

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 24 SPEECH—PART 1 WHEN WE STAND UP

‘When ordinary people stand up, they can change history,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘This is the purpose of our day-to-day SGI activities.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 46th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, May 24.

Today, I will talk with you informally. I hope you will listen in a relaxed, easy mood. We have many SGI members with us from overseas, including representatives from South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Singapore, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Poland. Thank you all for coming from so far away!

A first-rate person’s greatness is recognized by both friends and opponents.

Congratulations to the Soka University Baseball Team! [The Soka University Baseball Team won first place in the New Tokyo University Baseball League’s spring tournament.]

I hope the teaching staff of Soka University will encourage students who are striving hard in various spheres, as if they were their children.

Good leaders encourage and cheer others on to the extent that the other person thinks: “If my effort makes you this happy, I’m so glad that I challenged myself. I will never forget how you encouraged me.” Leaders should strive to encourage others with so much feeling that their words remain forever in people’s hearts.

A first-rate person’s greatness is recognized by friends and opponents alike. Arrogance and conceit just testify to a lack of any real strength or ability.

There is no more humanistic realm than the world of Soka.

To fight unflinchingly against evil – this is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

The famous French writer Victor Hugo says: “All things aid those who do good.... The weather will be for us, the north wind will be for us, the rain will be for us.” Indeed, all things side with those who do good. Likewise, all things and phenomena around us function as heavenly deities—the protective forces of the universe.

“Let us fight resolutely against injustice and evil!” This is Hugo’s cry. This is also the cry of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. And this is the legacy of our founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. This articulates the commitment of those who champion the cause of justice—the commitment of Buddhists.

To fight unflinchingly against the forces of evil that seek to oppress and destroy those dedicated to truth and justice—this is the Soka Gakkai spirit. To stand by and do nothing when one sees injustice happening is cowardly and hideously self-centered. Please never become that kind of spiritless, apathetic leader. It is vital that you have the acuity to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. I ask the youth division members to stand up and fight, and the youth division leaders to be in the vanguard of those efforts.

In unity is strength found.

Let me share a few Korean proverbs with you.

“In unity is strength.”

“We live by unity and die by division.”

“A crowd will draw even the lame person along with it.”

In other words, even a person with an injured leg can move forward powerfully with the help of others. These are words of wisdom from Korea, a country to which Japan is indebted for the transmission of Buddhism.

Let's show our fellow members in South Korea our great expectations and share our congratulations on the new departure of SGI-Korea, foremost in harmony and happiness!

I hope that Japan and Korea will advance in complete unity. I hope that we will move forward as the best, closest friends in the world.

A true leader values each and every individual.

We have Seamen's Group members with us as well. [This is a group of men's and young men's division members who work as seamen, sailors and in other ocean-going occupations.] Let's congratulate them on the success of their historic photography exhibition in India! [“Photographs of Men of the Sea” opened in Mumbai, India, on May 12.]

The world is our stage. We are not limited to Japan. I am always looking to the world. I am always acting for the sake of the world.

Let me tell you a little story that took place some 60 years ago. An American sailor sent a letter to the renowned physicist Albert Einstein, who was opposed to Hitler's leadership. The sailor wrote this letter in February 1939 while at sea in a storm. He had read one of Einstein's richly humane articles and was deeply moved. The sailor wrote of his strong resolve to join Einstein's fight for humanism and human rights.

To his surprise, he received a cordial reply from the great Einstein. Here we can learn an important lesson: A true leader values each and every individual. He or she never looks down on others, respecting them from the heart.

Dr. Einstein's letter communicates his honest, open joy. He says that his hope for better times to come was founded not on political leaders but on the existence of upright people like the sailor, people who seek justice and refuse to compromise their ideals (Denis Brian, *Einstein: A Life*, p. 314). This was the belief of perhaps the greatest mind of the 20th century, Einstein.

We must place our trust in good people. And there is no group of people in the world better described as upright people who seek justice and refuse to compromise their ideals than the SGI. It is vital that we strengthen and protect this wonderful organization. The advance of our movement will become a source of hope for all humanity.

When ordinary people stand up, they can change history. This is the purpose of our day-to-day SGI activities. Each of these efforts is an important step forward in kosen-rufu — a step on the great path, the great course leading to the future of humanity.

In any event, I can imagine how delighted Einstein would have been to meet our Seamen's Group members. I'm sure he would have been impressed by you and offered praise for your efforts! I salute you all as the captains of kosen-rufu.

(To be continued in the July 7 issue)

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS KNOWING GOOD FROM EVIL

From This Speech:

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- 1) What kind of injustices or evils do you see around you?
- 2) How do you want to fight them?
- 3) SGI President Ikeda often says that Nichiren Shoshu has treated SGI members unjustly. Why do you think that he says this?
- 4) What are some of the ways that we as individuals can fight this injustice?
- 5) How do you distinguish between good and evil?
- 6) How do you think that Buddhism defines good? Evil?