

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JUNE 29 SPEECH—PART 2 LIFE IS A MAGNIFICENT DANCE

**‘Live your life like a magnificent dance, a ballet!’ SGI President Ikeda says.
‘Spread the dance of life, joy of all joys, across the world!’**

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 47th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, June 29.

I hope that the members of SGI-Korea—representatives of whom are here today—will move forward in exemplary harmony and friendship, according with one of KSIG's mottoes, “Harmony First.” Getting along well is a great source of strength. Where people get along amicably, there is happiness. Discord is hell; it is misery. And it leads to a life of defeat.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches us how crucial it is to be united in purpose, in the spirit of many in body, one in mind. I hope all our members will support and respect each other and live beautiful, fulfilling lives.

Today, we have members from the United States, Korea and Cambodia here for training courses. Welcome! Thank you for coming to Japan! We also have representatives from France, Italy, Spain, India, the Philippines, South Africa, Brazil, and the Sakha Republic in Siberia, part of the Russian Federation. Thank you all so much for coming from so far away!

SGI-Cambodia General Director Vuthi Seng and five other members from the Kingdom of Cambodia are visiting Japan and have joined us today. I visited Cambodia in 1961, the year after my inauguration as Soka Gakkai president, and I chanted there. Twenty-five years ago, in 1975, I met with His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia in Beijing and carried on a friendly discussion with him. Over the last four decades, my wife and I have continuously prayed for the peace, prosperity and happiness of Cambodia. We are so happy to see Cambodian friends here today in good health and spirits!

SGI-Cambodia has just been officially recognized as a religious organization by the Cambodian government. This is proof of the victory of the Cambodian members, who have worked hard and patiently as good citizens of their country over the years. Together with our SGI members the world over, I want to mark this fresh departure for the SGI-Cambodia with a round of applause. Congratulations!

True faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is to always focus on kosen-rufu.

It will soon be July 3, the Soka Gakkai's Day of Mentor and Disciple. It was on this day in 1945 that Mr. Toda was released from prison and that, in 1957, I was detained in prison [for questioning over the Osaka Incident]. July 6 marks the day that both Mr. Toda and Mr. Makiguchi were imprisoned in 1943. And July 17 is the day, also in 1957, that I was released and the famous Osaka Rally was held.

The Osaka Rally took place at the Nakanoshima Civic Hall amid pouring rain and crashing thunder. Two banners carrying the Daishonin's words hung in the hall that day. One was a quote from “Letter to the Brothers”: “Devils will arise without fail. If they did not, there would be no way of knowing that this is the correct teaching” (*The Writings of*

Nichiren Daishonin, p. 501). This passage warns that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra will be called on to wage a rigorous struggle against the three obstacles and four devils and the three powerful enemies.

The other passage was from “On the Buddha’s Prophecy”: “I say that without fail Buddhism will arise and flow forth from the east, from the land of Japan” (WND, 401). This is a great declaration of the kosen-rufu of all Jambudvipa—the entire world.

The true spirit of faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism is to always be focused on and always be striving for the goal of worldwide kosen-rufu.

Our fellow members in Kansai have battled with single-minded determination to win without fail against each and every powerful opponent they have faced. Kansai is a model for all. I hope all our members will continue to courageously pursue the goal of worldwide kosen-rufu, just as our Kansai members have.

At the Headquarters Leaders Meeting commemorating May 3 this year, held on April 25, I announced that the SGI had members in 156 countries and territories. Today I report to you, as we prepare to celebrate July 3, that the SGI now has members in an additional seven nations, bringing the total number of countries where our members are practicing to 163.

When you talk about our organization to non-practicing family or friends, I hope you will proudly tell them that we have members in 163 nations.

The only way to achieve peace is to reach out to the world.

The first additional country where we now have members is the Kingdom of Tonga, a beautiful South Pacific paradise. I want to visit this island kingdom one day. In February, my wife and I, as representatives of all of you, were privileged to receive honorary citizenship from the king of Tonga. SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima kindly accepted this honor in my place. I have also been informed that one of Tonga’s beautiful beaches will be named the Daisaku Ikeda Beach.

All of these honors will eternally illuminate the path of all SGI members who follow in our footsteps in generations to come.

The SGI network now also extends to the Republic of Mongolia, a land that was of such concern to the Daishonin. This, I feel, is profoundly significant in terms of Buddhism. We have also welcomed the president of the Republic of Mongolia to Soka University. [In 1998, Mongolian President N. Bagabandi gave a lecture at Soka University, in which he expressed his gratitude to SGI President Ikeda for his efforts to promote educational exchange.]

I have also received repeated invitations to visit Mongolia. Many nations invite me to visit, but unfortunately my schedule does not always permit me to do so.

We now also have members in Uzbekistan in Central Asia. In ancient times, this region flourished as a cultural center under the rule of King Kanishka and was a transmission point for the eastward spread of Buddhism into China and beyond. Now, SGI Bodhisattvas of the Earth have appeared and are practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism in that distant land. This is evidence of the epic “westward transmission of Buddhism” being carried out by the Soka Gakkai. This is all in exact accord with the Daishonin’s prediction.

In Europe, we now have members in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Balkan Peninsula. SGI members there are working to overcome the tragedy of the civil war that has wracked the region, holding discussion meetings and making home visits. They are creating a great wave of human revolution—of inner transformation—toward

peace and reconstruction. Our courageous members in Bosnia and Herzegovina are moving boldly ahead, determined that a nation in which the sound of the Mystic Law reverberates will prosper and be protected.

Another addition is the Republic of Malawi in southeast Africa. *Malawi* means flame. SGI members have also begun to be active in this nation of hope for the 21st century.

I will leave the other countries for introduction another time. Suffice it to say, our SGI members in each country are working hard to earn the trust of their fellow citizens and carrying out activities that are models of intercultural dialogue.

Over the years, I have exerted myself wholeheartedly behind the scenes, perhaps more than anyone can imagine, to open the way for the spread of the Mystic Law in all these nations. Let us joyously celebrate this advance of kosen-rufu to 163 countries around the globe!

Thinking back, first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi strove hard to change Japan's narrow, island mentality and open the hearts of the Japanese people to the world. He was a great man, a visionary and pioneering world leader.

If we Japanese, as the people of a tiny island nation, just sit back and watch the world from afar, we will be left behind. We will become orphans, alienated from the rest of humanity. We must, with the broad-minded spirit of global citizens, form vibrant friendships with people all around the world and take a fresh look at our own nation from that broader perspective.

The world must be our focus. This was Mr. Makiguchi's wish.

Such a vast perspective is demonstrated by the Daishonin, who casually dismissed the arrogant political despot of his day as "the ruler of this little island country" (WND, 765).

The only way to achieve peace is to reach out to the world in friendship and form alliances with the peoples of all nations. In the future, I hope you will step out into the wide world.

Earlier today, SGI-USA Arts Division Leader Pascual Olivera and his wife, Angela, performed an exquisitely beautiful dance for us. Thank you very much!

Life is a dance. The struggle to achieve kosen-rufu is also a dance. In my 1989 lecture at the Academy of Fine Arts of the Institut de France in Paris, I spoke of the "dynamism of creative life." I cited part of the following passage found in the Daishonin's "Great Evil and Great Good": "When great evil occurs, great good follows. Since great slander already exists in our land, the great correct Law will spread without fail. What could any of you have to lament? Even if you are not the Venerable Mahakashyapa, you should all perform a dance. Even if you are not Shariputra, you should leap up and dance" (WND, 1119).

Live your life like a magnificent dance, a ballet! Spread the dance of life, joy of all joys, across the world!

One who continues to act with love for humanity is a victor in life.

Recently, five items in the collection of the SGI-affiliated Victor Hugo House of Literature, located in the city of Bièvres on the outskirts of Paris, have been declared national treasures by the French Ministry of Culture. House of Literature Director Philippe Moine is with us today. Congratulations!

Let me tell you about the five items. The first is a printer's proof of the masterpiece *Les Misérables*. The proof has detailed corrections in Hugo's own hand and is a unique treasure.

I have been very fond of Hugo since my youth. There is a passage in *Les Misérables* that says: “Philosophy should be energy; it should find its aim and effect in the improvement of mankind.... To make them good men... — such is the province of true philosophy.”

Philosophy is energy. It is not just words in a book. Buddhism is energy, too. It is a force to direct our lives toward good.

It is often said that Japan today has no philosophy and that our confusion is only deepening. The increase in violent crimes committed by young people is a reflection of the warped state of adult society. The Soka Gakkai, in contrast, has a firm philosophy, is working for the sake of society and is a great spiritual pillar not only for Japan, but for the entire world.

A rare first edition of Hugo’s epic poem, *The Legend of the Centuries*, was also designated a French national treasure. Hugo bound this volume himself and he also marked revisions in it. It contains a long handwritten dedication, as well.

To whom did he present this special volume? A very brave woman — a woman who, at grave risk to her own life, gave Hugo shelter when the authorities were persecuting him. Hugo expressed his enormous gratitude to her: “That I was not captured and subsequently shot, that I am alive at this moment, I owe entirely to Madame Juliette Drouet who, at the peril of her own liberty, and her own life, saved me from every trap, unceasingly watched over me, found me secret hiding-places, and saved me, with what heroic courage God alone knows, and will reward.”

Although the situation is of course different, it is believed to have been a female follower of the Daishonin who warned him of the imminent attack on his dwelling and facilitated his escape in what became known as the Matsubagayatsu Persecution.

Great indeed is the strength, the courage, of women.

The Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions are aware of all the efforts our women’s division members are making to support and protect the Soka Gakkai, which is advancing in accord with the Buddha’s intent and decree.

The benefits we accrue in the course of our struggle to realize kosen-rufu are immense. They will never fade. And they belong to all of you.

Another of the items is the only surviving copy of a printer’s proof of *Les Contemplations*, a volume of poetry that Hugo wrote while in exile.

Also designated is an autographed copy of his draft of a decree of amnesty for exiles. As a political figure, Hugo called for the pardon of those who had been driven from France when the Paris Commune [the insurrection of Paris against the French government in 1871] failed. This decree of amnesty was Hugo’s cry for human rights in the French parliament. A true political leader is prepared to do anything to protect those who are fighting for truth and justice.

The 21st century will be the century of human rights. It is especially important for young people to be sensitive to human rights. We must fight vigorously against all intrigues that seek to suppress religious freedom and against malicious slander and defamatory attacks. We must address and challenge such wrongs.

The final item to be designated a French national treasure is a sheet of paper with the last words written by Hugo, three days before his death. They are the profound words, “Love is action. Victor Hugo.”

A person who continues to act with love for humanity to the end is a victor in life. This is a perfect description of the members of our Many Treasures Group [a group for elderly members, many of them pioneers from the early days of the SGI’s movement]. They are

the heroes of kosen-rufu, more important than any celebrity. We must praise, support and respect them to the utmost.

When Hugo was around my age, 72, he declared: “I am like a forest that has several times been felled; the young trees are increasingly strong and vigorous. For half a century now, I have been setting down my thoughts in prose and verse, but feel that I have uttered only the thousandth part of all that is in me...” I can say the same of myself. I still have so much I want to write for the sake of my dear fellow members.

Ten thousand people are no match for one serious individual.

The Daishonin asserts, “But still I am not discouraged” (WND, 748). I hope you will all engrave those words in your heart today.

Kosen-rufu is an eternal struggle. To fight and fight on, right through to the end, with the lion-hearted spirit of the Daishonin — this is the hallmark of a truly great life.

Leaders cannot succeed by show or by their wits alone. It is intensity of purpose and unity that win the day. A passionate, all-out effort opens the way forward and leads to victory. Ten thousand people are no match for one serious, dedicated individual. You can have a group as large as you like, but if its members are not earnestly committed, it won't be a force for anything. Shakyamuni Buddha stood up alone. Nichiren Daishonin also stood up alone to embark on his struggle. Everything starts with the individual. The individual is key. This is the teaching of Buddhism.

We must have courage. Compassion is born from courage. And courage is the essence of Buddhism. As Shakespeare writes in “*Coriolanus*,” “It is held / That valour is the chiefest virtue, and / Most dignifies the haver.” With these words, I close my speech today.

Please take care of yourselves! Let us meet again!