

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S SEPT. 5 SPEECH—PART 2 EXPANDING OUR LIVES FOR PEACE

'For humanity in the 21st century to eliminate war and conflict, and establish genuine peace,' SGI President Ikeda says, 'it is vital that we open our hearts, broaden our intellectual capacities and expand our states of life, so they become as wide and all-encompassing as the cosmos itself.'

The conclusion of SGI President Ikeda's speech at the 9th Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting, held at the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall in Hachioji, Sept. 5.

Many of you have come from far away to be here today, and I am afraid a long story might have the same effect on you as a sleeping pill! [Laughter.] A short anecdote is easy for everyone to listen to—with that in mind, let me share several insightful quotes with you.

The Italian poet Dante cited the words of the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle, "Under a bad government a good man is a bad citizen." Under a corrupt, unscrupulous regime, virtuous people are treated as villains. The good are harassed and oppressed. That is why an alliance of wise, enlightened people is so important.

Reflecting on the struggles of her youth, the English novelist Charlotte Brontë proclaimed, "I had also to take my degree in the school of Adversity." Forging ourselves in the school of adversity is important. All of you are leading meaningful lives—you are dedicating yourselves for others and the sake of the Law. This is the greatest happiness. Please be assured of that.

The 19th-century Italian thinker and advocate of Italian independence, Giuseppe Mazzini, declared: "Youth lives on movement, grows great in enthusiasm and faith. Consecrate them with a lofty mission; inflame them with emulation and praise...." Enthusiasm and faith are crucial. Without faith, especially, a young person cannot realize profound growth as a human being. It is also important for us to praise young people, to forge and train them in the midst of various struggles for kosen-rufu. Once they are awakened to a lofty mission, young people are consumed with enthusiasm and grow into great leaders.

Many people acquire master's and doctor's degrees, but the most respectable are those who earn "doctorates" in the school of adversity.

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy wrote in his diary: "Living is dying. To live well means to die well. Try to die well."

We can never change this planet until we firmly embrace a correct view of the universe.

I am presently carrying on a dialogue with the Russian cosmonaut Alexandr Serebrov about the wonders of the universe and philosophy in the space age. [As president of the All-Russian Youth Aerospace Society, Mr. Serebrov is dedicated to teaching children and youth about space.]

I believe that in order for humanity in the 21st century to eliminate war and conflict, and establish genuine peace, it is vital that we open our hearts, broaden our intellectual capacities and expand our states of life, so they become as wide and all-encompassing as the cosmos itself. We can never rectify the folly of endless feuding, hatred and killing on

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this small planet of ours, making it a place where all can live in peace and happiness, until we firmly embrace a correct view of the universe, life and a philosophy based on a cosmic perspective. That is why I am conducting this dialogue with Mr. Serebrov. He is also devoting himself to our exchange in earnest.

I am pouring all of my energies into carrying on dialogues with people in every sphere of endeavor, all across the world, for the sake of peace and future generations.

The thoughts and opinions of Mr. Serebrov, who has gone into space four times and has traveled extensively around the globe, resonate perfectly with my own. He is also well-versed in religion, saying that among all the religions of the world, he feels the strongest affinity with Buddhism.

Why? Because, he says, throughout its history Buddhism has never resorted to force to attack other cultures or people of other faiths. Buddhism, he feels, is the warmest, most accepting and tolerant of religions.

Buddhism is a great philosophy that stands at the forefront in its ability to meet the needs of the space age.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote, "It is the power of the Buddhist Law that enables the deities of the sun and moon to make their rounds of the four continents" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 685). The entire universe moves ceaselessly in rhythm with the Mystic Law.

The more scientific research advances, the more closely it accords with the wisdom of Buddhism.

While resonantly chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the fundamental rhythm of the universe, we work, speak and act for the development of society, world peace and the happiness of humanity. There is no more noble life than this. That is why thinking people around the world are strongly seeking Buddhism, the supreme law that permeates life and the universe.

The Daishonin wrote, "No phenomena — either heaven or earth, yin or yang, the sun or the moon, the five planets, or any of the worlds from hell to Buddhahood — are free from the two phases of life and death" (WND, 216). The heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon and the planets throughout the universe all go through an unending cycle of birth and death. It is the same with human beings.

No phenomenon or thing in the universe is exempt from these two phases. The stars in the vast universe also repeat this never-ending drama of birth and death.

**At every level of existence, when energy surges forth,
something new is born.**

On Aug. 16, NASA released photographs taken by the Hubble Space Telescope of a galaxy some 50 million light-years from earth.

Speaking of NASA, the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School is participating in a remarkable educational program developed by the agency for students to study outer space. [NASA's EarthKAM program, which Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High School began participating in last year, allows students to take photographs of Earth by using the Internet to direct a digital camera on the space shuttle during select space flights.]

The photos released by NASA are of galaxy NGC 3079 in the Ursa Major constellation. They show activity in the center of the galaxy's disk, where a bubble of hot gas rises from a veritable swirling cauldron. The bubble is more than 3,000 light-years in height and has a number of towering red columns of gaseous filaments.

We are talking of a phenomenon of incredible scale! The filaments whirl in a vortex and

are expelled into space. Astronomers speculate that “eventually this gas will rain down upon the galaxy’s disk where it may collide with gas clouds, compress them, and form a new generation of stars.” Our own Sun was also born from such a grand drama of the universe, as was Earth.

The Lotus Sutra teaches a cosmology of staggering dimension. I have spoken of the dynamic drama of the birth of stars previously in such books as *Buddhism and the Cosmos*.

At every level of existence, when energy surges forth, something new is born. The same is true of our organization for kosen-rufu. When everyone’s energy — starting with that of the leaders — burns brightly, new, talented people appear, and new development begins. A new horizon unfolds before us, and we can create a new history of victory.

What is that energy? It is the courage to face a challenge. It is the ability to act on one’s own initiative. It is the compassion to protect others.

From a certain perspective, the sun, the moon and even the universe itself are entities that overflow with life-nurturing compassion.

The energy of which I speak is also the tenacious commitment to win without fail. It is the determination to achieve kosen-rufu in the place of one’s mission — a determination like the fiery red columns expelled from the center of that galaxy. Where such determination exists, “shining stars” of talented people will appear and give rise to a beautiful unity and harmony that resembles a magnificent galaxy.

Buddhism elucidates life’s continuity across past, present and future.

The Daishonin’s Buddhism views the world from a cosmic dimension. The Daishonin does not merely look ahead one or two millennium — he speaks in terms of the “ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law” and of the “infinite future.”

Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future.

In the treatise “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” the Daishonin wrote: “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” (WND, 736). And in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” he said: “The Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that I, Nichiren, now chant will enable all people throughout the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 720).

From the perspective of widely spreading the Mystic Law into the boundless future of the Latter Day, our struggle has just begun. Let us advance with that towering determination. And let us live out our lives with an eternally youthful spirit.

In closing, I want to share some more inspiring words of courage.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill offered reassurance to the people of France, who were fighting a bitter battle against Hitler: “Remember we [the British] shall never stop, never weary, and never give in, and that our whole people and Empire have vowed themselves to the task of...saving the world from the new Dark Ages.”

Do not stop fighting until you achieve victory! Even if you are tired, never give up, never give in! Never forget your vow! This was Churchill’s personal determination not to be defeated.

This is also the Soka Gakkai spirit.

I hope you will all devote your lives to the great struggle to achieve the mission of

kosen-rufu with the same determination.

The French writer Victor Hugo spoke out to protect the people, “That which is not declared loudly often causes the greatest harm.” Silence means defeat. It is wrong to stand by quietly in the face of injustice. We must speak out for the sake of truth and justice.

Earlier, the Soka Gloria Brass Band gave a wonderful performance of a piece from Offenbach’s *Orphée aux enfers* (Heaven and Hell). As a token of my appreciation, allow me to close today’s speech with a quotation from Tolstoy: “Within you, firmly there within you, are all the joys of Heaven and all the sufferings of Hell.”

Thank you for traveling such a long way to join us here today! Thank you!

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION MEETINGS THE ETERNITY OF LIFE AND THE UNIVERSE FROM THIS SPEECH:

Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future. In the treatise “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude,” Nichiren Daishonin wrote: “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 736). And in the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” he said: “The Nam-myoho-renge-kyo that I, Nichiren, now chant will enable all people throughout the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law to attain Buddhahood” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 720).

1) SGI President Ikeda says: “Life, together with the universe, is eternal. It is without beginning or end. Buddhism perfectly elucidates the eternity of life and its continuity across the three existences of past, present and future.” Why do you think it is especially important now to move ahead steadily from the perspective of the eternity of life? Do you think that the concept of the eternity of “life together with the universe and its continuity across the three existences” expounded in Buddhism is important for global society? If so, why? Can you think of ways in your daily life that you can help make this philosophy the current of the 21st century?

2) Based on the spirit encompassed in the above passages from the Daishonin, do you have an idea as a Buddhist practitioner about how you want to respond to the tragedies of Sept. 11?