

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 24 SPEECH—PART 2 A PIVOTAL ROLE FOR THE FUTURE

‘The United States will play a pivotal role in the 21st century,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘I want to put even greater energy into developing our movement in America while contributing to the welfare and prosperity of each local community.’

The conclusion 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.

In Japan and throughout the world, we have begun our grand advance toward May 3, 2001. May 3 is also Constitution Day in Japan. As the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun* reported May 3, I was recently presented with an ornamental folding screen featuring the handwritten calligraphy of Yukio Ozaki, the father of constitutional government in Japan. The director of the Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation, Yukiyooshi Ozaki, a nephew of Yukio Ozaki, bestowed this precious treasure on me.

Yukio Ozaki was a great Japanese liberal politician. From the establishment of Japan’s national assembly—the Diet—in 1890, he was elected 25 times in a row to the House of Representatives and remained an active member of parliament for 63 years. He holds the world record as the longest serving member of any parliamentary body in the world.

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi mentioned in one of his writings that Ozaki fought against corrupt, high-handed political leaders. I will never forget how Mr. Toda once sternly scolded a politician by saying, “Take Ozaki, the defender of constitutional government, as your model!”

Young people grow from taking decisive action.

Ozaki wrote the calligraphy on the folding screen during the Pacific War. It is in the Chinese style of writing called *kambun*, and it says with great literary elegance:

*From my Cloud and Wind Pavilion,
I gaze out upon the world of cloud and wind,
And find it rampant with treachery and disloyalty.*



*The Royal Road has crumbled into dust
And constitutional government is in disarray.*



*The whole world is bent on deceiving people with lies.
I quickly take up my brush
And write these words to save our age.*

Through his writings and speeches, Ozaki fought back fiercely against betrayals and falsehoods. He called on youth to possess a rebellious spirit, to reject and rise up against injustice. Youth, he said, should regard criticism and attack as the greatest encouragement for their further effort. This spirit of fighting back is the special privilege of youth.

Young people can grow when they take decisive action to rebut every onslaught of

groundless slander and criticism. There's no better way to forge one's inner strength. It is a tremendous opportunity.

The Soka Gakkai is on the side of right and justice. This is why we can fight against evil and injustice with complete conviction. The members in the early days of our movement burned with that spirit. Those who fail to fight back energetically against all oppression and vanquish it can no longer be called youth—they are losers in life.

I have chanted to the Gohonzon with all my heart, praying that I, and I alone, would be the object of all persecution, while the rest of our members would be protected and kept safe from harm. And I will continue to fight. I am determined to exert myself a thousand or even 10,000 times harder than I have up to now. Unlimited strength surges forth within me.

If we do not teach our present youthful successors the spirit of faith to meet persecution head-on, to fight it and triumph over it, what will become of our organization in the future? The only chance we have to teach them this spirit is now. I want to foster and raise youth in earnest for the sake of the eternal prosperity of the Law, for the sake of kosen-rufu and for the sake of the SGI's unending growth and development. I ask the youth division members to train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice.

One cannot fight great battles unless one is prepared to risk everything.

The pioneers of every age come under attack. This is an unchanging truth of human history. Ozaki was a lion. Though he was denounced as unpatriotic and a traitor to his country, he remained unwavering in his opposition to militarism.

A lion is strong. A lion rises up bravely alone to fight.

In 1931, Ozaki boldly argued in the Diet that the Peace Preservation Law—the law that was later used during World War II to suppress the Soka Gakkai's activities—should be rescinded. A decade earlier, in 1921, he had submitted to the Diet a resolution calling for arms reduction and delivered a historic speech on the subject. [He was expelled from his political party for this.] At the time, the respected Japanese poet Akiko Yosano praised Ozaki as a pioneer who turned his back on the notion of “politics as power” and instead followed the path of “politics as humanism” and “politics as art.”

I eagerly look forward to the realization of government solidly based on humanism.

Because of Ozaki's active defense of justice, his life was threatened many times. Once, a young ruffian broke into his home and tried to attack him. Some time later, the young man's father visited Ozaki to apologize. The political leader, far from offering harsh words of condemnation, presented the father with a poem he had composed to the effect that he should be proud that his son cared so much for his country that he would risk his life for his beliefs.

It goes without saying that under any circumstances there is no justification for violence or inflicting injury upon another's person, but Ozaki wanted to praise the young man's spirit.

I have always been ready to give my life for kosen-rufu and for our members. One cannot fight great battles unless one is prepared to risk one's life. That is how the Soka Gakkai we have today was built.

When still a young man, Ozaki had a grand ambition: He wanted to become the Victor Hugo of Asia. I hope that young people will aspire to great achievement just as Ozaki did.

Buddhism teaches us to 'rely on the Law and not upon persons.'

Ozaki is also well known for donating 3,000 cherry trees to Washington, D.C., when he was the mayor of Tokyo.

That reminds me—the cherry trees in the Toda Memorial Cemetery Park in second

Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's hometown of Atsuta Village, Hokkaido, bloomed with special beauty this spring, as if joining us in celebrating the centennial of Mr. Toda's birth. They made a breathtaking sight. People living in the area sent me photographs, and I was deeply moved by the marvelous blossoms.

Buddhism teaches us to "rely on the Law and not upon persons" (the Nirvana Sutra). Mr. Makiguchi, in his *System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, argued that this philosophy was consistent with the basic principles of constitutional government. People, not the law run autocratic governments, he pointed out. They are not based on right and wrong or good and evil but only on the unbridled will of the ruling dictators.

Mr. Makiguchi was of the opinion that as societies advance, they move beyond that stage and evolve into the rule of law — as set forth in a constitution. And he believed that the same principle would apply to religion. This was his view of history.

It is dangerous to base anything on the constantly changing human heart, affected as it is by so many causes and conditions. Both Buddhism and human society must be based on laws and principles.

The SGI's movement is leading the times.

In March, I met with former Philippine President Fidel Ramos here at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall. One subject we discussed was constitutions. I asked him what book he would recommend to young people. Most people answer this question with a great novel or work of philosophy, but Mr. Ramos immediately replied, "I would recommend that young people read the constitution of their country." He added: "The ideals that the people of a nation should work to realize are always spelled out in the preamble of their constitution."

This reply made a strong impression on me. Probably very few people have read their nation's constitution.

The present Japanese constitution enshrines the sovereignty of the people, the renunciation of war and respect for fundamental human rights. Ozaki writes that the crucial thing is whether "the Japanese people possess the ability to properly implement this brilliant, excellent constitution." He believed that Japan's future would be bright if the people could learn to use their constitution correctly.

The Japanese Constitution guarantees citizens' basic human rights in several of its articles. Article 11 states, "The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights." Article 14 says, "All of the people are equal under the law." Article 19 states, "Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated." Article 20 states, "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all." And Article 21 states, "Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed."

To what extent have we succeeded in realizing these ideals? Many would say that as far as human rights are concerned, Japan is still a developing nation. A great deal of hard work is necessary to make our constitutional guarantees a reality.

Ozaki focused on Article 14, which guarantees equality under the law. He believed that the concept of equality was the fundamental principle of democracy. Article 14 reads in part, "All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin."

Discussing this article, Ozaki writes: "Article 14 of our new constitution guarantees that all citizens are equal under the law. In other words, no one — whether prime minister, wealthy capitalist or landowner — is better than us or inferior to us. All people possess

equal worth in the eyes of the law. If we really understand the spirit of this article, no one would think of himself as lowly or unimportant.... People with self-respect do not capitulate to authoritarian power. People with self-respect are not swayed by wealth.... Let us not look for power outside ourselves. Let us awaken to the power within.” These words have a deep resonance with the teachings of Buddhism.

Many say that the Japanese people are too concerned with external distinctions of prestige, such as social status, family background and academic titles. Our wonderful alliance of the people, the Soka Gakkai, however, is fully awakened to the principles of equality and human dignity. Our movement is at the cutting edge, leading the times. Humanity of future ages will applaud our efforts. Nichiren Daishonin will rejoice at our victory and praise us.

Mr. Toda declares: “The Soka Gakkai has no reason to fear anyone, because its actions are completely justified from the perspectives of Buddhism, the laws of the land and the rules and customs of society” (March 31, 1956, Headquarters Leaders Meeting). Let us keep advancing with this same pride, this same sense of mission, this same conviction.

Peace cannot be achieved without a struggle.

Ozaki also writes, “Life is a peaceful struggle from beginning to end.” In these words, he has brilliantly captured an important truth. We of the Soka Gakkai, too, are waging this peaceful struggle. Peace cannot be achieved without a struggle, nor can prosperity, nor happiness. Everything in life, in society, is a struggle. This is a universal truth.

Ozaki writes, “The proof of victory or defeat in life is in the last five minutes.” With this conviction, he fought into his 90s, never retreating a step. He waged an unremitting battle against evil and injustice. I hope all of you will do the same.

The important thing is whether you can say at the end of your life: “I did my very best! I have won! I have no sadness or regrets!” Those who keep fighting to the end are beautiful. Their lives shine with triumph. Leaders, when they exert themselves in earnest like this, can create a momentum that spreads throughout the entire organization.

I hope that all of you will write an unprecedented personal history, always advancing with fresh vigor in the spirit that “You haven’t seen anything yet!”

SUA’s Orange County campus is attracting tremendous attention.

I am holding an English-language newspaper that carries a feature article about Soka University of America’s Orange County campus. The new campus is attracting tremendous attention, and people have great expectations for it. As the university’s founder, I propose three new guiding principles for the school:

Foster leaders of culture in the community.

Foster leaders of humanism in society.

Foster leaders of pacifism in the world.

What do you think? They are in addition to Soka University of America’s mottoes, which are:

Be philosophers of a renaissance of life.

Be world citizens in solidarity for peace.

Be the pioneers of a global civilization.

The newspaper I held up is the *Orange County Register*, which has the largest circulation in Orange County. SUA is introduced in the May 17 edition, with the headline “The School of Life: Soka University, now being built on a hilltop in Aliso Viejo, will reach beyond the basics to instill value.”

The article, presenting a general overview of facilities and curriculum of the new university, begins on the front page and then continues to page six, which it fills. It includes a photograph of Mr. Makiguchi and describes in detail the school’s founding spirit and the significance of Soka education.

The article also quotes the university’s architect, Norman Pfeiffer: “It’s an uncommon thing for a brand new university in America to be built from scratch on a raw piece of land.” The article states that while the buildings are in the European style, the campus also incorporates “Buddhist values of appreciation of nature and concern for the land.” It reports that the university will offer “courses that encourage respect for peace and the sanctity of life,” and that the university’s educational aim is to create global citizens.

A great deal of positive interest among Orange County residents has been generated by the article, with the university receiving many calls from the local community requesting further information. As this shows, the Orange County residents welcome the addition of SUA to their community. As the university’s founder, nothing could make me happier. Construction is progressing according to schedule toward the university’s opening next year [as a full-fledged liberal arts college].

The significance of the birth of SUA, which is destined to invigorate the world of education in the 21st century, is immeasurable. I ask for your kind support in recruiting students for the university and in all other aspects involved in making it a success.

The United States will play a pivotal role in the 21st century. I want to put even greater energy into developing our movement in America while contributing to the welfare and prosperity of each local community.

We have already entered the second phase of our endeavor to create world peace, and I hope to see SGI members in the United States and the rest of the Americas, as well as Europe and all other parts of the world, working together in solid unity.

When we dedicate ourselves to kosen-rufu, our lives expand limitlessly.

As I close today, I want to share some words of wisdom by the German poet and dramatist Friedrich von Schiller: “To the brave, to the determined, [this is] an auspicious moment!” I want you all to be brave, determined leaders—advancing with brilliant leadership like the great ancient Chinese prime minister of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Chuko K’ung-ming.

The heavenly deities will protect such a person. They will not protect a coward.

Schiller also writes, “With larger objects man himself expands.” By “objects,” he means purposes and goals. Our object is large: worldwide kosen-rufu, leading all humanity to happiness. When we dedicate ourselves to this just, grand goal, we expand our lives.

Shakespeare, in his tragedy *King Lear*, has the character Gloucester say, “Henceforth I’ll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself, / *Enough, enough*, and die” (Act IV, Scene VI). Let us, too, staunchly bear all tribulation and fight—fight until the end. If we do, tribulation itself will cry, “Enough!”

With constant prayers for the health, activities and victory of our members around the world, I close my speech today.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS THE NEXT GENERATION

From This Speech:

If we do not teach our present youthful successors the spirit of faith to meet persecution head-on, to fight it and triumph over it, what will become of our organization in the future? The only chance we have to teach them this spirit is now. I want to foster and raise the youth in earnest for the sake of the eternal prosperity of the Law, for the sake of kosen-rufu and for the sake of the SGI's unending growth and development. I ask the youth division members to train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice.

- 1) Why do you think that SGI President Ikeda feels it so important to teach youth this spirit to protect our organization?
- 2) How can each of us, whether young or old, help teach this spirit?
- 3) What are the different ways that each of us can protect our organization?
- 4) What are the different ways that youth can “train and forge themselves through their Buddhist practice”?
- 5) President Ikeda is obviously thinking a lot about our organization's future. What ideas to you have for SGI-USA's future? What kind of organization do you want it to become in, say, 10 years?