

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
Heart and Seoul
By HO GOKU

Seoul in May. The spring breeze refreshing. The sunlight pouring down from the clear skies, bright.

It was my second visit to Korea and first in eight years. This time, the highly respected Kyung Hee University had invited me as founder of Soka University. On May 15, I received an honorary doctorate in philosophy from the university, and on the following day, May 16, my wife received the Emerald Award from the Global Cooperation for a Brighter Society Club International (headed by President Choue Young Seek, Kyung Hee University's chancellor).

As I expressed my sincerest gratitude for these honors, I renewed my commitment to build more golden bridges of friendship between Japan and Korea.



During the Korean War, my mentor, Mr. Toda, was deeply pained by the terrible sufferings of the Korean people. "I can hear their voices crying out in pain and sorrow," he said. "Who will save the people of Korea, a land to which we owe so much of our culture?" His heartfelt cry still rings in my ears. Making his spirit mine, I vowed to extend a bridge of friendship and cultural exchange between Japan and Korea.

The day I received the honorary doctorate, May 15, is Teachers Day in Korea, the day when students and disciples show their appreciation to their teachers and mentors. It is a perfect expression of the traditional Korean spirit of courtesy and respect for teachers.

In that same spirit of gratitude and respect, I dedicated the doctorate bestowed upon me to my mentor.



The first step in friendship is recognizing the truth. Yet most Japanese know little about their neighbors in Korea, nor do they make any effort to find out. I have long believed that a genuine blossoming of mutual trust and friendship is impossible as long as this condition persists.

And I have also been aware of the importance of transmitting the true history of Japan-Korea relations to younger generations. With that in mind, in January 1966, just a year after the signing of the Treaty of Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, I spoke to several thousand members of the Soka Gakkai high school division about a young freedom fighter, known as the Korean Joan of Arc, Yu Kwan Sun.

In 1919, the Korean people rose up against the harsh oppression of Japanese rule in the March 1st Independence Movement. Yu Kwan Sun was arrested in the uprising. Right to the very end, until her death in prison, she remained true to her cause and continued to cry out, "Long live independence!"

I see, in the noble life of this young woman, the belief in justice and morality, the purity and the courage that make up the Korean spirit. I am glad that Yu Kwan Sun's story has made a deep, lasting impression on Japanese youth.



Our SGI-Korea members have prized and exemplified this spirit more than anyone. They have bravely taken on the challenge of planting the seeds of the philosophy for happiness and peace in the hearts of their beloved comrades. In the early days of their movement, their efforts were often misunderstood. They endured a long, harsh winter. But they never gave up.

“We will prove the truth and the validity of the SGI movement through our actions,” they vowed. And they persevered in their efforts to serve society as Buddhists, devoting themselves to a national Korean environmental clean-up campaign, a farming village’s assistance campaign, and to preserving the natural environment.

Today, their flowers of trust and appreciation are blossoming in many areas of Korea. For my part, I have decided to record the struggles, the courage, and the triumphs of our esteemed KSGI members in *The New Human Revolution* and thus honor them for all time.



There was a time when evil elements in Japan hatched plots to destroy this noble alliance dedicated to positive contributing to society. That’s when Woo-Chong Hee, the current KSGI women’s division chief, stepped forward to fight these insidious onslaughts, staunchly protecting and supporting her fellow members. At the time, she was the young women’s division chief. Continuing her tireless daily efforts to visit and encourage members at their homes, she finally raised high the flag of victory.

General Director Park Jae Il, at age 44, is another youthful leader of KSGI. He became a member when he was 19. A childhood bout of measles had left him with a serious speech disability, and he would sometimes find himself unable to explain himself, getting into trouble as a result. But after taking faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and earnestly doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, his powers of speech were restored.

His newfound voice became a formidable weapon in his fight against the injustices of the Nikken sect, which was intent on deceiving the Korean people. He is a person of integrity, of strong moral character and of inquiring spirit.

He is also a person of action, ever-ready to fight for justice and truth. The voices of those who speak of him are always filled with trust and hope.



“Become a leader who advances in the unity of many in body, one in mind.” Those are the words of advice I gave General Director Park, then KSGI youth division chief, five years ago. When hearts are joined in a common cause, they form an unbreachable citadel. The beautiful unity of comrades devoted to a common cause is a microcosm of a peaceful human society.

I am happy that today General Director Park and Women’s Division Chief Woo-Chong Hee are, together with their many comrades, building just such a citadel of the people — a model for society, pure and as indomitable as the national flower of Korea, the Rose of Sharon, or, as it’s called in Korea, the immortal flower (*mugunghwa*).

Our Korean members have triumphed. The spring of hope has come. My friends, my brave comrades! Let us join hands and, with light, happy hearts, climb the mountain of our mission in the 21st century. There the flowers of joy bloom!

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