

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 18 SPEECH THE GREATEST PRIDE

In another speech to Cheju National University officials, President Ikeda says that 'the greatest pride of my youth is that, when my beloved mentor, Josei Toda, second Soka Gakkai president, was experiencing the most trying adversity, I abandoned my plans to go to university. And I alone among all his disciples gave my entire being to supporting and assisting him.'

The new century will be ushered in by people with a fresh, new vision and by places that have a fresh, new energy.

In *The Social Contract*, the 18th-century French thinker Rousseau writes of an island that attracted his attention. He praises the valor of the people of the Mediterranean island of Corsica in defending their freedom and democracy. "I have a presentiment," he writes, "that this little island will one day astonish Europe."

This island of Cheju has a vital power source that is producing talented young people: our Cheju National University. I am certain that this courageous, invincible island will thus astonish Asia in the new century and will be looked on with admiration by the whole world.

Staying true to the way of mentor and disciple means never surrendering to fear.

I am reminded of a masterpiece that was painted here on Cheju Island: the ink painting *A Cottage Under Evergreen Trees*, a national treasure by the great painter Kim Chong Hui, completed 155 years ago. Kim's enormous talent earned him the envy of others, and he was falsely charged with a crime and exiled to Cheju.

In spite of his persecution, he came to Cheju with imperturbable calm and self-possession. He had great affection for the honest island people and devoted his energies to the education of youth.

Kim had a devoted disciple, Lee Sang Jeok, who was stationed in China then. Throughout Kim's exile, Lee continued with unwavering sincerity and thoughtfulness to send his mentor precious books that he obtained. Though others might have betrayed his mentor, he remained faithful.

Lee was unafraid of the authorities' persecution or the vicissitudes of public opinion. He stayed true to the way of mentor and disciple. How this must have pleased and gratified his mentor!

Kim painted his picture of evergreens — a pine and a cypress, trees that retain their vibrant verdure despite the harsh winter cold. Inscribing the painting in masterful calligraphy with a verse praising his disciple's unchanging devotion, he sent it to Lee. This was *A Cottage Under Evergreen Trees*.

Lee wept with joy when he beheld the painting. He took it with him to a gathering of leading Chinese scholars and, with great pride, presented his mentor's work for all to see. These luminaries of China were moved by the painting and praised it highly.

Transcending differences of nationality and circumstance, they thought of Kim far away and the hardships he was facing. They each composed a short poem in tribute to this men-

tor and disciple united in the cause of justice. Lee had the 16 paeans to true friendship mounted together with the painting and sent it back to his mentor on Cheju.

Speaking of mentors and disciples, two years ago, when Dr. Cho Moon Boo became president of Cheju National University, South Korea's minister of education, Lee Myung Hyun, a former student of Dr. Cho, attended the inauguration ceremony. This is another beautiful, moving masterpiece of mentor and disciple.

The greatest pride of my youth is that, when my beloved mentor, Josei Toda, second Soka Gakkai president, was experiencing the most trying adversity, I abandoned my plans to go to university. And I alone among all his disciples gave my entire being to supporting and assisting him.

But so profound was my mentor's concern for me and my being unable to attend university that he spent nearly every morning of the next decade giving me a thorough education through private lessons. I know in my heart that my receipt of an honorary doctorate from your great institution of learning is also due to my studies at "Toda University."

Humanistic education entails communicating with and learning from young people.

Your country, including this island of Cheju, is the home of great human beings. Your people are profound; they are large in spirit; they are strong. They boldly open their own paths with their own character and integrity. Your university, with its mottoes of truth, justice, self-realization and enterprise, is the true symbol of this fighting intellectual spirit.

There are Ancient Chinese legends of sailing to your island home in search of the magical herb of immortality, of eternal youth. But there is a real-life source of eternal youth: devoting one's life to the sacred task of humanistic education, based on a deep love for young people. This means communicating with and learning from them. By doing so, eternally youthful life-force wells forth from one's life like an inexhaustible spring.

The great 16th-century Korean educator and poet Lee T'oegyee writes:

*Why are the green mountains ever green?
Why do the rivers flow ceaselessly day and night?
We, too, must never stop!
Let us remain forever brimming with vitality!*

I, too, am determined to join hands with the faculty of Cheju National University and make further lively and youthful progress in fostering global citizens for the coming century and promoting cooperation among them. This is an undertaking in which your fine university will play a key role.

I am very happy that a goodwill exchange delegation comprising Soka Gakkai members from Kansai and Kyushu — both places that have close historical ties to Cheju Island — is visiting today.

Allow me to close by offering my congratulations, with immeasurable respect and appreciation, on the 47th anniversary of your university's establishment, which you will celebrate May 27. Three cheers for the illustrious institution that is Cheju National University!

Kamsahamnida! (Thank you very much!)

President Ikeda's speech at a dinner he hosted reciprocating the honors and hospitality he and Mrs. Ikeda received from Cheju National University, Cheju City, South Korea, May 18.

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