

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MAY 21 SPEECH—PART 2 TRUE RELIGION MEANS COMMITMENT FOR PEACE

**‘A religion that does not help people, that is not devoted to peace, is not a proper religion,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘At its essence, religion is commitment—commitment to saving people from suffering. True religion strives to instill that commitment in people’s lives.’**

*The conclusion 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.*

The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte says, “It is education alone that can save us from all of the ills that oppress us.” These are words of eternal wisdom.

The first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, Tsunesa-buro Makiguchi and Josei Toda, were both educators. I also decided to make education my final undertaking, and I have poured all my energy into that goal.

It is through education that we become truly human. Religion by itself has a tendency to lapse into self-righteousness. Looking back through history, there have been religions that have closed people’s minds and caused meaningless conflict. In some religions, arrogant clerics have regarded believers as little more than slaves and used them as a means of lining their own pockets. This is terribly wrong.

A religion that does not help people, that is not devoted to peace, is not a proper religion. At its essence, religion is commitment—commitment to saving people from suffering. True religion strives to instill that commitment in people’s lives.

Education, meanwhile, fosters people through widely accessible and universal knowledge. Without both religion and education, the correct path for humanity cannot be completed.

Fichte also declares, “As the next generation that proceeds from you turns out to be, so will your reputation be in history.” Ultimately, individuals, organizations and nations are evaluated in history based on the quality and quantity of capable people they find and foster.

We must raise leaders who will contribute to the welfare of the people, society and the human race as a whole. This creates widening ripples toward world peace. This is precisely what the SGI is doing. I hope you will remember that now, as the curtain rises on the Century of Education, it is the mission of the SGI to take the lead in the “humanitarian competition” of fostering capable people.

### **Fostering capable people is the basis for everything.**

The Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, about whom I once wrote a feature article in my youth, says, “The beginning and end of my politics is education.” Our elected representatives should take a leaf out of his book and make a special effort to support, defend and devote themselves to the cause of education. Naturally, it falls to the task of government to tackle various social problems, including economic and environmental issues.

But the most important thing is producing people who are aware and educated. When people are aware, educated and uphold higher values, the road to a wise solution of environmental and all other such problems can be found. Fostering capable people is the

basis for everything. That is also why I have issued various proposals and articles toward the development of a society that serves the essential needs of education.

### **Participating in a momentous struggle changes your karma quickly.**

At the previous Headquarters Leaders Meeting, I suggested we make our next long-term goal the year 2030—the 100th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai’s founding (see the May 25 *World Tribune*). However, I want to clarify that in presenting this goal, I was thinking primarily of the youth! [Laughter.]

Actually, after the last meeting, I was inundated with determinations from members of the Many Treasures Group [those 65 and older] voicing their firm resolve to be with us for that anniversary and to chant even more daimoku to make sure they will live that long! [Laughter.]

Given this situation, I want to suggest that we advance first toward a closer goal, 2005. What do you say? No doubt this will be a big relief to all our Many Treasures Group members! [Laughter.]

The year 2005 marks the Soka Gakkai’s 75th anniversary. And the number 75 has a mystic correlation with the five or seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. [The phrase Myoho-renge-kyo consists of five Chinese characters; Nam-myoho-renge-kyo consists of seven.] That same year, we will also celebrate the 30th anniversary of the SGI’s founding.

Then, five years after that, we will reach 2010, the Soka Gakkai’s 80th anniversary. The Chinese character for *eight* means to open. It will also be the 50th anniversary of my inauguration as third Soka Gakkai president.

These are the immediate milestones I suggest we set our sights on. What do you think?

Let us advance resolutely toward the expansion of kosen-rufu, with each member, community, prefecture and region making May 3, 2005, their grand goal.

The summit of kosen-rufu is high. The Soka Gakkai has at last reached the halfway mark in its ascent of the Mount Everest of kosen-rufu. And I am deeply grateful that I personally have been able to make it this far together with all of you.

Let us live long lives and make our way to the top of this mountain with joy, hope and strong commitment, with the goal of completing the foundations for kosen-rufu. Though some may pass away in the course of our journey, they will attain Buddhahood and quickly be reborn. Since life and death are indivisible, they will continue to work for kosen-rufu as our fellow members in faith forever.

The first challenging slope of the 21st century—one that will determine the future destiny of Japan—is right before us. Those who climb this slope successfully, who win in this challenge, will be victorious in all struggles in the 21st century.

I am now earnestly trying to create the impetus for that victory within the Soka Gakkai. The next few years will be very important. Let us leave behind a magnificent history!

Also, especially since we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the youth division this summer, I want the youth, with their innate passion and power, to adorn the occasion by winning a wonderful victory for the cause of good.

There is no greater happiness than participating in a momentous struggle. It is also a quick way to change one’s karma. Great benefits arise from great challenges. Mr. Toda was always saying: “I wish we could face bigger persecutions!” “Isn’t there some bigger struggle we could undertake?” Mr. Makiguchi had the same spirit. And so do I.

The Buddhist Law is wondrous and unfathomable. The greater our efforts for kosen-rufu, the greater the energy and strength that wells forth from within us. Our lives overflow

with rich benefit.

Only through such tireless endeavors can we build a solid, lasting foundation that is capable of providing direction not only for Japan but for all of humanity.

### **To attain Buddhahood, Nichiren Daishonin says we must fight evil priests.**

Napoléon Bonaparte says, “In any career, glory comes only at the end.” It is the end that is important. The final years of those who were seduced by worldly fame and fortune to abandon their faith are miserable. On the other hand, there are many heroic ordinary people who end their days wonderfully.

Toshiharu Omachi, a dedicated pioneer Soka Gakkai member who was active in the Komae area of Tokyo, is a fine example. He died at the age of 92 on April 29. Today, his son Fumio Omachi, a vice ward leader, and his daughter-in-law Toshiko, a women’s vice headquarters leader, are with us.

I visited Mr. Omachi at his home on Sept. 15, 1979, and spoke with him about many subjects. He had the strong, imposing presence of the 19th-century Japanese hero Saigo Takamori. Originally active as a Liberal Democratic Party–backed representative of the local village and town councils, he worked hard for the development of his local area. He was well known to all in his community.

In 1955, he made the firm decision to join the Soka Gakkai. He was 46 years old.

It caused quite a stir. His entire family was strongly against it. His neighbors and people in the local community called him a religious fanatic and showered him with insults. Undeterred by the furor, he stood up confidently and declared that he was devoting his life to the Soka Gakkai and kosen-rufu.

It was Mr. Omachi who donated the land for the Tamagawa Peace Center, the area’s main Soka Gakkai community center. He also sincerely supported the temple Butsuju-ji, which was built by the Soka Gakkai [on land that he donated adjacent to the center], with the aim of promoting close, harmonious unity between clergy and laity. The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, however—after taking full, eager advantage of the financial offerings that Soka Gakkai members brought them—did an abrupt about-face and betrayed the Soka Gakkai to whom it owed so much.

Mr. Omachi was one of the first to rise up and fight against this, speaking out to refute falsehoods and reveal the truth, as did his eldest son, Fumio, and the rest of his family [who had eventually followed his lead and joined the Soka Gakkai].

As Nichiren Daishonin says, “Both teacher and followers will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering if they see enemies of the Lotus Sutra but disregard them and fail to reproach them” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 747). Mr. Toda often quoted this passage and said that we must fight decisively against evil and injustice.

Fifty years ago, in August 1951, a short time after he was inaugurated as second Soka Gakkai president, Mr. Toda sent a letter to a leader who had been active since the early days of the organization. In it, he wrote with characteristic strictness: “When viewed from the eternity of life, what are the petty difficulties of this world? To attain Buddhahood is to reside in a state of eternal happiness.... Now, in every chapter, our members are working passionately for kosen-rufu. Faith is the basis for everything. We have no need for those who want to be praised by priests!” This was Mr. Toda’s guidance. He was always looking far into the future.

In another Gosho, the Daishonin teaches the spirit of fighting against corrupt priests and cites these words of the Nirvana Sutra: “It is because I was a defender of the correct

teaching that I have been able to attain this diamond-like body” (WND, 20). This “diamond-like body” is the indestructible state of Buddhahood. That is why the Daishonin tells us to fight against evil priests.

Mr. Omachi fought bravely, exactly as the Daishonin instructed. He also contributed to his community as a city councilor for the Komeito [now known as New Komeito; the political party in Japan of which Soka Gakkai is the main support body] and was much loved by all. Even after he retired from local politics, he earnestly continued to do everything he could for his juniors, his fellow members and the Soka Gakkai.

This is the mark of greatness. You can judge a person’s true worth by how he or she behaves after retirement.

I have heard that well over a thousand people attended Mr. Omachi’s funeral. Leaders in various fields attended the wake or personally visited his family to pay their condolences out of their profound respect for him.

Mr. Omachi had spent his days in constant dialogue. That is how he made so many precious friendships.

### **Passing one’s faith on to one’s children is a sign of a person of true faith.**

Faith alone is life’s greatest treasure. When Mr. Omachi joined the Soka Gakkai 46 years ago, he was the only one in his family to do so. Now, his three sons, two daughters, 13 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren are all exerting themselves in faith as Soka Gakkai members and leaders in our kosen-rufu movement. Many of the members of Mr. Omachi’s extended family have also studied at the Soka schools, and they joke that there are enough of them to form their own Soka alumni reunion!

Mr. Omachi’s family is a shining example of the transmission of faith from one generation to another. This was Mr. Omachi’s brilliant legacy. I think that passing one’s faith on to one’s children is a sign of a person of true faith.

When I learned that Mr. Omachi had died, I immediately composed a poem for him:

*We miss you—  
He who was like  
A great king—  
And await with longing  
For your return.*

*—With profound respect  
for the leader who paved  
the way  
to Komae’s momentous  
victory.*

Mr. Omachi is a comrade in faith whom I will never forget.

In closing, let me share the words of some great thinkers.

The German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe says, “What shines is for the moment born, must perish; / The genuine, posterity will cherish.”

The American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, “Patience and patience, we shall win at the last.” This epitomizes how the Soka Gakkai created its history of undefeated victory.

The French writer Victor Hugo consistently indicts the unjust politicians of his time. He declares that it is the duty of representatives of the national legislative assembly to “rise, offer their chests, neither calculating the number nor the force of the enemy, and defend with their bodies the sovereignty of the people.”

And José Martí, the father of Cuban independence, says, “In times that call for decisiveness, indecision is a crime.”

With this, I conclude today’s speech. Thank you!