

SGI President's Visit to the Philippines Making Friends Is Kosen-rufu

SGI President Ikeda gave the following speech during the Philippines Executive Conference, Manila, Feb. 12.

I am truly delighted to see my wonderful family of friends here in the Philippines. During this visit, I have received many honors, including the first Rizal International Peace Award from the Order of the Knights of Rizal as well as an honorary degree of Doctor of Humanities from the University of the City of Manila. I am profoundly aware that these accolades are due in no small part to the tremendous contributions each of you has been making to society. They are honors bestowed upon me as your representative. Since I have accepted these awards on behalf of all of you, I hope you will rejoice and celebrate with me in their conferral.

Two very dear friends of mine, Dr. and Mrs. Abueva, for whom I hold great affection and respect, have joined us tonight. I am deeply grateful to Dr. Abueva, because it was through him that Soka University was able to establish an educational exchange with the Philippines.

I have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to discuss the life and works of the Philippine national hero Dr. José Rizal with Dr. Abueva. And when I spoke at the University of the Philippines seven years ago — in what remains a fond and precious memory for me — I concluded my speech with a poem by the great writer.

I am reminded that Dr. Rizal wrote the following in a letter penned while in exile: “Religions, whatever they might be, should not make men enemies of one another but rather brothers, and real brothers.” These are wise words.

Religious strife must be avoided at all cost; under no circumstance should it be allowed. People may hold different religious beliefs, but the bottom line is that we are all human beings. We all seek happiness and desire peace. Religion should bring people together. It should unite the potential for good in people's hearts toward benefiting society and humanity and creating a better future for all. This was the spirit of Dr. Rizal, and it is the spirit of the SGI.

Crucial in this endeavor, too, is education, a universal value. Without education, religion becomes autocratic and confining.

The wisdom of the Lotus Sutra is intrinsically free and unhindered.

With a completely free and unhindered spirit, we are deepening understanding with thinking people in society and broadening our circle of friendship. We are creating infinite value as we strive to bring out the best in all things and situations and promote beautiful harmony. This is the path of the SGI.

I thus have great admiration and praise for the activities of the SGI of the Philippines and the solid efforts you are making to create bonds of sincere friendship based on the value of education. Making friends, spreading understanding and empathy for our aims, is in itself the expansion of kosen-rufu.

Dr. Abueva has said: “The human spirit is unconquerable, resilient, and potent against the forces that seek to destroy it.” And the worthy people of the Philippines have shown the world the truth of that statement through the monumental victories they have won time and again with their invincible spirit.

As we move toward the 21st century, I hope that you, my dear friends of the SGIRP, will give free rein to the unlimited power of the spirit, the power of life itself, as you create the

strongest network for peace and happiness in the entire world.

I offer my heartfelt prayers for Dr. and Mrs. Abueva and for all of my dear friends in the Philippines.

With “Friendship and Harmony” as your motto, please lead wonderful, joyous and meaningful lives.

To all of you, *mabuhay* (long life)!

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