

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SPEECH MAY 21 SPEECH—PART 1 THE FORCE OF PEOPLE AWAKENED

‘It is not those in positions of authority or famous people in society who possess the greatest power;’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘It is the people.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda’s speech at the 6th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Toda Memorial Auditorium in Sugamo, Tokyo, May 21.

Today, SGI representatives from 15 overseas countries and territories, including Brazil, the United States, several European countries, Nigeria and South Korea, have joined us at this Headquarters Leaders Meeting. Thank you all for coming from so far away! I deeply appreciate your efforts.

A special congratulations to our unsurpassed women’s division members, who will soon celebrate the 50th anniversary of their division [on June 10]!

The 21st century is the Century of Women. Let all of us men stand up and bow to the women as a sign of our deep respect and support!

Next year, 2002, will mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Victor Hugo. The great French author writes: “Ah! People! ... Deploy your unexpected stature. Show the world the formidable wonder of your awakening.... Arise! Arise!”

It is not those in positions of authority or famous people in society who possess the greatest power. It is the people.

Hugo was calling out to his fellow citizens, urging them not to think themselves unimportant. He encouraged them to show their foes the colossal force of the people awakened.

The Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddhism for the sake of the people. “People, arise!”—this is the call of Hugo, the call of my mentor, Josei Toda, and the call of the Soka Gakkai.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen, known as the father of modern China, says that while the power of government can produce immense good, it can also produce immense evil. He insists that bad government must be eliminated if we wish to secure happiness for the people and prosperity for the nation. It was in this spirit that he began the Chinese revolution.

**Because we are carrying out the widespread propagation of the Law,
we have incredible lives.**

In Japan, we are now living in an age of democracy. So there is no one who is superior or inferior to anyone else. We should all be equal. “Even so,” someone has said, “when you turn on the television, all you see are public figures, and they act as if they are somehow better than the rest of us.”

Let us ask ourselves this question, then: “What kind of person is truly great?” The Daishonin cites T’ien-t’ai’s words “Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect; since the person is worthy of respect, the land is sacred” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1097). The person who upholds the supreme Law deserves supreme respect. This is true humanism. How respectable, then, are all of you who are striving so hard to spread the Mystic Law!

Mr. Toda used to say: “You have all forgotten just how great you are! It may be true that

when you go home, no grand banquet awaits you. Your house is not as spacious as a palace. So you put yourselves down, filled with self-pity at your impoverished circumstances, but that is ridiculous. It is you as a human being that is great. You can always buy a big house someday in the future. But just remember, after all, that those things will eventually crumble into dust.” Mr. Toda also used to quote a passage from “On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice.” The Daishonin states that his disciples who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo “surpass by a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times the founders of the ... various other schools of Buddhism.” And he adds, “Therefore, I entreat the people of this country: Do not look down upon my disciples!” (WND, 788).

You are not only chanting the Mystic Law but also spreading it throughout Japan and the world. You are carrying out the widespread propagation of the Law. As such, you have an incredible stature.

The Daishonin calls on the people of Japan and the entire world not to look down on his disciples. Anyone who disregards his call will incur strict retribution in accord with the law of cause and effect.

If you should encounter criticism or ridicule arising from others’ ignorance or lack of understanding about our movement, just laugh it off, telling yourself: “Why should I let such a person bother me? Am I going to let this little obstacle stop me?” and continue to live with pride and confidence.

The soul of the student division is to take the initiative.

On June 30, we will celebrate the anniversary of the student division’s founding. Congratulations!

The soul of the student division is initiative. The future lies in the student division. I am absolutely confident that future presidents and general directors of the Soka Gakkai, as well as excellent leaders in all fields of society, will emerge from the student division.

On June 30, 1957, the student division’s inaugural meeting was held at the Azabu Civic Hall, Tokyo, with Mr. Toda in attendance. I sent a congratulatory telegram to the meeting from Yubari in Hokkaido. At that time, the Soka Gakkai was fighting violations of its members’ freedom of religion by the Yubari Coal Miner’s Union.

Mr. Toda had instructed me to go to Yubari immediately. And quick as a flash, I set off alone for the northern mining town. Consequently, when the student division’s inaugural meeting was held, I was right in the thick of the dispute.

The Coal Miner’s Union, which trampled on the human rights of our members, was known as one of the most powerful unions in Japan at the time. I resolutely fought against it and won a resounding victory.

In our struggles for kosen-rufu all over Japan, I built an unparalleled record of victory after victory. I am very proud of that. Those struggles are a golden memory.

Three days after the student division’s inaugural meeting — on July 3, 1957 — I was arrested on false charges in Osaka. I was determined to protect Mr. Toda and my fellow members. If that meant going to jail, I was prepared to do so, to fight as youth is meant to fight.

We need to foster capable leaders to protect the people from corrupt authority.

At the student division’s inaugural meeting, Mr. Toda said to the 500 bright young people assembled, “It is my wish that half of you will become company directors and the other half will earn doctorates.” These are well-known words.

We need to foster capable individuals—capable leaders, in particular, in order to protect the people from the corrupt, cruel nature of authority. This was Mr. Toda's conclusion and his fervent wish.

The world of authority seethes with arrogance and intrigue. Those who dwell therein never know when they will be betrayed or brought down. It is a frightening world.

What is required to hold on to one's integrity and commitment to justice in such an environment? You cannot win simply by numbers or going through the motions. Strength and ability are important. No matter how many people you have on your side, if they are not strong, they will vanish when a crisis arises.

That is why Mr. Toda trained me so rigorously. He would even summon me in the middle of the night. At 3:00 in the morning, he would telephone and say, "Come over here right away." And I went immediately. That is how intense our struggle for kosen-rufu was in those days.

I have described my years with Mr. Toda in my novel *The Human Revolution* and in numerous essays, but there is no end to my memories of him.

The purpose of our faith is to win in life, in society and as human beings.

As you all know, the MDs of our doctors division and the PhDs of our academic and science division are active all over Japan. We are living in a wonderful age. In the past, people with high academic degrees were a rarity in the Soka Gakkai, but now we have a great force of intellect marching forward with us.

Of course, having a doctorate has nothing to do with the realm of faith. Nothing could be more foolish than being preoccupied with social status, fame and fortune. Whatever one's profession or education, a life dedicated to kosen-rufu is the greatest and most noble life there can be.

The other day, I received some wonderful news from our Soka schools: "At this same time when our founder, President Ikeda, has received more than 100 honorary doctorates and professorships from universities around the world, the number of graduates of the Tokyo Soka School System alone who have earned doctorates has also passed the 100 mark, with the current total standing at 108.

"In addition, the Kansai Soka School System, which is newer than its counterpart in Tokyo, counts 24 graduates who have obtained doctorates. This makes for a combined total of 132. And many more of our Soka school graduates are scheduled to receive doctorates in the future."

Though I hesitate to speak of myself, I wish to report to you, as your representative, that with a soon-to-be-conferred honorary professorship by China's Fujian Teachers University, the number of honorary doctorates and professorships I have received will total 105. These wonderful honors are all thanks to you, and I humbly accept them on your behalf.

Incidentally, my wife, as a representative of the women's division, will also receive an honorary professorship from Fujian Teachers University.

I also wish to share that I have received notifications from several other academic institutions of their intention to confer similar honors on me in the near future. These include: an honorary professorship from China's Zhejiang University in Zhejiang Province, where Mount Tientai [home of the T'ien-t'ai school of Buddhism and origin of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai's name] is located; an honorary professorship from Moscow State University, which was the first university to bestow an honorary doctorate on me [in

1975]; and an honorary degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta—the alma mater of that great champion of human rights, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Including those that are slated, the honors conferred on me by universities and educational institutions around the world now total 130. I have accepted these titles solely with the wish to pass them on, as a legacy of recognition from the leading seats of learning, so that you and your descendants will be bathed in their light.

June 6 this year marks the 130th anniversary of the birth of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who is the father of Soka education. The more we learn about his life and work, the more we realize what a truly great teacher he was. How mystic it is that we should be able to celebrate this auspicious occasion of the 130th anniversary of Mr. Makiguchi's birth with the honors I am scheduled to receive from academic institutions totaling 130 and also the number of graduates of the Soka School System to date who have doctorates totaling 130!

I should add, by the way, that 39 Soka University graduates have also obtained doctorates. And, just to show you how time flies, a graduate of the Sapporo Soka Kindergarten [founded in 1976] has earned a doctorate.

In any event, if educators have a firm commitment to students' welfare and development, they will succeed in producing many capable individuals. In contrast, people who are self-centered and puffed up with their own importance will not be able to guide or foster others.

For what purpose should we cultivate wisdom? For what purpose is our faith? The answer is to win—to win in life, in society and as human beings. It is to win without fail, so that we may secure happiness and create peace.

People who have this fundamental sense of purpose and mission are strong. People who have forgotten their purpose are weak.

Graduates of the Soka School System and Soka University have earned doctorates in a wide variety of fields, including medicine, pharmacology, dentistry, engineering, agriculture, science, physics, bioscience, law, economics, literature, education, linguistics, anthropology, religion, international relations, human-environment studies and peace studies.

Another wonderful piece of news is that a Soka kindergarten will finally open in Brazil, an event that many people in the South American country have long been waiting for. Members of the SGI-Brazil educators division who are involved in the planning and preparation for the new kindergarten have joined us today. Thank you for making the long trip! *Obrigado!*

I am certain that the new Soka kindergarten in Brazil will also produce many doctorates and outstanding world leaders for the 21st century.

To be continued in the June 22 issue.

**TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS
RESPECTING OURSELVES
FROM THIS SPEECH:**

Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda used to say: “You have all forgotten just how great you are! It may be true that when you go home, no grand banquet awaits you. Your house is not as spacious as a palace. So you put yourselves down, filled with self-pity at your impoverished circumstances, but that is ridiculous. It is you as a human being that is great. You can always buy a big house someday in the future. But just remember, after all, that those things will eventually crumble into dust.” Mr. Toda also used to quote a passage from “On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice.” Nichiren Daishonin states that his disciples who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo “surpass by a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times the founders of the ... various other schools of Buddhism.” And he adds, “Therefore, I entreat the people of this country: Do not look down upon my disciples!” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 788).

1) President Toda used to say, “You have all forgotten just how great you are!” What do you think Mr. Toda meant when he said this to the members? Why do you think it is sometimes difficult to remember your greatness?

2) Again Mr. Toda said: “You can always buy a big house someday in the future. But just remember, after all, that those things will crumble to dust.” Where does Buddhism say real value in life lies? What do you think is the real meaning of actual proof? How does it manifest in our lives?

3) The Daishonin states that his disciples “surpass by a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times the founders of the ... various other schools of Buddhism.” Why do you think chanting and spreading the Mystic Law is such an incredible benefit? Do you believe that you can attain absolute happiness by doing so? If so, why?