

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S DEC. 9 SPEECH—PART 2 THE POWER OF ONE COMMITTED PERSON

**A person who gives serious thought to the welfare of society is ‘invincible, regardless of what happens,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘When one such committed individual stands up in earnest, the entire area in which he or she lives and the organization in which he or she practices will flourish.’**

*Part 2 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 40th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Dec. 9, 1999.*

I can clearly picture the beautiful relationship that existed between the young Dr. Rakhmanaliev, chair of the World Committee on Awarding the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal and Prize, and his mentor, the renowned Russian philosopher A. F. Losev. His mentor was persecuted during the Stalin era and imprisoned for 33 years.

Great people, just people, are often subjected to oppression. If one doesn't encounter obstacles in the cause of championing justice, one isn't fighting hard enough.

Although Losev was deprived of his liberty for more than three decades, he is said to have freely written book after book in his head. After finally being released from prison at age 81, he went on to publish 20 books over the next 15 years, until he died at 95. He apparently wrote the majority of these works from memory—by recalling what he had already formulated in his mind during his imprisonment.

In his youth, Dr. Rakhman-aliev received direct guidance and instruction from the elderly Losev in Moscow on an almost daily basis for eight years. Lacking any support from the government, Losev lived in extreme poverty. Whenever Dr. Rakhmanaliev, a graduate student, went to visit his teacher, he would bring some cookies or dry crackers that he had bought with his scholarship money. They would then share them while drinking hot cups of tea and studying together.

I was filled with profound emotion when I heard this. Having stood all alone by my mentor, Josei Toda, when his business experienced severe financial difficulties, and having attended his private “Toda University,” I deeply appreciate Dr. Rakhmanaliev's sentiments.

To share others' sufferings and hardships—I hope that SGI leaders and Soka University teaching staff members will always have such warmth and compassion. This is the path of victory as a human being.

Though harshly persecuted during his lifetime, Losev is today regarded as one of the foremost philosophers of the 20th century.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev also enjoyed a close friendship with the literary historian Dmitri S. Likhachev, one of Russia's courageous voices of conscience, who died in October. Even in his 90s, Likhachev was able to recite passages from books he had written in his 20s and 30s.

The examples of such outstanding intellects led Dr. Rakhmanaliev to believe that the more the human brain is used, the more its potential increases. I agree. Just as physical exercise strengthens the body, mental exercise strengthens the brain. All aspects of our Buddhist practice—our efforts to study Nichiren Daishonin's writings and Buddhist

doctrine, do gongyo and carry out dialogue to spread the ideals of Buddhism — serve as a workout for the brain.

Recently published findings by American scientists show that, in research conducted in monkeys, the adult brain can grow new cells or neurons to replace old ones when they die. Until now, it was believed that brain cells stopped growing once adulthood was reached and gradually died off with age. This new discovery, though, shows that new cells are constantly being added to the cortex — the thinking, learning and memory center of the brain — even after adulthood (“Neurogenesis in the Neocortex of Adult Primates,” Oct. 15, 1999, *Science*).

Congratulations to all our seniors!

### **A true Buddhist refuses to condone cruel, inhuman behavior.**

I want to share some words of wisdom from Likhachev, a champion of human rights and humanistic ideals: “While cultivating physical strength can naturally contribute to long life, it is little recognized that cultivating mental strength is also indispensable for longevity.” “Consideration and kindness are conducive not only to good health but to enhancing physical beauty.”

He also reached these conclusions about life: “If you think only about yourself, and live solely preoccupied with your own happiness to the exclusion of all else, you will leave nothing valuable behind in life.” “The highest value in life is goodness — moreover, goodness that is backed by wisdom and decisive purpose.”

It is just as he says. For this reason, real, humanistic education — education that teaches these fundamental values — is important. We are entering an age of humanistic education.

Please be assured that your daily activities as SGI members constitute the ideal way of staying fit and healthy, as well as the way to long, genuinely fulfilling lives.

“The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). These are the Daishonin’s famous words. The behavior that the Daishonin refers to is respecting, valuing and protecting other human beings with all one’s being.

In contrast, there are arrogant people, who act as if everyone else is here solely to serve them, who are cruel and inhuman, brandishing authority and throwing their weight around. A true Buddhist refuses to condone the behavior of such people.

If you give serious thought to the happiness of your friends and the welfare of your society and community — racking your brains over how you can contribute, taking action to try to make a difference — then you will find vibrant wisdom welling forth from your life. Courage will rise within you quite naturally. You will develop your character in the process.

A person who lives this way is invincible, regardless of what happens. When one such committed individual stands up in earnest, the entire area in which he or she lives and the organization in which he or she practices will flourish. This is an unchanging formula for victory. It was so in the past, and it remains so today.

### **The power of Buddhist reason can win over people in positions of great authority.**

Incidentally, Chingiz Aitmatov, the respected Kyrgyz writer after whom the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal is named, was born the same year as I, 1928. We were born exactly a hundred years after the great Russian author Leo Tolstoy, who was born in 1828.

Tolstoy was excommunicated by the church authorities of the day, who were jealous of his fame and reputation. Yet he was completely unfazed by their persecution.

The youth, the common people, the intellectuals and even the international public opinion were overwhelmingly on his side. Thinking people denounced the church's arbitrary excommunication of this famed writer.

At the beginning of this century, Tolstoy wrote a letter to the powerful Russian czar, proclaiming that all of humankind was moving from evil to good, from darkness to light. Trying to stop this movement, Tolstoy wrote, was "a futile endeavor." He courageously declared that it was impossible to stop humanity's advance toward enlightenment.

Until the last moment of his life, Tolstoy fought unflinchingly against injustice and the high-handed ways of authority. Tenacity is vital in any struggle.

In *The Philosophy of Creation*, Dr. Rakhmanaliev writes: "There is something of unsurpassed greatness. It is not the greatness of authority, but the greatness of the spirit." The greatness of authority and position is not genuine; it is but an illusion.

Dr. Rakhmanaliev also states, "There is no form of communication suited to expressing the majesty of the spirit more than dialogue." Let us continue to pursue dialogue, talking heart to heart with as many people as possible, thereby spiritually strengthening and invigorating people's lives.

And, through such efforts, let us triumph in all our endeavors. Herein lies the hope of the 21st century, as well as the mission of youth. The youth division must never be defeated. The youth must win without fail for the sake of the people.

The Daishonin declares: "Buddhism is reason. Reason will win over your lord" (WND, 839). The powerful reason of Buddhism can win over even people in positions of great authority.

In an article submitted to the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, Mr. Aitmatov shares his views about the SGI: "Possessing an all-encompassing vision, the SGI does not shun reality but is actively involved in the world around it and values the practical, everyday wisdom of ordinary people. The SGI also leads people to a noble plane, where they apprehend the laws of existence ranging from fundamental moral ethics to the eternity of life. The SGI—it is a river of humanism. I am among those who walk along the banks of that flowing river."

This is an example of the high expectations and praise that people of integrity and conscience around the world have for the SGI. In 2000, let's strive hard again in all our challenges, with joy and unflagging optimism. Let's win!

The Daishonin writes, "The farther the source, the longer the stream" (WND, 736). I declare that we, the SGI members, represent the proud source of a stream that will flow into the 3rd millennium.

### **Faith is the search for solid principles, the quest for a better life.**

Dr. Rakhmanaliev is 47, the same age I was when I had my second meeting with Soviet Premier Aleksey N. Kosygin. Mr. Kosygin was then 71, the same age I am now. I am aware that Dr. Rakhmanaliev and his wife, Madame Natalia Musina, share a warm friendship with the Kosygin family.

Premier Kosygin was a person of outstanding character. He kindly went out of his way to welcome me, an ordinary private citizen. His daughter was also a wonderful person.

*President Ikeda met Soviet Premier Kosygin for the first time in 1974, on his first visit to the Soviet Union. Asked by Mr. Kosygin what his basic ideology was, Mr. Ikeda replied without hesitation, "I believe in peace, culture and education—the underlying basis of which is humanism." President Ikeda met with Mr. Kosygin a second time on his second visit to the Soviet Union, in 1975. And when the SGI leader visited the Soviet Union in 1981, the year after Mr. Kosygin died, he visited the late premier's grave and called on his daughter, Lyudmila Gvishiani, who has also since died. Ms. Gvishiani confided that her father had spoken happily to his family about his first meeting with the SGI president, telling them: "I met a very interesting Japanese today. I was happy to have had a most refreshing discussion, even though we spoke about many complex issues."*

Together with the youthful Dr. Rakhmanaliev, I want to further spread the indestructible alliance of people committed to promoting peace, culture and education into the new century.

Finally, I want to introduce a number of wise Russian sayings that resonate with the teachings of Buddhism, for Buddhism encompasses all human phenomena.

First, the author Anton Chekhov writes: "It is the nature of human beings to have faith, and it is imperative that they seek out faith. Otherwise their existence is rendered meaningless."

We have faith because we are human. Faith is the search for solid principles. It is the quest for a better life. Faith exists so that we, together with others, can lead lives of dignity, deep fulfillment and no regrets.

The philosopher Vissarion Belinsky writes: "Struggle is a condition of life. When the struggle ends, so does life." We must never give up our struggle. If we do, our lives become a living death.

The Russian philosopher A. F. Losev, under whom Dr. Rakhmanaliev studied, declares, "Tranquillity is motion of endless speed." I think what he means is that true peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle. We of the SGI have the same spirit. As the Daishonin says, "One should regard difficulties as peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

And here's a line from Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*: "A battle is won by the side that has firmly resolved to win."

I am praying sincerely that all my beloved fellow SGI members will enjoy good health, longevity and happiness. I also wish you a wonderful new year!

Thank for everything during the past year. Let's all do our best again next year! *Spasiba* and *Rakhmat!* ("Thank you" in Russian and Kyrgyz.)

*(This concludes the Dec. 9 speech)*

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS**

### **True Peace of Mind**

From This Speech:

**The philosopher Vissarion Belinsky writes: "Struggle is a condition of life. When the struggle ends, so does life." We must never give up our struggle. If we do, our lives become a living death. The Russian philosopher A. F. Losev...declares, "Tranquillity is motion of endless speed." I think what he**

means is that true peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle. We of the SGI have the same spirit. As the Daishonin says, "One should regard difficulties as peace and comfort" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750).

- 1) "When the struggle ends, so does life." Why is that?
- 2) Why is continuing to struggle synonymous with living a full life?
- 3) President Ikeda says, "True peace of mind is found only in a vigorous, energetic struggle." Do you think that most people would agree with him?
- 4) Have you had an experience in which you saw that "one should regard difficulties as peace and comfort"?
- 5) How has your idea of "peace and comfort" changed due to your Buddhist practice?