needs you. It's hard for everyone. While there's life left in you, keep fighting!"

These words spurred Madame Deng to get up on unsteady legs. She completed the Long March, sometimes walking by herself and sometimes being carried by stretcher.

I want all of you to live and keep living, no matter what — for all of you have a mission. All of you are indispensable people for kosen-rufu. All of you are Bodhisattvas of the Earth. There is not one of you who is not needed.

Leaders should respect others' dignity, offering them words of praise and encouragement.

Madame Deng's mother passed away on Nov. 18, 1940, during World War II. The date was exactly four years before Mr. Makiguchi's death in 1944. Gazing at her deceased mother's face, Madame Deng made a silent pledge to her: "Mother, thank you. I am proud with all my heart to be your daughter. I will strive to become even stronger. And I will devote myself to serving the people. No matter what hardships I may encounter, I won't be beaten, just like you weren't. I will never do anything that would make you ashamed of me, so please rest in peace."

Such was the leave-taking of a mother and daughter who had lived true to their convictions. I can picture this beautiful scene in my mind's eye.

Madame Deng lived out her life true to the promise she had made to her mother.

Her activities in China's revolution were a wonderful success. Why? There were three special characteristics to them:

First, speed of action. She would immediately contact relevant individuals or go anywhere if it were necessary, no matter how far away it may have been. This is just like our women's division members.

Second, meeting face-to-face. Letters, messages, phone calls and other modern methods of communication alone do not fully allow us to convey our true intent, nor do they allow us to grasp the other party's true feelings. As much as possible, Deng Yingchao tried to go to see the person or people involved, or had them come to see her, making every effort to talk with them face-to-face. She insisted on the importance of communicating and understanding each other's sentiments.

Third, always paying due respect to others. She personally tried to keep her appearances in the public limelight to the absolute minimum and devoted herself wholeheartedly to working behind the scenes. In this way, she gained everyone's trust.

It is important for leaders to respect others' dignity, offering words of praise and encouragement: "Yes, you're so right." "That's great!" "How wonderful!" "I knew you could do it!" "In that case, why don't you try this?" There is nothing worse than leaders who are arrogant or given to emotional outbursts.

In her last years, Deng Yingchao devoted great energy to nurturing successors, who would carry on China's revolution. The key to the future lies in fostering the youth. My present sentiment is exactly the same.

Madame Deng cherished the belief that "leaders should be advisers and supporters of young people," and that they should "never order them about or coerce them." She also spoke quite sternly on the need for leaders to raise their own children into fine successors. "Not only must leaders themselves serve as models of observing the rules," she said, "but they must also strengthen the education of their children. Using the privilege of one's position to maneuver for the advantage of one's children is unforgivable. This only harms the children in the end. Being strict with one's children is ultimately for their own good."

I completely agree. In the SGI as well, there are families where the parents are top leaders or famous celebrities but whose children do not practice. Of course, with children, it's important to take a long-term view. And it's probably not a good idea for parents to force the practice on their children. However, unless parents teach their children about the Gakkai spirit and about practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in order to realize happiness and peace for all, the Law will not endure eternally in society. The artery of the family's good fortune and benefit will also be severed.

Besides, who will chant for you when you die?! Seriously, though, it is ultimately both parents and children who lose out. Especially if we, as members indebted to the SGI, forget to teach our children the spirit of repaying debts of gratitude and let ourselves be carried away by worldly vanity, we will stray from the correct human path. If we do so, our lives are unlikely to be very happy.

What matters most is what we give to others.

When Madame Deng retired and handed over all her official duties to her successors,

she said: "The person retires, but the heart retires not." "Though I may have retired from office, I have not retired from the revolution."

I am filled with exactly the same resolve. I am acting as a roof to protect the Gakkai, and I intend to continue doing so. I will never retire from my active engagement in kosen-rufu activities. By placing myself in the front lines throughout my life, I am determined to keep furthering our kosen-rufu movement.

"I will fight as long as I live!" This was Deng Yingchao's cry. She kept fighting right up to her death at age 88, remaining true to the youthful pledge she made to herself, her pledge to her mother, to her comrades and to her husband, Premier Zhou.

If the present youth division members live to 88, they have another 50, 60 or 70 years before them to fight for kosen-rufu. Viewed in this light, the SGI's future in the coming century is indeed bright.

My friends of the youth division in Kansai, a place that has such deep ties to Zhou Enlai and Deng Yingchao! My friends of the Kansai youth division, a group with which I have the most profound connection! Please go on to exceed your predecessors! May all of you strive as if each of you are Soka Gakkai presidents and vice presidents, and with an even greater determination, carry on our work in the 21st century. I entrust this task to you.

I want to share some quotes of well-known thinkers: Albert Einstein declares, "The value of a man...should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive." What matters is what one gives to others.

The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca asks, "Is there any doubt that the strength that cannot be overcome is a truer sort than that which is unassailed, seeing that untested powers are dubious, whereas the stability that repels all assaults is rightly deemed most genuine?" We could say that facing difficulties is a chance to be "deemed most genuine" by the Daishonin.

Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen writes, "The man who stands alone is the strongest." We must stand alone. This is the spirit of a person of true courage.

Another Norwegian, poet Arnulf Overland, writes, "There is only one path to freedom / The path that one travels over the bodies of traitors."

Enthusiasm is what faith is all about.

The American thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Having a heart brimming with enthusiasm is what faith is all about. The members in the Soka Gakkai's early days, and especially the members of Kansai, blazed with enthusiasm. That is why we were victorious.

Incidentally, I received letters from two universities today notifying me of their intention to confer honorary doctorates upon me.

To date, President Ikeda has received 63 honorary doctorates from educational institutes throughout the world. If those that have already been decided on but not yet conferred are included, the number rises to 86. He has also received honorary citizenships from 95 cities around the globe. If those that have been decided on but not yet conferred are counted, including a notification received from a Brazilian city on the day of the Headquarters Leaders Meeting, the number comes to exactly 100.

I am your representative. I hope you will regard all the awards I receive as honors that

have been bestowed upon you. I declare with unshakable conviction that the good fortune of supporting our SGI movement, which is receiving acclaim from around the world, belongs to all of you.

In closing, I pray with all my heart for the continuing all-out efforts of Ever-victorious Kansai and for the vigorous health and great endeavors of SGI members throughout the world.

Thank you for your long attention.

The conclusion 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 1 appeared in the June 18 issue.

Title: When The Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Cheerful! (2) [madame Deng Yingchao]
Subject: World Tribune 07/02/99 n.3249 p.4 WT990702p04 Kyoto, Japan 05/27/99
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 05/27/99 Attitude Behavior Cheerful Daisaku Deng Gakkai Gets Going Headquarters Ikeda
n Kyoto Leaders Major Meeting People Political President Soka Speech Speeches Spouses their Tough Trib